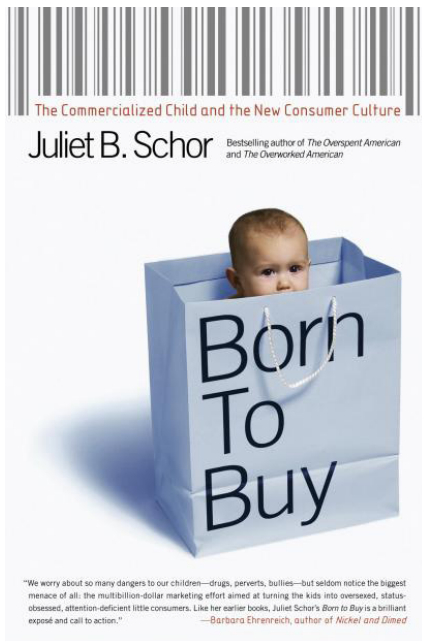


GR M10 Module 9: What is in a Logo?



Why are Logos so Powerful?

In our culture, eighteen months old babies can recognize logos, and by the age of two they ask for products by their brand names. In her book *Born to Buy* (1), Juliet B. Schor presents the amazing facts about the power of logos and branding on children. According to Schor, the average 10-year-old has memorized about 400 brands, the average kindergartner can identify some 300 logos and from as early as age two kids are “bonded to brands.” “Some may call it brainwashing, others say it’s genius; regardless of how you see it, the approach is the same: target young kids directly and consistently, appeal to them and not the adults in their lives and get your product name in their heads from as early an age as possible”. From TV shows and toys to video games, snacks and clothing, kids today, according to Schor, know too much yet understand too little, sopping up subliminal and not-so-subliminal messages of “buy, buy, buy.”

Naomi Klein also discusses idea of the power of logos in great depth in her book *No Logo*. Focus on the pervasive process of branding and the spread of corporate control into schoolrooms and government, and also describes the emergence of an active citizen-based opposition to corporate dominance. Klein argues that the “super brands” - the huge corporations such as Disney and Nike - are progressively taking over virtually all “public spaces,” including school curricula, neighborhoods, and all-encompassing infotainment malls like Virgin Megastores.

Power of logos is derived from the primal urges. Brand advertising stimulates the desire to belong to a tribe by displaying symbols that make someone part of a particular social group. So trademarks and logos are not simply words and images. They:

- Identify a product, service or organization
- Differentiate it from others
- Communicate information of its origin, value, and quality
- Add value
- Represent potentially valuable assets
- Serve as important legal properties

Brief History and Function of Logos

Some of the earliest examples of the product marks and stamps were found on pottery from the stone age period as early as 5000 B.C. Stamps, probably indicating the maker, have been found in Knossos on Crete from 3500 BC and Corinth from 2000 B.C. (2) Origins of the official logos could be traced back to the medieval Europe, where a coat of arms was a design belonging to a particular person or group of people and used by them in a wide variety of ways. In the 21st century, coats of arms still continue to be in use in a variety of institutions. They create an allusive



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)



(6)



(7)

reference to: quality, performance, reliability. For example, the Porsche logo is the coat of arms of the city of Stuttgart, where the cars are built. The city was built on the site of a stud farm, which explains the horse in the coat of arms; the antlers and red and black stripes are part of the arms of the Kingdom of Wurttemberg. This logo has been used since the 1953. (3)

Since the industrial revolution, a variety of goods produced both locally and globally became available. As an example, Manet's painting *Un bar aux Folies-Bergère* (4) from 1882. shows British Trademark Bass (5) at two bottles. Growing middle class had more spending power, and manufacturers faced greater need for distinguishing products. Logos were designed to guide shoppers through numerous choices. Before the WW2, global economy was focused on heavy industry, and there was little need for trademarks. Post-war boom in retail businesses, especially specialty stores and department stores, and electronics and service industries, placed heavy emphasis on trademarks and logos. Since the 1960s, developments in printing technology allowed cheaper color ads and made the print advertising boom possible. Since then, radio, TV, retail environments, WWW, mobile devices and video games became the new advertising mediums that continue to force logo design and promotion development. Logos and branding were recognized as being able to help a product stand out from its competitors, and generate customer loyalty with repeat purchases. Logo creates a 'corporate image' and suggests quality, and ties in with marketing and the brand name.

The full name for the logo is "logotype" from the Greek words "logos" for word, and "tupos" meaning impression. It can also be called trademark. It can be a piece of type, a symbol, a picture, or a combination of any or all of these. Chermayeff and Geismar gave this logo design formula:

"A mark is both form and substance, image and idea. To be effective, its forms must be familiar enough to be recognizable, and unusual enough to be memorable. The design must be simple enough to be read in an instant, and reach enough in detail or meaning to be interesting. It must be contemporary enough to reflect the epoch, yet not so much of its time as to appear dated before the decade is out. Finally, it must be memorable and appropriate to the ideas and activities it represents."

Types of Logos

Logo is a means of condensing an organization or product into a single simple statement and visual symbol. Logos are used to distinguish one organization or product from another. Logos are designed in wide range of styles, from simple name of product/company to abstract shape.

Name Only Logos

In early days of branded products, it has been common for owner of business to simply put signature on product. Signature was the indication of quality, value and origin. Over the years, signature developed into distinctive logo style (6), or became part of a product label. In other cases, signature was either not used at all or replaced by straightforward printed name. (7) Name only logos work best when name is short or adaptable and relatively abstract. National Westminster Bank wouldn't make



(8)



(9)



(10)

a good logo name because it is too long and rather unwieldy. Such products/companies benefit from contracted form of name or simple graphic device.

Name and Symbol Logos

These are used when a name does not connote the brand attributes, and symbol does not have sufficient distinctiveness to stand on its own, so they are joined into a name and symbol logo. (8) Some companies use a combination of logo and logotype, created by the name being presented in a particular graphic manner. Coca Cola logo is one of the best examples of the logotype having logo status. (9) Some name and symbol logos drop the name when they became established and able to ensure recognition through their symbol, such as Nike and Apple. This development introduces the idea that a logo design may not be allowed to remain static. Designers need to be prepared for change over time and to be able to respond to changing market requirements.

Initial Letter Logos

Companies with long names, either from the beginning or due to a merger, where names are compounded, often adopt initial letters as full name is unwieldy in general use. Companies then develop logo by giving initials character and distinctiveness. Examples include: IBM, VW, and DKNY. Potential problems with initial letter logo include particular letters missing real personality and distinctiveness, Initials being obscured by design (10), different companies/organizations can have same initials, and problem presented to public who does not know expanded form of name. Resorting to initials works for the established, and well known companies.

Principles of Effective Logo Design

Following are the guidelines for the image and representation design from Kevin Mullet's and Darrell Sano's "Designing Visual Interfaces" (<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0133033899>).



(11)

1. Immediacy

Effective logo must be recognized at a glance - even under extremely poor viewing conditions. This means that all but the elements that most characterize the sign object are removed. The impact, or "graphical power" of effective visual signs springs directly from this quality of perceptual immediacy: they force their way into our awareness. Each of the pictograms in figure 11 presents a powerful graphic image because each has been reduced to the essence through the process of simplification and abstraction. Note the solid forms, simplified contours, and complete absence of any internal detail. The fir tree of Boise-Cascade, the maple leaf of Air Canada, and the men of Henckels are all highly stylized to emphasize the most important formal characteristics. Each one of the pictograms is simple and direct, bold and clear, balanced, and well integrated with its ground.

2. Generalization

For logo design, imagery is normally used to represent a class of artifacts, rather than any particular instance of that class. By removing details associated with the particular,



(12)



(13)



(14)



(15)

the designer creates simpler forms that are easier to process, recognize and react to because they have less visual information. It is no accident that the worlds great mystical and religious symbols, as well as the alphabets have evolved through the process of simplification and abstraction over many centuries. The identity program for the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, (12) for example, uses a greatly simplified paper fan motif throughout. The fan itself is stripped of all detail except that needed to identify as a member of its most general class. The internal structural detail are merely suggested, not rendered, through the use of negative space.

3. Cohesiveness

Maintaining the cohesion between the type and images and the images themselves is possible when they all share the formal qualities. Type and images should work together to strengthen the whole instead of competing for the viewer's attention as independent elements. Cohesiveness of the icons for the 1968 Mexico city Olympics (13) has been achieved through the use of the bold forms, close cropping, and light/dark balance. Repetition of the bold forms, undulating waves, isolated limbs throughout an image set helps users learn to "read" the resulting visual language and further enhance their processing of the information. The waves in the Olympic pictograms, for example, make it easy to identify those icons representing water sports. Wherever possible, the same elements - including line weights, curvatures, and forms have been used.

4. Characterization

Iconic signs evoke one or more essential characteristics of the object. By focusing attention on a few essential aspects, visual representation can strongly characterize an object despite a high level of abstraction. Choosing the right point of view is as important as determining which qualities to emphasize. It wouldn't be useful at all to depict a chair from above or a radio from behind. The icons developed as the transportation signage system show how choosing the right viewpoint can help distinguish objects. (14) The viewpoints chosen for these icons are those from which these vehicles are seen most frequently in the viewer's everyday experience.

5. Communicability

The communicability depends on the shared context between the designer and the audience. Unless the audience shares the context with the designer, design work may not be appreciated. To grasp the concept of communicability, we will revisit Paul Rand's cover for the Direction magazine. (15) In the Christmas 1940 cover for Direction magazine, the use of a barbed wire cross as a ribbon on a gift wrapped package (note the Christmas tree shape of the perforations) provides the stark reminder of the war engulfing Europe. Whereas today, this message may be obscure, in 1940, the message was immediate.

Cultural dependency is apparent in these icons representing Japanese, Italian and Chinese restaurants. (16)



(16)

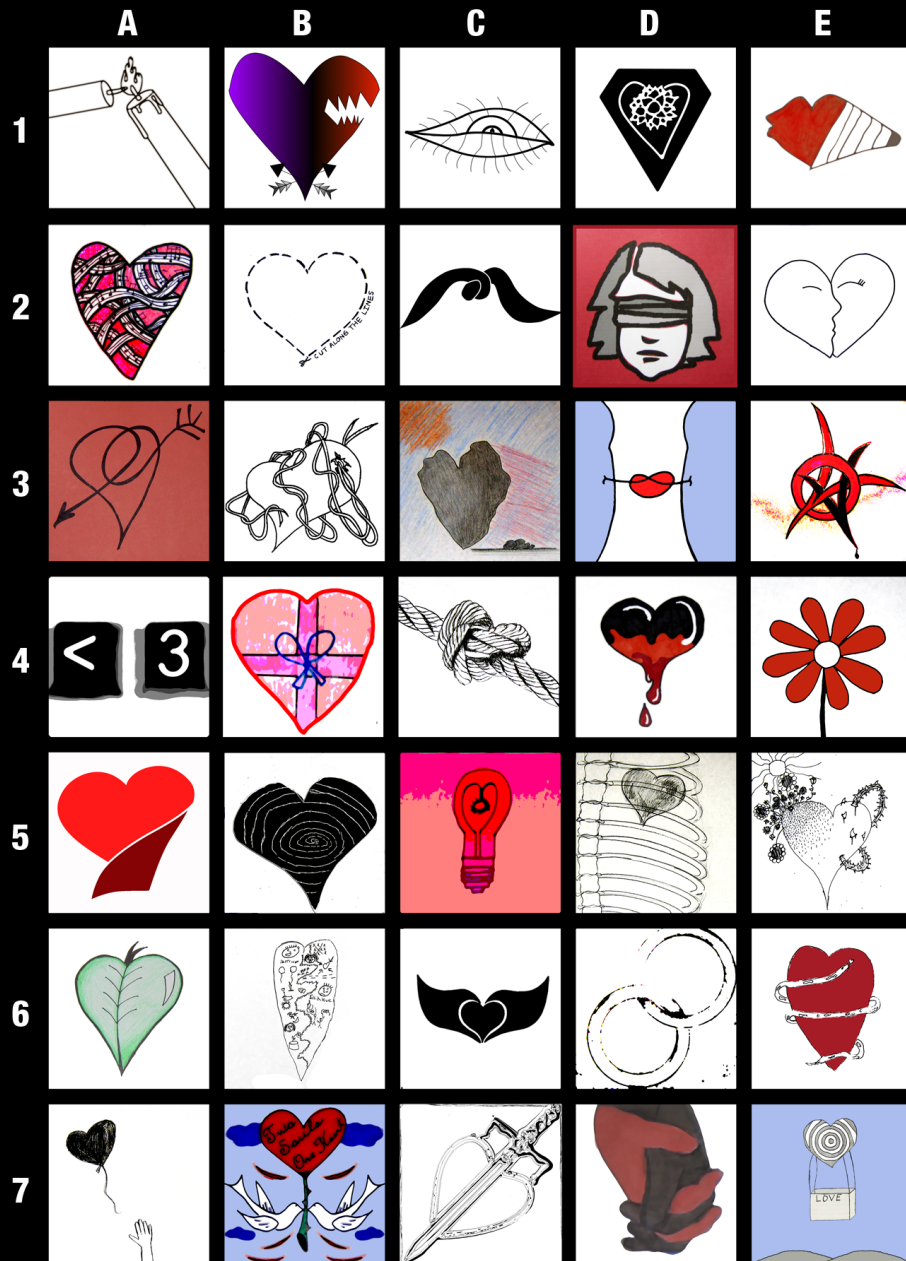
EXERCISE:

In the following exercise you will analyze effectiveness of one of the symbols designed by the Fall 2006 class. Their assignment was to create a New Symbol for Love. You can find the class project at the following page of this module, or you can access it at: <http://redsparrow.org/gr10/announcements/hearts.jpg>

Choose one of the symbols and use the number/letter mark to let us know your choice. For example, symbol representing the blindfolded person would be 2D. You choose the criteria: it could be the most or least successful symbol in your opinion. Once you made your selection, please answer the following questions:

1. Could this symbol be recognized at a glance? Why or why not?
2. Has this symbol evolved through the process of simplification and abstraction? Have all the unnecessary details been removed? What would you remove or add to make the symbol more effective?
3. Do all the elements of design share the same formal qualities? Have the same line weights, curvatures, and forms have been used consistently? How would you make this symbol more cohesive?
4. Does this symbol “speak to you”? How would you make it more communicative?
5. Which ones of the guidelines for the image and representation design from Kevin Mullet’s and Darrell Sano’s “Designing Visual Interfaces” have been applied to this design? Which ones have not been applied? How would you improve this?
6. Visit <http://www.paul-rand.com/identity.shtml> and choose one of the logos (identities) designed by Paul Rand. Which ones of the guidelines for the image and representation design from Kevin Mullet’s and Darrell Sano’s “Designing Visual Interfaces” have been applied to this design? Which ones have not been applied? How would you improve this?

A NEW SYMBOL



For centuries, the heart has symbolized love. But love has changed. Give us a new symbol.

FOR LOVE

Intro to Graphic Design
Fall 2006