

THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

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Abstract. *This research paper explores the profound influence of graphic design elements on human emotions. Designers are creators who not only generate a new universe, but also must rule it by establishing laws for the harmonious function of its components. The foundational building blocks in "conceiving this world" are the elements of graphic design including point, line, shape, form, texture and color. The core purpose of every designer is to plot how to mix these aspects in a way they achieve consensus. If these elements are combined appropriately, designer's projects will engage with their audience, awakening emotions and creating memorable experiences. This paper delves into how these elements are utilized to stir specific feelings, highlighting the intricate relationship between design and human psychology. The data we used in the given paper relies on various studies conducted by psychologists and also on our personal research. The analysis of effects produced by elements of graphic design on consumers' feelings is important, because it can enhance user experience and feelings which can help businesses develop a loyal client base. Furthermore, it can provide insights on certain design decisions that can be used to create more effective and impactful works.*

Key words: *brand identity, design elements, perception, psychology*

Introduction

Through studies in graphic design, we've encountered multiple times what the profession entails, namely creating drawings, plans or patterns for goods that are going to be produced. Even though the explanations from textbooks provide a short, clear, comprehensive way to convey the essence of this domain, I believe the purpose of our craft can be expanded.

Every designer is foremost a creator who not only generates a new universe through their masterpieces, but also must ensure balance between the components for their realm to function. Like atoms, which are the basic units of matter, the elements of design signify the unique, fundamental constituents forming the visual representation of an idea. These primordial threads of design are combined in the right way by the masterful hands of creators in order to materialize their projects, forming visually pleasing and ingeniously simple results.

By meticulously incorporating these aspects into their designs, creators can attract attention and also interact with their audience by evoking specific emotions and associations, ultimately creating memorable experiences for them. In the sphere of marketing, elements of design can be a powerful tool, which can strategically create a brand association — a mental connection a customer makes between a trademark and an experience, person, concept, interest or activity. Brand association is crucial, because it guides the customer's perception towards a company and its products.

The point

A point is a trace left with just one touch in space, representing the simplest pictorial element.

In painting, the point creates the impression of space and conveys volume. For example, large points painted with warm tones generate the illusion of proximity, while small dots brushed on with cool tones produce the illusion of distance [1]. In neoimpressionist paintings, George

Searut and Paul Signac used pointilism, a technique that includes formation of patterns by applying distinct dots of color to form an image.

In the domain of graphic design, the point aids in creating the main focus of the image. A couple of small dots can make a difficult complex structured and understandable. Readers recognize points as a shortcut to high-priority information [2]. A reference point can help build, orient, align, and drive geometry in a conceptual design, which can influence how consumers perceive the product. They can create a sense of consistency and order, which strengthens the trust of customers, expressing professionalism and reliability. A layout with clear reference points can create a feeling of attention to detail and thus instills trust in shoppers.

The line

Paul Klee, a German and Swiss graphic artist, mentioned that the line is a point gone out for a walk, so we can say that the line is a continuous feature on a flat surface [1].

Lines in design can awaken different emotions through their direction, thickness, length and interactions with other elements. Horizontal lines convey tranquility and lack of movement, while vertical lines communicate greatness. When two of them are combined, they transmit stability by creating a right angle. Unlike the other two mentioned, diagonal lines are dynamic, giving a sense of direction to the viewer [3]. For example, in the Nike logo, the convex line expresses movement, speed and energy, while its simplicity stirs a sensation of agility and grace. Longer lines prompt durability and shorter lines create a feeling of urgency. Thick lines are more dominant and prominent, while thinner ones are more subtle. Also, intersecting or overlapping lines elicit a feeling of conflict, whereas those arranged in a repetitive pattern incite harmony.

The shape

Through shape we understand the exterior aspect of an object limited by a contour in a two-dimensional space. Shapes can be classified into three groups: organic shapes, which are found in nature; geometric shapes, which are consistent and easily measurable; abstract shapes that are distorted or simplified versions of the previous two types [4].

Organic shapes create associations with nature, life and growth [4]. Leaves, a common organic shape, are often seen in logos for organizations promoting ecological awareness and sustainability, for instance, The Nature Conservancy. Also, leaves can be noticed in businesses related with health and wellness, used in designs regarding herbal medicine.

Geometric shapes are associated with order, stability, symmetry and are used to create structure and harmony. Shapes with angles can invoke the sense of authority, reliability, especially rectangles and squares. The triangles suggest energy, movement and action, when diamond shapes are usually used in high-luxury brand logos to convey sophistication. The most flexible shape in design is the circle, which can portray unity, infinity, completeness [4].

Abstract shapes are representations of real things without repeating their exact form. They are favorable in illustrating ideas hardly expressed through realistic depictions and also in simplifying intricate forms in order to make them more understandable for the customers. Typical abstract shapes are alphabet glyphs, which are specific forms of characters or symbols that form the written language [4]. Depending on the design, glyphs can evoke certain emotions. For example, glyphs with bold lines and symmetrical shapes can convey seriousness and importance, while characters with curvy shapes can evoke a playful mood.

The form

Form is the spatial representation of two-dimensional shapes, which basically means that a third dimension is added to the given shape. For example, a 2D shape like a square can be extended in a third dimension, obtaining a 3D form like a cube, pyramid, prism etc. In graphic design, adding a third dimension is usually an illusion, because the work is still done in a bidimensional space [5]. A compelling deception of form can be created by thoughtfully

combining techniques, like adding light and shadow, highlight and reflection, gradient and blending etc.

Form is essential in graphic design, adding visual dimension and volume. It is engaging to the eye, because it makes objects appear more realistic for the viewers, creates a sense of depth, establishes the main focus of the design, thus helps convey a message and evokes emotions. Form adds a 3D quality that generates tactile sensations, such as hard or soft, hot or cold, pointy or round. There are two main types of forms: geometrical and natural. Geometrical forms appear more man-made and produce feelings of control and order, while natural ones occur in nature, producing a feeling of calmness and harmony [6].

The texture

In design, texture refers to the surface quality of a work of art. In order to mimic the texture of materials, graphics are layered upon each other, therefore creating a visual illusion [7]. That way, there are two main types of textures used in the field: actual and implied.

Actual textures contain tactile properties created by material and are useful in designing business cards, flyers, brochures or invitations [7]. Implied textures are generated by layering graphics on shapes so they bring a feeling of texture. The last ones are usually used in print and digital design, where physical touch is not possible [7]. Both kinds of texture add a distinct visual tone to a piece of graphic design, thus stimulating the brain to remember the tactile and visual sensations, respectively, creates a brand association

The color

Color is defined in the Oxford dictionary as "the appearance that things have that results from the way in which they reflect the light". Since most sensory stimuli come from our visual system, color is a key component that defines graphic design.

Warm colors, such as red, orange, yellow usually convey energy, happiness, optimism, anger. For example, Red Bull and Ferrari use red in their designs to attract attention and express energy and excitement. Orange creates a sense of friendliness and joy and is used in the logos of Nickelodeon and Fanta [8]. Cool tones, like blue, green or purple, evoke calmness, relaxation, being associated with the sky, water and snow. Facebook, Samsung and Intel chose blue to represent their brands due to its strong connection with reliability and professionalism [8]. Green is closely linked with nature, leading environmental organizations like Greenpeace to use it in their designs. Although achromatic colors, white and black, are less spectacular, they are heavily used in minimalistic and timeless designs, creating a sense of clarity and sophistication.

Survey

We conducted two surveys among students at our university about primary colors and shapes and what emotions students associate with them.

1. What emotions do the colors blue, red, and yellow evoke in you?
2. What do you associate with such shapes as triangles, squares, and circles?

Results and discussions

After our surveys, the results were as follows:

Red color:

- 48.9% of people associate the red color with "anger, fear, or danger"
- 40% with a sense of love and passion
- 11.1% of people understand red color like the sense of life energy

Blue color:

- 57.8% of people associate the color blue with "calmness"
- 33.3% with "sadness or boredom"
- 8.9% with "severity or seriousness"

Yellow color:

- 73.3% of people associate the color yellow with "happiness and positivity"
- 17.8% with a "sense of energy and movement"
- 8.9% with "anxiety or disgust"

Most common answers were:

Triangle

- Power, sharpness, energy

Square

- Stability, balance, security

Circle

- Unity, perfection, harmony.

Even though the answers vary, we can still trace how people developed certain associations with different colors and shapes. This once again proves the strong emotional influence of design elements on a person.

Conclusions

In conclusion, design elements play a significant role in graphic design, which works closely with marketing and people's perception of said design. It is important, as a designer, to follow along with the brand identity when working with a customer and take into consideration the main points that shall make the finished product successful.

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