

Principles for the Design of Brand Marks



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Abstract This chapter aims to deepen the understanding about the Design of Brand Marks in the design-symbolic-perception relationship to clarify concepts and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this theme, assisting in the design, standardization, and use of brand marks. A qualitative non-interventionist methodology was selected, namely a literature review to clarify, delimit and discuss the concepts and different taxonomies of graphic brands, as well as to identify graphic brand design principles; furthermore, the case study methodology, based on six Graphic Standards Manuals, allowed the identification of design principles, and confront them with the knowledge obtained by the literature review. The methodology was relevant insofar as it allowed us to identify the principles necessary for the Design of Brand Marks. The literature review showed a lack of consensus and some points of convergence in taxonomic classifications and in the definition of concepts and design principles for Brand Marks. The case study allowed us to observe that even the Brand Marks designed by professional designers present structural and formal errors, standardization errors, as well as incorrect or imprecise technical terminology. We consider that this chapter contributes to the deepening of knowledge in the field of Brand Mark Design, through the clarification of concepts, terms, and principles for the development of Brand Marks.

Keywords Brand Marks · Graphic Principles · Logotype · Symbol

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1 Introduction

The success of a given company, product or service depends on several facts that ensure its notoriety and differentiation in the market and an effective communication, which includes: a visual identity system, quality in the product and service, a good consumer experience, a selection of media appropriate to the profile of the audiences, articulated media, and advertising, among others.

Regarding the creation of awareness, brand dimension and brand positioning in the market, the Visual Identity System plays a strategic role in the process of identification, differentiation, and memorization, creating conditions for the effectiveness of the brand communication media over time.

According to Raposo et al. [1], the Visual Identity Systems are a supersystem, insofar as it includes other systems (a set of correlated components articulated by their meaning and graphic similarity to form a coherent whole), such as the Brand Mark, the base and secondary chromatic palette, typography, imagery, formats, and other graphics. The elements of the Identity System and its design principles (rules for selection and use) define the brand language and ensure visual coherence in all media, whether physical, digital, virtual, two-dimensional, three-dimensional, spatial, or audiovisual.

In the Brand Visual Identity System, the Brand Mark stands out as the graphic signs whose meaning is the brand. After the name, the Brand Mark is the most used and most seen identity element. The Brand Mark works as a signature of the brand, identifying what belongs to it or is of its authorship/responsibility and differentiating the brand, its property, products, and services from those of its competitors.

A Brand Mark is a graphic element that is marked on products for identification and on branded media, while a brand is a network of intangible concepts about something.

Since a Brand Mark plays a role of identification and differentiation, its selection and design have perceptual requirements on a symbolic, graphic, and aesthetic level, articulating denotative with connotative meanings. The Brand Mark needs to be graphically aligned with what the brand represents.

This chapter discusses the Brand Mark concept and the different classificatory taxonomies, presenting some design principles, as a result of a master's thesis.

The investigative process was designed considering a set of associated problems, namely:

- The lack of consensus on key concepts in this theme, as well as publications dedicated to the design of Brand Marks that merely present cases and portfolios, lacking reflection, systematization, and in-depth theoretical study of this practice;
- Wrong or inaccurate use of technical terminology about Brand Mark types, in books, papers, Visual Identity Guidelines, brand standards manuals, brand centers, namely the confusion between Brand Mark, logo, logotype and symbol;
- Translation problems in the terms Brand Mark, logo, logotype and symbol;

- The great diversity of communication media (enhanced by globalization and the Internet) that demand more of the Brand Marks' design, namely the need for reduction and recognition;
- Misconceptions in the selection and design of Brand Marks, disregarding the context of use, technical and perceptual limitations, as well as brand communication needs.

Considering the problematic, two research questions were defined:

- What are the relevant concepts, terminologies, and principles in the process of designing a Brand Mark?
- What are the graphic characteristics of brands of companies with an international dimension, success and history? How to use these characteristics in the design of new ones?

Additionally, the following research objectives were defined:

- To deepen the knowledge about the design of Brand Marks, in the design-symbolic-perception relationship;
- Clarify concepts and terms specific to Brand Marks design;
- Identify general design principles of Brand Marks.

In order to answer the research questions and objectives, a qualitative non-interventionist methodology was adopted. The literature review allowed to proceed to the study framing, as well as to discuss concepts and morphological classifications and contributed to the definition of Brand Marks design principles. On the other hand, the descriptive case study allowed the analysis of the Brand Mark section in six digital Graphic Standards Manuals (three in E-pub format and three in PDF format), with the purpose of identifying Brand Marks design principles. The results of the case study were confronted with those of the literature review, allowing conclusions to be drawn.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Brand Marks Concept

The concept of brand has been discussed in several areas, namely management, marketing, communication and design, with no consensus on concepts or a common lexicon. Kotler and Keller [2, p. 386] state that “a brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination thereof, that is intended to identify the goods and services of a seller or group of sellers and differentiate them from those of competitors.” However, for Costa [3, p. 18] the concept of brand is more than that, defining it as “a socio-economic, political and cultural phenomenon, but also legal, formal, semiotic, etc.”. Raposo [4, p. 241] considers that “the brand is a consequence of associations arising from the experience and culture of the receiver, taking into account messages

received directly or indirectly from the organization (...) that work as groups and systems of signs and that culminate in the collective social imaginary”.

Thus, in the scope of this work, we consider that a brand is a network of related meanings formed in the collective imagination (the brand image) of the people who know the brand. The brand image results from experiences and contacts with the brand and includes reputation and secondary associations, establishing the brand equity of the corporation, business, product or service.

As for the Brand Mark, Raposo [5] defines it as the visual graphic sign that represents the brand, namely a logotype or a symbol (separately or as a group), and may include a designation, slogan or descriptive. In the same sense, Chaves [6] states that a Brand Mark is a visual sign capable of representing and synthesizing the identity and image of a company. The Brand Mark is a sign, something that means and that is used in the communication and identification of the brand, being subjected to different conditions that require flexibility in the reduction, recognition in different contexts and ease of retention and memorization [5].

Brand Marks are logotypes or symbols used separately or in combination. A logotype is a graphic representation of the brand name to be seen and read, so its design is made with typography (predefined letters or numbers), modified typography, or lettering (designed exclusively for that purpose) [7, 8]. The symbol is a conventionalized graphic representation of an idea that synthesizes the meaning of the brand or something that has meaning in its narrative, and can be iconic, schematic, abstract or generative [9].

Thus, a Brand Mark must follow certain principles of design and use, so that they can contribute to the awareness of the brand identity and its adequate positioning in the market. Calderón [10] explains that the Brand Mark identifies the brand, whose communication oversees presenting arguments and building a narrative that informs, guarantees symbolic differentiation, and establishes an agreement or commitment about quality and the relationship with stakeholders in the short and long term.

The study Logos Now by Siegel + Gale [11], focused on the perceptions of different global brands, states that the brand mark can connote or arouse secondary associations, emotions and feelings in the person who perceives it, even if this person has had no previous contact with the brand.

Brand image begins to form in the first visual, consumer, communicational, advertising, or reputational contact between a stakeholder and a brand, organization, business, product or service. It is in this context that branding seeks to manage the public perception of the brand, while the Visual Identity System aims to ensure the correct identification, differentiation, and communication [5].

A Brand Mark is a sign of identity that establishes the correlation between products, product ranges, services and other goods and equipment, differentiating and identifying the brand in buildings, in its media and in what it sells.

The design of a Brand Mark includes structural, formal factors, and the graphic features that correlate its sub-components. It also includes the perceptual and symbolic strategies of style and level of iconicity or abstraction, capable of ensuring that the Brand Mark is fixed in the collective memory in a manner consistent with

the brand. The Brand Mark can be measured, touched, and seen and registered for commercial use, while the trademark is essentially an immaterial idea or concept [9].

2.2 *Taxonomy*

The taxonomy, that is, the morphological classification of the elements of a Brand Mark and its organization by classes or typologies, helps in the analysis and understanding of the various types of Brand Marks [12]. In the process of developing a de-terminated Brand Mark it is important to know its different typologies, in order to choose the one that best fits the brand concept, values, means and needs of identification and communication. However, among the authors who study Brand Marks there are distinct visions as to their taxonomy. We consider some classifications unnecessarily complex, while others are not very useful for categorizing Brand Marks.

2.2.1 **Chaves and Bellucia Classification**

According to authors Chaves and Bellucia [13], Brand Marks are divided in two main categories: logotypes and symbols. Logotypes are subdivided into four subclasses: “typographical” (use of an already designed typeface); “exclusive” (use of a typeface designed specifically for the brand; “retouched” (use of an already existing typeface with changes in certain elements, such as spaces, sizes, proportions, lengthening or compression of some elements, creation of special ligatures, among others, with the aim of increasing the uniqueness of the Brand Mark); and “iconized” (use of an existing typeface, replacing some letters with icons that correspond formally); The authors also add two other subclasses: “singular logotype” (a set designed as a whole, with an exceptional shape that does not respond to any existing typeface); and “logotype with stable accessory” (use of certain complementary elements to strengthen contrast and differentiation, such as, underlining, small symbol, dot or just a background with, usually, geometric shape).

The symbols are divided into three categories: iconic (use of something representative and recognizable in the real or imaginary world with a high level of formal similarity or its encoding); abstract (use of a representation without similarity to an object, whose form connotes sensations, such as “hardness”, “fragility”, “softness”, “tradition”, among others); and alphabetic (use of initials of the brand name or letter to represent the brand). Graphically, the symbols can be designed in more organic or geometric shapes and can be combined with the various types of logotypes, which they call a combined Brand Mark.

2.2.2 Cassisi, Bellucia and Chaves Classification [14]

In 2011, Cassisi, Bellucia and Chaves [14] proposed another classification that is divided into nominal and symbolic identifiers. However, it has similarities with the classification presented previously.

Nominal identifiers encompass logotypes with background (inserted in a dependent background); pure logotype (representation of the name through typography, calligraphy, or lettering); and logotype with accessory (accompanied by a dependent symbol).

On the other hand, symbolic identifiers cover logotypes with symbol (accompanied by an independent symbol); and logo-symbols (integration of the logotype into the symbol).

2.2.3 Mollerup Classification [12]

In Mollerup's classification [12] Trademarks are divided into Non-Graphic Marks and Graphic Marks, which in turn are subdivided into Picture Marks and Letter Marks.

The Picture Marks are divided into Figurative Marks (representing a concrete object) and sub-divided into Descriptive Marks (describing what it represents), Metaphoric Marks (describing a recognizable idea or one that has meaning in context) or Found Marks (arbitrary selection and abstract form); and Non-Figurative Marks (use of images).

Letter Marks are organized into Name Marks or Abbreviations. The Name Marks are subdivided into five classes: Proper Names; Descriptive Names; Metaphoric Names; Found Names; Artificial Names.

Abbr are subdivided into Initial Names or Non-Initial Abbreviations. Initial Names decline into Acronyms and Non-Acronym Initial Abbreviations.

We can observe that Mollerup's classification [12] is based on what it is and how it is designed. However, in the case of the logotype, the classification follows less the morphological or typographical logic and adopts the structure according to the naming and connotation of the brand name.

2.2.4 Classification Raposo et al. [1]

Raposo et al. [1] present a classification focused on the morphological structure of the Brand Marks and by their graphic style, organizing them into two major groups: symbols and logotypes.

A symbol can be classified as iconic (descriptive or metaphoric), schematic (organic or geometric), abstract (organic or geometric), alphabetic (with letters) or dynamic (dynamic is when the shapes undergo some kind of graphic change in structure, color or texture, or are replaced from a set of possibilities, are customized or

obey to a script or generative programming). In the case of the logotype, it can be typographic, lettering, calligraphic or dynamic.

The authors also consider Brand Marks combining symbol and logotype. For Raposo et al. [1], the needs and limitation of brand communication should determine the typology of Brand Mark and as well the visual hierarchy between symbol and logotype, if used together.

2.2.5 Adoption of a Brand Marks Classification

Chaves [14] states that many poor-quality Brand Marks result from inadequate choices in the typology to be used. In this sense, Chaves [14] states that the design of a Brand Mark should start by selecting the typology and factors such as: respect or rupture in the sectorial codes; extension and layout of the designation; the various points of contact; the brand architecture; the alignment and semantic compatibility with the brand.

By analyzing the different taxonomic classifications of Brand Marks it was possible to identify the common typologies.

In a first stage, we tried to adopt for this study the classification of Cassisi, Bellucia and Chaves [14]. However, we found that some Brand Marks could fit into more than one class, while others could not fit into any typology. In this sense, the classification proposed by Raposo et al. was adopted [1].

3 Case Studies

The case study was selected as a non-interventional research methodology, including the direct observation method and a descriptive analysis of the common chapters on graphic brands in six digital Graphic Standards Manuals (three e-pub and three Brand Center). The six cases were selected considering three criteria: being brands with an international dimension, having representativeness, and considering its level of complexity in graphic standardization. Two cases were selected from each sector: technology, automobiles, and university institutions, including cases with dynamic visual identity.

The study focused on the standards manuals (e-pub version) of the brands Edp, Kia and OCAD University and the brand centers of the brands IBM, Audi and Aalto University and on the sections: brand anatomy, construction (grid), variations of brand shape, brand versions (horizontal and vertical), protection area, minimum size, positioning (in physical and digital media), application, use on backgrounds (colored and photographic), composition (layout), prohibitions (don'ts), and the relationship of the graphic brand with other elements (typography, sub-brands, partners, and signature).

In a complementary manner, the 15 most representative brands from each of the sectors were selected: food industry, transportation, university institutions, place identities, and sports, for a total of 75 Brand Marks.

The evolutionary process of each Brand Mark was observed to verify its relationship with fashion phenomena; furthermore, an empirical analysis was made of the graphic characteristics of the current brands: anatomy, composition, colors, logo-type, typographic class (through Vox Classification), typography variant, sign type, symbol type, iconicity scale, favicon existence, minimum size, blur and pixelation performance, behavior in monochrome (black and inverted), and Vienna Classification. Brand Mark anatomy (classification by typology) and morphology (symbol-logo relationship) and syntax (subcomponents, colors, etc.) were also compared [9].

4 Principles of Graphic Design for the Brand Marks

When we refer to design principles, we consider the criteria and fundamentals that determine the selection, design, configuration, and composition of the components that make up a Brand Mark as a single and coherent whole. In this case, we are particularly interested in those that can contribute to the memorization and recognition of the Brand Marks by the stakeholders. As Raposo [9] states, Brand Mark design principles are not rules, checklists, nor recipes or guidelines, but rather basic fundamentals on how to proceed during the design and use of a Brand Mark.

The definition of principles for the design of Brand Marks has been discussed in greater depth by several authors, such as Solas [15], Mollerup [12], Leitão et al. [16], Calderón [10], Cuéllar [17], Shumate [18], and Raposo [9].

According to Solas [15] the design principles of a Brand Mark come from the identity strategy and the strategies of its visualization. Solas [15] considers that from the identity strategy result: the representation principle or symbolic principle (the global image in its entirety represents an identity); formalization principle (refers to the image as a whole); integration or consistency principle (guarantees visual coherence in the various supports, in order to produce a global image, through the standardization of the various components); universality principle or image globalization, which is divided into: cultural universality, temporal universality (preference for simplicity and generic and rationalized forms for greater durability); and universality of the addressees (divided into three classes: superior, considered in some way as prescribers of the entity; the intermediate class, composed of emulators; and the type of publics; principle of normalization (guidelines for the reproduction of the Brand Mark in the various media); and principle of differentiation (rupture of the sectorial codes or formal assimilation to its major competitor).

Concerning the principles that come from visualization strategies, Solas [15] considers geometrization, sharpness and legibility. The author mentions that combining geometry, with sharpness and legibility strongly impacts the categorization of the normalization principle insofar as it makes it flexible to use in various

media and printing materials and processes. Furthermore, he considers that the legibility of the Brand Mark is determined by its size and context of use.

Calderón [10] considers as principles of design of Brand Marks the universality, the originality (differentiation), the standardization and adds the graphic synthesis or simplicity (the fewer features the Brand Mark has, the better its perception and easy memorization).

On the other hand, Mollerup [12] states that a Brand Mark must be quickly identifiable and transmit the values of the company or product it represents, being necessary to consider requirements such as: recognition, application, differentiation, legal protection, simplicity, attention value, decency, color reproduction, black and white reproduction, applicability in products and media, its eye-holding power, description, tone of voice, its relation to fashions, timeless character, graphic excellence, the ability to say "buy me", to be a trademark, to be able to be used in digital and video, three-dimensionally, associable with non-verbal sounds, discretion and likeness.

Mollerup [12] considers it essential to first identify the brand's competitors and media, noting that a word mark may be stronger in certain media than a pictorial mark. Moreover, its ability to differentiate itself from competing brands is fundamental.

For Cuéllar [17] designing a Brand Mark should imply principles such as: the concept of the brand; its flexibility (possibility of use in different brand communication media); its originality (possibility of registration as a unique brand); its durability (ability to last at least five years); its timeless character (not to be defined by trends); its adaptability (ability to adapt to various scales and media); its legibility (easy reading, recognition and subsequent memorization); its identification (ability to recognize the main components of the Brand Mark, such as shape, typography—if any—and color); its representation (alignment with the values and mission of the company it represents); and its aesthetics (secondary associations or connotation by the graphic appearance).

From another perspective, Shumate [18] argues that a Brand Mark should ensure the following requirements: instant recognition; ability to transpose into monochrome, especially black, without altering the visual perception of the original version; consistency and ability to reproduce in various situations; mass, i.e. density enough to be legible in reduced formats; contrast with the background where the Brand Mark is applied; formal and style coherence; the non-overlapping of elements; the form should be a synthesis that works as a cohesive whole.

In his study, Raposo [9] agrees with other authors about the need for differentiation, timelessness and flexibility of use, adding the possibility of visual declination, monochromatic use with true negatives, the form's contrast through a skeleton or structure recognizable at a distance and with low vision, the level of schematization or iconicity, the semantic compatibility with the brand and its positioning in the market, the graphic synthesis and the power of fascination (state of attention on the subject and the ability to retain the look or seduction). Also, the principle of exaggeration (artificial appearance and formal accentuation of certain features improve the contrast in the media and environments), stating that the artificial character allows a Brand Mark to contrast more in a natural, urban or audiovisual world [19].

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5 Conclusion

The methodology of the present study seems adequate to the extent that it allowed us to identify principles for the design of Brand Marks. In the literature review, we observed the existence of several taxonomic classifications of Brand Marks. After analyzing the selected classifications, we observed that some are unnecessarily complex, while others do not allow us to adequately categorize certain Brand Marks. We understand that a typological classification should be explicit and easy to categorize as the one proposed by Raposo et al. However, the study of other classifications was important as it allowed us to increase our knowledge on the subject under study. The literature review also allowed us to identify common and different denomination of Brand Marks design principles.

From the case studies, it was concluded that many existing Brand Marks have performance gaps because of design errors and standardization of use. Several problems were observed in the technical lexicon and that in the placeholder there is a tendency to use a rectangle or square with the same perimeter area, which is a clear optical problem. The data indicates that most of the Brand Marks combine logotype and symbol, being particularly evident in the university and Place Brands. Regarding color, there was a predominance of red, particularly in the food industry and university sector. More than half of the Brand Marks have a single color, with emphasis on the transportation sector.

It was possible to observe that in digital applications logotypes perform worse than a symbol than a symbol, due to their horizontality. Many Brand Marks have little mass (spot or contrast), especially logotypes, implying the use of containing shapes

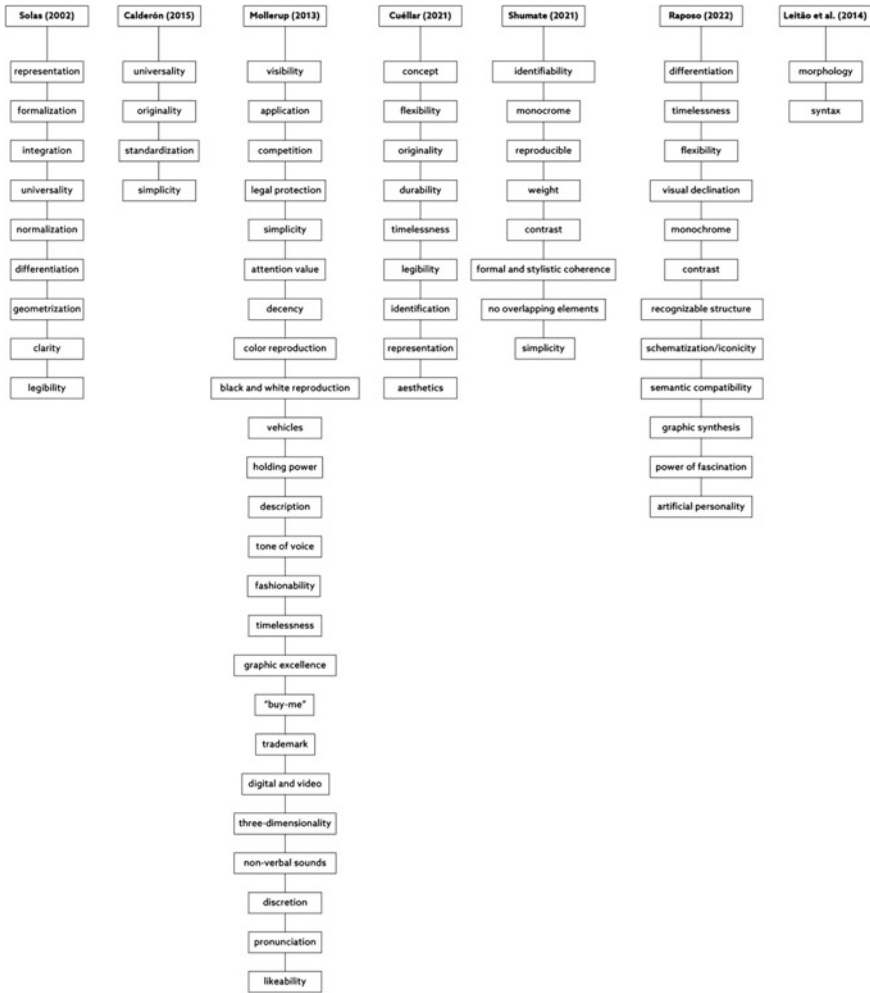


Fig. 1 Diagram principles for the design of graphic brands

to ensure contrast; There are Brand Marks unsuitable for applications in monochrome for light or dark backgrounds; In the automotive industry, it was observed that, until the end of the twentieth century, the Brand Marks were flat and that, in the transition to the XXI century became three-dimensional. From around 2007 and especially after 2015 there has been a trend towards two-dimensional design.

In summary, it is considered that the design of Brand Marks requires knowledge of certain concepts and principles, namely: visual coherence, sufficient contrast, legibility, flexibility, transposition to monochrome—especially to black, timelessness, excellence of graphics, semantic compatibility, adaptability, the power of fascination, the exaggeration of the form/structure, the hierarchy between symbol and logotype,

originality and formal balance of the whole. Many of these principles are present both in the Brand Marks and in the various means of communication of successful companies with an international dimension and a history of success.

The study allowed clarifying the Brand Mark concept, as well as understanding the imprecision in the use of technical terminology and the translation problems in Visual Identity Guidelines, brand standards manuals, brand centers.

It also allowed us to understand that the diversity of media, and digital media in particular, pose greater challenges to the design of Brand Marks, especially in the reduction and recognition at a distance and in small formats such as favicon and avatars on social networks.

It was also realized the importance of establishing design principles and standards considering the Brand Marks in optical and perceptive terms and not only geometric ones.

It was possible to define Brand Mark, Logotype and Symbol and to study the characteristics of Brand Marks of brands with international dimension, namely their evolution over time and how they resist fashion phenomena. The study allowed us to contribute to the knowledge about the design of Brand Marks in the design-symbol-perception relation and to identify general principles for their design.

For future developments, it is considered relevant the development of a digital platform, in website format, that presents, classifies, analyzes and compares several Brand Marks. This website is intended to be a form of visual education and a support to clarify and explain concepts and principles specific to Brand Marks design.

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