Communication Efficiency and Inclusiveness in the Corporate Visual Identity

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INTRODUCTION

Much of the literature devoted to Design sees Man as the centre of all design activities. From this perspective, Design starts to meet a human need, contributing to the improvement of life quality in an ecological and sustainable way, while conciliating with commercial or market issues. However, the history of communication Design and other visual arts is marked by stylistic variations from which images and Brands representing corporations cannot be dissociated.

As happens in other areas, communication Design can have a contribution to users' daily lives. The graphic designer should shape messages that belong to others to communicate them to specific audiences.

Being based on the consulted authors is presented a theoretical body comprising the draft Corporate Visual Identity as the consequence of a purpose and a pursuit of communication effectiveness. The literature review is focused on the design of the Corporate Visual Identity signs, where, identified, the main arguments of drawing - which
contribute to the effectiveness of Visual Identity communication and Brand marks drawing - get special relevance as a way of making complex information more accessible, understandable, and easy to memorize.

Visual Identity is presented as an artificial interface to mediate communication and interaction between two groups of people: those within the company and all stakeholders.

Graphic signs drawing process is discussed in view of their need to ensure the identification, differentiation, and articulation between the denotative and connotative meaning, according to human perception and understanding. It analyses several ways of creating semantic emphasis to enhance the sense of the message, influencing the brand perceptions. These associations also influence the memorization, facilitate the recognition, and contribute to a significant visual experience.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CORPORATE VISUAL IDENTITY

It's a common error to mistake concepts such as Identity and Corporate Image. For a matter of rigor, in this case, we understand that Corporate Identity is a set of intangible attributes assumed as their own, by the organization, which constitute the "discourse of identity", and develops within organizations, as with individuals. It is the information used in the visual messages.

Corporate Identity results from the corporate culture, which, according to Tajada (2008), is the dominant set of beliefs and values of the organization, corporate philosophy, standards, and characteristics of the working group's habits, traditions, and behaviours. But to Villafañe (1993), the definition of corporate culture is more evident; the author believes that it is the process of social construction of self-identity - that is, the appropriation of meaning (or new meanings). For the author, the identity comes from the history of the company, the business plan, and corporate culture.

The concept of corporate culture can be subdivided into the realistic, idealistic, and ambitious plans, which are related to the mission and conditions of identity and is a natural consequence from acting and communication between groups of people over time in a context work (Tajada, 2008).
In short, the Corporate Identity results from a set of not necessarily similar visions, in which each social subject is aware of what it is, a notion of how it intends to be seen. It is an ideological view that results from what the organization wants (on a real level), which are its immediate and/or projectual perspectives (Chaves, 1988). Constituting itself as a way to think and act in a group, the corporate culture contributes to the formation of identity - that is, "... to the organization or parts of it have the sense of being as a consistent and specific being, that assumes his history and place in society," (Kapferer, 1991, pp.30-31).

Regarding the Corporate Image/Branding Image, it is the result of different mental perceptions from Stakeholders, about a specific reality, or the result of the brand communications, the level of satisfaction to what is offered, fulfillment of expectations, and experiences of different audiences.

The corporate image relates to an analysis by the audiences, the result of all the data obtained and concerning the organization (which can cause different interpretations or images).

As seen, the perception of Corporate Visual Identity is the result of a syntaxis, a set of connotations seen in one or more moments and gathered as one in the mind of one or a group of persons in such a way and with little awareness that contributes to the corporate image.

The vast majority of authors (e.g. Chaves 1988 and Costa 2001) who have written on this subject believe that the mere existence of a company is enough to create its corporate image, but the real problem resides in how to obtain the desirable one. From this perspective, when a company exists, it becomes publicly evaluated. The same authors emphasize the importance of a program to obtain the desired corporate image, which is the host of designer decisions during the design of the Corporate Visual Identity system, eventually subdivided (adapted in content and codes) in different ways to communicate to different audiences.

In this sense, the corporate identity is a set of attributes assumed as their own by the organization, which constitutes the "identity discourse". It is developed inside the organization, as with an individual. Corporate Identity is a complex picture, once a set of visions is not necessarily similar. Each social subject has a notion of what it is, and
the way it pretends to be seen.

The Corporate Image is the ultimate goal of the Communication Design project, but does not refer to design or to graphic images, but before to the mental image that the audience made from a company or organization (Costa 2004).

The designer's work affects the strategic choices and, particularly, the need to define, plan, and materialize the corporate identity through signs (only visual elements) in what is called by Corporate Visual Identity. Referring to this principle, Zimmermann (1993, p.11) understands that, "through the symbol or logotype, colors, typography: or the connection between a multiplicity of visual relationships among all these basic elements of Visual Identity, a company publicly shows its image and, simultaneously, his being."

We understand that the system of Visual Identity is the combination and relationship of the various signs with different natures and individual meanings to form a unique semantic meaning (Costa, 2004). Heskett (2005, p.145) explains, "A system can be viewed as a set of interrelated, interacting, or interdependent elements forming, which can be considered as forming a collective entity."

The various signs of identity implicitly or explicitly carry the same brand sense, then by recognition, recall, and association allow you to create one global meaning. The identity system aims to obtain the pretended Corporate Image, in result from an effect in a chain of causes that occurred in the social imaginary (Costa, 2009).

It is important to note that not all aspects of the identity system are visual, such as: sound environments or the pronunciation of the brand name; the olfactory mark; the design and quality of products and services; Interior Design; uniforms; Internal Communication; Communication and External Relations; Web and management 2.0. Thereby, the Corporate Visual Identity role includes all messages organized in a system according to a program designed to create a distinctive style and is capable of generating a corporate image that complies with the corporate identity (Costa, 2004).
This transformation of the Corporate Identity into Corporate Image seems to have to overcome various obstacles to work. The program itself, or desire previously established, from which results the strategy to guide the Corporate Visual Identity, complies both securities or corporate interests as well as market demands: "The company should aspire to conquer the leadership in the broadcast message but should not be forgotten the demand from the public neither the response of recipients corporate message." (Sanchis, 2005, p.23.) On the other hand, in the case of Corporate Visual Identity, a receiver gets messages in different times and contexts, which makes the decoding depend first on its ability to interconnect properly the meanings, and secondly on the communicative quality of the developed identity system.

As Munari (1979) understands, once all receivers recreate the received messages, there is always a difference between the Communication of the Corporate Visual Identity and the Corporate Image, i.e., between the message sent and its processing or its integration by the receiver. If this re-coding of received messages are combined with some inertia in the system of Corporate Visual Identity, it's possible to have an imbalance instead of the intended Corporate Image (Chaves, 1988).

Although the description seems to be a bit short, Llorens (1999) says that the programs of Corporate Visual Identity are developed in two main stages: strategic and creative. In the strategic phase, values are identified as well as the identity of the company, continuing with the delimitation of the strategic axes to follow. La fase creativa consiste en codificar los valores corporativos visualmente y según el objetivo o propósitos estratégicos (actividad desde la cual salen diversos objetos gráficos que van a (re)presentar la empresa gráficamente y públicamente).

In the course of his work, the communication designer is faced with different needs and requests from the company. The designer is presented as the mediator that optimizes and adds value, in a humanization process that tries to ensure that the Corporate Visual Identity fits the corporate program, and to the cultural profile of the audience, this is, “The designer encodes visual messages by translating the needs of the sender into images and content that connect with the receiver.” (Hembree, 2011, p.14.)

In this regard, says Fernández Iñurrutegui (2007), the communication designer is to interpret and encode corporate
message using graphic signs culturally common to the issuer (company) and receiver (audience).

Following the premises of Communication Design, the designer is the interface optimizer, the mediator between the corporate messages from the company to the audience. The designer concerns about the Corporate Visual Identity project are selecting and manipulating the inter-subjective codes required for the proper decoding in a given context. The Corporate Visual Identity project refers to a system of integrated graphic signs that gain a new semantic meaning when drawn together. From the Design's perspective, the expression of Signs of Corporate Identity determines the graphic-semantic positioning of the brand, according to notions of value (Raposo, 2014a).

Designing a brand is not a task to chance. Brands have to ensure the distinction, differentiation, and recognition. As stated by Zimmermann (1998, p.84), opposing to being fashionable, which is to share the same language with a group, "to have style it is to be unique, to be different". In the scope of Corporate Visual Identity, the concept of style refers to "a quality or a characteristic way of expressing itself," (Schmitt & Simonson, 1998, p.111), and with this way of becoming public it could use all the expressions of communication design.

In this sense, before starting the project IVC, which is defined as desirable corporate image, a process referred to variously as: Brand Picture or Brand Personality.

Aaker (1997) proposed the "Dimensions of Brand Personality" as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" caused by direct or indirect contact between the audience and the brand (Plummer, 1985, quoted by Aaker, 1997).

Kapferer (2012) considers that the definition of brand personality by Aaker (1997) is too broad to include any intangible attribute, as intellectual abilities, gender, and social class, and maintains the model of "Brand Identity Prism (1992)". which is based on knowledge of psychology, as well as on the design project.

In its proposal, Kapferer (2012) presents six dimensions that shape the personality and brand identity: 1 - Physical (objective characteristics, symbols, and attributes); 2 - Personality (subjective characteristics, character, and attitude); 3 - Culture (set of values that define the context in which the brand grows); 4 - Relation (beliefs and
associations, and how they will interconnect with the public); 5 - Reflection of the public (creating value through stereotypes and aspirations of the public); and 6 - Self-image (the way the public sees himself and how this relates to the brand perception).

According to Azoulay & Kapferer (2003), the brand personality is a concept that consists in assigning a set of human characteristics to the brand, such as values, age, emotions, behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs. The brand personality fosters lasting relationships between the issuer and the audience, because it relies on the communication of identity on a symbolic level recognizable by the public, which seeks to identify objects with archetype, related with styles of life (Martins, 1999).

According to Zimmermann (1998, p.84) in opposition to be trendy, what's about sharing a group language, to be similar to others, "having a style is to be unique, being different." In the Visual Identity program, "when it comes to style, we speak of a quality or a characteristic way, a specific way of expressing herself," (Schmitt and Simonson, 1998, p.111), and by this way to create a public expression that should be coherent with the corporate behavior in general.

Consequently, as noted, the designer deals with the task of optimizing a message that does not belong to him and to seek its maximum efficiency. That is why the personal style and trends can interfere with the semantic efficiency of communication design objects, specifically when they are reduced to these concepts.

For the same reasons, Davis (2005) refers that defining the brand style is an important decision that should capture the spirit of Corporate Identity, Values, and Personality. Consider that style is as the clothes of the company, it is used depending on the context in which it will be used, and depending on the personality of anybody who wears it. This idea is reinforced by Schmitt and Simonson (1998, p.111-112) for whom "styles perform several and important functions for the companies. They contribute to build the visibility and brand reputation; intellectual and emotional associations; distinguish products and services among others; setting relations of affinity; help distinguish varieties within product lines, adjust the marketing mix to different target markets".
Over the years have emerged a series of studies that aim to understand how the creation of meaning works in visual communication, which has often led to the resource to semiology, or to semiotics. Chaves (2003, p.123) presents a possible explanation, considering that “harassed by the self phobia to the randomness, when the functional or technological factors will be absent, they will seek for explanations in other fields, such as, for example, the semantic. They will cling to the semiological science as a lifesaver to come as sort of sign technology”.

We know that from the existing signs, graphic design uses symbols symbolically, that are established and that vary with the culture and context of use. Resnick (2003, p.123) considers that “symbolism is the term used to describe the art or practice using symbols. A symbol is a thing standing for or representing something else, especially a material thing taken to represent an immaterial or abstract concept”.

Although it is common to find studies that do it, Costa (2008a) argues that semiotics is insufficient to explain the processes of Graphic Design, once it is a branch of study from the linguistics, based in orality and in the written language and not on the images – “The language of images does not speak a purely intuitive lexicon. However, photography is a language without code.” Costa (2008a, p.70) supports its assertion explaining that on images there is an absence of a limited repertoire of signs known prior by sender and recipient, able to combine among them in the discourse to create meaning. The opposite happens with the text, whose repertoires are the letters, the alphabet, words, and the grammatical rules. Images do not have such a limited repertoire of signs and are based on the representation or display of scenes or objects that constitute the structure of his speech instantaneous and overall. (Costa, 2008a).

The use of semiotics to understand the functioning of the communication design should be limited to the common aspects between the written and the visual language, such as syntactic (the graphic shape of the sign, its denotation within a system or code), the semantic (symbolic value, the sign expressiveness and connotation), and the pragmatic (legibility, contrast, differentiation, flexibility in use, perception and comprehension of the sign in a given context). In the communication process, there is necessarily more than one person, at least the transmitter (which induces) and the receiver (which is induced and deduces). Although in both cases the deduction is conditioned by culture, it does not induce (Costa, 2008a).
This view is shared by Frascara (2008), who says that semiotics sits on an inflexible logic to the human and cognitive behavior; for example, when it comes to a specific audience, or like rhetoric, because only affects in the exposure of meanings, it lacks the data that we can find in sociology, psychology, or marketing: “Rhetoric and semiotics help, but are insufficient when it comes to building real and specific answers to real and specific audiences, relating to real and specific messages dealing with real and specific problems,” (Frascara, 2008, p.95). We know that everything has meaning and that not everything that conveys meaning communicates, always that it lacks the sense that allows decoding (Costa 2011.p.52).

Following the same line of thought, Acaso (2006, p.27) writes that the visual language "in particular has little to do with the rest of the languages we know, since both the writing and the verbal are subject to specific rules, fully structured and defined. The visual language (...) is the oldest semistructured communication system we know... the one that has the most universal character. For the author, the feature that more distinguishes the visual language from others is its resemblance to reality, and the many ways of representing itself.

According to Dondis (1976, p.25), there is a basic and common perceptual visual system to all human beings, who suffer variations, for example, by culture. The author believes that it will never be possible to establish a precise system to the visual language as that one existing in the written language; it would be a necessary storage structure for encoding and decoding, a structure with "a logic that visual literacy is unable to reach". That is, the visual language does not have a signs repertoire or a universal and unique code. The visual language is composed of basic elements such as color, shape, letters, graphisms, proportions, textures, tones, images, and rhythms, each one with its own meaning and possibility to change or to be added to the other graphic signs to form a tone of voice or connotation (Bonnici, 2000, p.76).

Research on the visual language, grounded in semiotics, can be dangerous because, as says Cloutier (1975, p.103), "we must avoid extrapolating too systematic and the structural linguistic analysis can’t be fully applied to the study of languages without language, those who do not have a precise code". But, Smith, Moriarty, Barbatsis and Kenney (2005, p.xiii) go further and state that “in visual communication, however, there is no unifying theory, nor should
there be, because the area represents the intersection of thought from many diverse traditions”.

The different models of communication developed by various authors refer to a need to share signs allowing a common code, but this is rarely comprehensive, i.e., “…this ideal situation, of complete congruence between the stock of signs on a coincidences field only exists on artificial languages,” (Frascara, 2008, p.96). By this way is understood that in the full role of signs, from sender and receiver, the communication process is only possible by a number of more or less shared signs, more or less understood by the same way (intersubjective signs to transmitter and receiver). These considerations are not incompatible with the existence of an effective Communication Design method, they just show the complexity of the process and the importance of the designer as author, as a mediator, or as an agent in a society that communicates.

Frascara (2008, p.27) says that "design is an intellectual, cultural and social activity: the technological aspect belongs to a dependent hierarchy" (the author refers to the production and distribution). The same direction is pointed by Providência (2003, p.197-198), clarifying that "we understand that in design - drawing an artifact for cultural interaction - the drawing is one of the stages in the design process, the result of a desire that precedes his purpose, which is revealed as a technical thing but in its genesis, is poetic. (...) The author, moved by the desire (feeling of absence, desiderium) intentionally builds a substitute (purpose) that fills the empty space of that desire. The desire creates the design, serving a finality (...) the author, to respond to the order (purpose) may assign a metaphor value, shaping his poetry."

That is why the designer must not assume his personal style in his work, since the code belongs to the sender and to the receiver – "Design must solve a problem and disappear in its solution, should not be the protagonist of the object. An object-design is a way to an end, because it has excessive details. And design, as Papanek says, should never be an end in itself," (quoted by Zimmermann, 2003, p.70). Munari (2001, p.49-53) makes it very clear, referring that "... unlike the artist and stylist, the designer does not have a personal style to which can appeal to formally resolve his problems. What the true designer produces doesn't have aesthetic features allowing to characterize him."
To Kroehl (1997, p.18), communication involves encoding in which a complex reality is simplified and transformed into messages appropriated to the context and culture, and again enlarged by the decoding process. This process to transform complex data into common information is the communication goal, and Graphic Design is the first way to grant its efficiency, being a true Cultural Interface.

**BRAND MARKS - THE SUMMIT OF CORPORATE VISUAL IDENTITY**

Often, the concepts of brand and mark are misunderstood. Throughout human history, the brand has received different purposes and its definition was modified into a series of graphic and intangible meanings that are the synthesis of what is a certain reality. On the other hand, the brand refers just to a graphic sign used to evoke something. The mark is the sign itself, while the brand is what is made present by invocation.

It's also important to distinguish the brand from the product (the reality behind the brand which gives the semantic direction) and from the Brand Image, which is broader and includes corporate reputation and mental images in audience minds (Raposo, 2012).

Brands are concepts that are developed artificially to look like a natural phenomenon. The brand's success occurs when it effectively becomes a natural phenomenon; that is, when the audiences appropriate it in a consistent manner with the Corporate Identity and the strategic corporate goals. That is why brands are developed in accordance with extended audiences maps, seeking to correspond to expectations and desires compatible with its positioning. For this reason, the effectiveness of brand communication depends on its ability to become common and accessible to broad audiences in terms of age and culture, whether or not suffering from some degree of disability.

Depending on the desired name and positioning, the Brand Mark is developed to grant uniformity and distinction to all graphic demonstrations of the organization. The Brand Mark is the graphic sign used as a signature by the organization or brand to identify, distinguish, and relate the different media of visual communication. This graphic sign can be a logotype or a symbol, or even be both as a single element.

The Brand mark fulfills the function of invoking something, to differentiate and identify, functioning as the
signature that ensures the authorship or ownership. For this reason, after the name, the Brand Mark is the identity sign most used in visual communication, which is why it acts as a container of meanings. That is, beyond the denotative and connotative meanings assigned during its design, Brand Marks will get others, which are assigned by audiences depending on their personal experiences with the product, service, and communication. Thus, Brand Mark acts as a brand ambassador, the most obvious sign of the Corporate Visual Identity system, which it also integrates (Chaves and Belluccia, 2003).

Often it is considered that the brand is the only way to differentiate companies, products, or services with similar characteristics. In this regard, Beltrán (2014) states that such claims are a fallacy, because what happens is that the brand plays the role to distinguish features, which previously were not so evident. Regarding the Corporate Identity, Beltrán (2014) considers that it is possible to establish a hierarchy between what he calls primary realities (those that are more evident, distinctive, and specific, but less frequent) and the secondary, or tertiary, (which are less differentiated, less known, and more frequent), but they all have content that may be relevant or negative for the brand (particularly when they are auditory, audible, or visual).

Kapfer (1991, p.53) understands that the logo and the symbol "provide information about the personality and brand culture", and that its purpose is to ensure that the brand is recognizable through them.

The design of a program's Visual Identity is more than a cosmetic process. And for a similar reason, the designer should be aware that designing a new brand has different requirements than redesign. Change is possible, but it requires a more rigorous coordination during its publication process, and also a bigger effort in their resignification, because there is always resistance to change. In the case of design of a new sign, you must create the context and disseminate narrative using specific graphics and articulation (Gernsheimer, 2008).

When it comes to a design project, without a starting point, there may be problems in terms of Corporate Visual Identity. Immediately in the research phase, there may be lack of information about the Corporate Identity, the mission and functionality of the company, but also on its market and operational strategy. In some cases, the designer develops projects that do not correspond to the reality of company objectives; also occur some cases where
the designer-style overrides the Corporate Identity or is limited just to follow trends, or when the CEO imposes a graphic solution, yielding differentiation problems.

In terms of Redesign, there are several levels of change that go from a total rupture of the symbols and codes to the restyling or facelift, a formal amendment without changing the symbols. Cases of Redesign occur when the company has reputation problems and want a new repositioning; when the company's operations are expanded to other sectors or activities; when the Corporate Visual Identity is obsolete or incompatible with current culture; when the designer rushes to undervalue the work of others to replace it with its own; when a new CEO decides to show his leadership, forcing a change in visual identity.

The design is a profound change in terms of denotative and connotative meanings. In turn, the redesign focuses particularly on denotative meanings.

According to Costa (2011), on Visual Identity projects, designers and clients tend to value more the symbols than the logotypes. However, symbols and logotypes are just two different ways to solve the need of a graphic identity sign, and we have a large number of successful and reputed logotypes that can demonstrate their efficiency. In general, the symbol is evident and has a more arbitrary nature than the logotype. However, we forget that, in addition to its denotative value, the logotype is also connotative and its graphical expressiveness depends on the interest of the program (as we can see by comparing the logotype of Siemens with Coca-Cola).

Beltrán (2014, p.29) argues that the effectiveness of Corporate Visual Identity obeys to communication needs and the spread of the attributes of the reality in question, still essential that it "is not arbitrary, but associated with the representing reality or realities; and consequently all communications must be accurate and appropriate, in accordance with the objectives".

According to Rand (1985), the Corporate Visual Identity is the design of the solution to a communication problem, which is why the designer’s work is to seek simple solutions, subtle and attractive, to capture the eye’s attention and contain surprise elements. In this sense, the Brand Marks play a particularly important role as a global synthesis.
The Brand Graphic must be compatible, in semantic terms and graphics, with the Corporate Identity, which, in turn, corresponds to the Corporate Identity and the strategic objectives of the company, serving to enhance the qualities of a reality. In this sense, Beltrán (2014, p.30) states that visually nothing should be left to chance in Brand Mark, so "its appearance, its size, its color, its texture, its position must be subordinated to its function".

The effectiveness of the message is not guaranteed when the information arrives at the receiver; the correct decoding also depends on its strength to stand out, and the interest with which it is received and from his attributed value - the message is filtered. The filter is symbolic and cognitive; Neumeier (2006, p.34) believes that "the differentiation happens by the way the human cognitive system works. Our brain acts as a filter to protect us from a vast amount of irrelevant information that surrounds us daily". For the author, the visual cognition requires that human factors are considered (perceptual, visual, cultural or symbolic), but also others such as aesthetics, which help to create differentiation and interest. It is important to clarify that “aesthetics is not necessarily associated with enjoyment, but more correctly with experience, which is one of feeling” (Jamieson, 2007, p.92).

Designing a message and transmitting it properly requires that the designer knows the visual codes shared between issuer and receiver, and especially how to combine those signs, abling them to create interest and condition the behaviors. Wheeler (2003, p.20) says that “the design must be appropriate to the company, its target market, and the business sector in which it operates”. Also, Costa (1980, p.23) states, "The question is therefore to establishing an optimal coordination and coherence among all manifestations of the company, which has certainly an effect on the reputation of the business and its quality, i.e. its image."

In the context of brand design, drawing is not an end in itself, it is how to shape the message and the communication program. And "communication begins with the perception. Every perception is an act of finding meaning (...)" (Frascara, 2006, p.69-70). This quest for meaning leads to a general idea, a set of symbols or attributes mentally assigned to the entity, the Corporate Image (Tajada, 2008).

According to Villafane (1999, p.68), "a visual identity program is a series of core elements regulated by a combinatorial code that sets the program itself". The elements of this repertoire are the Brand Marks (symbol, logo,
monogram, etc.) and the identity communication media system, i.e., the name, colors, graphisms, corporate typography, the layout, and its semantic articulation to create a specific style that will be applied to numerous types of objects (Chaves and Belluccia, 2003 and Wheeler, 2003).

That's why Providência (2003, p.201) refers that "designers are interpreters of the world; and its artifacts are suprafunctional objects, that unlike engineering objects, they often present an ulterior motive or an "artistic" value; but, on the other hand, and in these cases antagonistic to art, they don't abdicate to their integration into the mundanity of everyday and domestic things".

Villafañe (1999) points out that during the design of a Visual Identity program, the designer must ensure that it complies with four principles:

1 – The need for the Visual Identity to be a synthesis of Corporate Identity, projected globally according to their reality and emphasizing the positive attributes, but without lying;

2 – That the Visual Identity highlights the strengths of the project or the business strategy;

3 – The semantic consistency between the behavior and corporate culture with the Visual Identity and the direction of the communication;

4 – The integration of the plan of Visual Identity in the overall strategy of the company and financial plan according to the proposed Corporate Image.

The graphical representation of one concept or object can assume different styles or tones (rigorous, realistic, simple, deviant, expressive, synthetic, etc.) and with them determine the semantic content. In this case, the graphic expression affects the semantic meaning. So, a coherent graphic style contributes to position the sign or can be used to give emphasis to specific corporate values and most important personality characteristics (Chaves e Belluccia, 2003).

To adapt to different audiences, it is possible that the Corporate Visual Identity take styles/themes/tone of voice, which are customized characteristically to communicate the Corporate Identity according to a specific audiences' culture or requirement. This is the kind of tone or visual rhetoric adopted for corporate communication and Corporate Visual Identity system.
Visual Identity styles can be organized into two opposing main ranges: the informality (visual dynamism, formal and chromatic contrasts, irregularities, open or unfinished effects, lush or trendy), or structural (proportioned, compactness, pregnante, regular, symmetrical, balanced, simple, contrasts, closed, fewer colored and enduring). Yet there are a variety of possibilities and style intersections which can be used (Villafane, 1999).

The notion of corporate credibility works as with people; that is, as consumers we prefer to interact with brands that seem the most trusted, which we regard as more professional, more competent and understood in the subject – “The logo should serve as the credible voice of the company’s graphics program. But, once again, just as in the case of a person, the logo must be a believable representation of the business it symbolizes to be effective,” (Haig and Harper, 1997, p.26).

Agreeing with the same idea, Doyle and Bottomley (2006, p.115) hold opinions stating that “when people encounter a new brand, they necessarily rely heavily on what the brand is trying to signal about itself. One way a brand can do this is through the lettering it adopts”.

The topic or the tone is the kind of narrative, which is selected to provide a specific Visual Identity style. According to Schmitt and Simonson (1998, p.153), the topic or tone of voice is a "mental anchor point and, by specific reference," used to express characteristics of a company or brand to the public or to a segment of the audience of that corporation.

Writes Frascara (2006, p.23-31), "design is to coordinate a long list of human and technical factors, the invisible to visible, and to communicate” (...) "the designer essentially designs an event, an act in which the public interacts with the design and communication occurs. The purpose of the visual communication designer, then, is the design of communicational situations.” In Communication Design, the messages are set (encoded) in accordance to a program of an emitter in order to be easily and correctly received (decoded) by the recipient, persuading his actions without harm to him.
We may conclude that the Visual Identity Design acts as one of the major means of materialization and coding of the corporate values. The designer has the task of interpreting and meet corporate personality to give it a strategic direction through a global graphic language. To do this, the designer must know well each corporation to adjust the program to communication needs, because, as explained by Chaves and Belluccia (2003, p.48), although each organization is unique, "Few organizations can reduce their communication to a single language: different themes and different audiences require dividing the corporate discourse in several rhetorics."

**Brand Marks as Cultural Interfaces**

Azoulay & Kapferer (2003) states that the brand personality is a concept that consists in assigning a set of human characteristics to the brand, such as values, age, emotions, behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs. The brand personality fosters lasting relationships between the issuer and the audience because it relies on the communication of identity on a symbolic level recognizable by the public, which seeks to identify objects with archetypal, related with styles of life. To be really effective, all these complex and intangible dimensions need to become visible.

A communication system comprises selecting the graphic signs that are more appropriate and possible to coordinate to express certain global meaning. In these communication processes there is an hierarchy order in which the graphic signs cumplir a specific identification and differentiation functions, like the Brand Marks and colors, whereas the secondary ones are complementary and to reinforce, clarify, or support the style, such as graphisms, texts, formats, or textures (Rand, 1993, Chaves and Belluccia, 2003).

Smith, Moriarty, Barbatsis, and Kenney (2005, p.48) argued, “The eyes are, in fact, extensions of the brain into the environment. The last and most sophisticated of our senses to evolve, our eyes send more data more quickly and efficiently through the nervous system than any other sense.” In this way, the eye is responsible for capturing the data to be perceived; that is, “perception, the process by which we derive meaning through experience, is a dynamic, interactive system that utilizes built-in genetic programming to synthetize sensory input, memory, and individual needs.”

Therefore, and assuming he knows the current and common culture in a given context and time, the designer can
consciously direct the semantic meaning of graphic signs to awake certain concepts compatible with the object and be seen as strategic in a specific market.

In terms of drawing, the Brand Marks share many perceptive requirements with pictograms, but they are always a convention result, are more emotional, and have a persuasive character.

In general we can consider that the Brand Marks require readability and contrast, i.e., reading and readability of the name and the symbol (re)presented. But a Brand Mark also requires odd aesthetic qualities, whereas here the aesthetic function is to create differentiation, recognition, identity, and memorability (Heskett, 2005). Even when Brand Marks are logotypes, they are words designed to be read and, above, to be viewed.

Perceived by the eye, the Brand Marks contain isolated meanings, which are decoded and expanded, when associated with other related graphics signs. The organizations become represented, identified, or recognizable by differentiated visual styles charged with meaning.

Parramón (1991) said that Brand Marks must be legible, memorable, graphically unique (original and different from all the others), and expressively related to the concept it represents. As discussed, the designer should clarify the concept of Visual Identity through a graphic style, shapes, or colors, which is possible because "human being thinks visually. The images act directly on the perception of the brain, impressing first for be analyzed later, the opposite of what happens with the words" (Strunck, 2007, p.52).

The way we memorize graphic signs is not always conscious, but apparently they settle in the audience's mind and they can be used for design purposes. Rögener, Jan Pool, and Packhäuser (1995, p.14) say, “The subconscious reacts in a large variety of ways to even the most minimal stimuli. Sensory impressions are connected to symbols – that is to say, coded – and stored in the subconscious as experience. Symbols can activate any experiences at any given time and bring them forward to the conscious level.”

Rand (1985, p.7) says that “because graphic design, in the end, deals with the spectator, and because it is the goal of the designer to be persuasive or at least informative, it follows that the designer’s problems are twofold: to anticipate
the spectator’s reaction and to meet his own aesthetic needs. (...) It is in symbolic, visual terms that the designer ultimately realizes his perceptions and experiences; and it’s in a world of symbols that man lives. The symbol is thus the common language between artista and spectator”.

From a theoretical point of view, any image, object, or concept may be the starting point for designing a Brand Mark, but, in practice, their semantics efficacy depends on a program and on a certain design in a cultural context and use. To this purpose, Rand (1985, p.48) states that “visual Statements such as illustrations which do not involve aesthetic judgements and which are merely literal descriptions of reality can be neither intellectually stimulating nor visually distinctive. But the same token, the indiscriminate use of typefaces, geometric patterns, and abstract shapes (hand or computer generated) is self-defeating when they function merely as vehicle for self-expression”; the Brand Mark must be designed to be distinctive in an environment of use.

The formal synthesis is desirable for a Brand Mark, once it contributes, so that they contain only the necessary data to make it recognizable, contrasting, legible, artificial, individual, and memorable, once the eye prefers simplicity. Various laws of Gestalt Theory teaches as the eye pursues formal simplicity (Costa, 2011).

Associating these premises, the Brand Mark's graphical synthesis contributes to the differentiation, memory, and fascination, especially when the design includes the exaggeration of attributes considered as most relevant and unique to materialize the Visual Identity program (Ramachandran and Hirstein, 1999 y Strunck, 2007).

Finally, by excluding details, the drawing provided to Brand Marks is a new formal synthesis allowing them to be more flexible into a variety of media and in different sizes (Strunck, 2007).

The signs of identity are based on real objects or concepts, but some of their features are omitted, while others are exaggerated to express graphically and connote specific meanings. The Brand Marks design process can ensure the shape synthesis by accentuation or flatness of characteristics that best promote the recognition of object or concept. However, in the last few years, there have been many identity projects using three-dimensional Brand Marks or iconographic, or descriptive and realistic. Healey (2012, p.12) states that it was the way designers found to offer something new to its customers or to follow trends, and he writes that “the logo also needs to be updated with the
expectations of an increasingly sophisticated audience”.

On the other hand, Rand (1985) believes that there are many complex symbols and images, or even objects, that have been transformed into symbols of high efficiency, as a result of its use in a systematic, coherent, and articulated way. Still, Brand Marks require simplicity that can be demonstrated in a simple blur test where its formal structure and key profile should resist. Besides, “a trademark, which is subjected to an infinite number of uses, abuses, and variations, whether for competitive purposes or for reasons of “self-expression”, cannot survive unless it is designed with utmost simplicity and restraint - keeping in mind that seldom is a trademark favored with more than a glance. Simplicity implies not only an aesthetic ideal, but a meaningful idea, either of content, or form, that can be easily recalled” (Rand, 1985, p.34).

The need to ensure that the Brand Mark has a recognizable structure and a profile compatible with a specific meaning is located in the mental repertoire of the receiver. According to Joly (2008, p.20), “The mental image is distinguished from mental scheme, which combines enough and necessary visual traits to recognize a drawing or a necessary visual form. This is a perceptual object model, from a formal structure that we have internalized and associate with an object, which can be evoked by some minimum visual features.” Is to say that mental images are a more complex and intersubjective phenomena, because they are a specific form of internal representation, with an associative cognitive, prolonged when compared with other similar perception forms. Carrières and Codina (1992, p. 52) explained that “the mental image is obtained according to an amodal perceptual process. The term 'amodal' has been established following several studies made on con-genitally blind people, who proved that a mental image is not uniquely based on visual perception”.

From the perspective of psychology, the theory of geons (geometric ions) presented by Irving Biederman (1987), and according to which there are at least thirty six geometric components made up with three-dimensional shapes (such as cylinders, cones, pyramids, etc..) stored in our mind as structural descriptions. I.e., that with these forms all objects can be perceptually decomposed, identifying the most shared structures between the object and geometric figures.
In this sense, Rand (1993, p.58) highlights that drawing a Brand Mark with a complex shape or trying to express what the company does with an illustration “will only make identification more difficult and the 'message' more obscure. A logo, primarily, says who, not what, and that is its function. Its effectiveness depends on distinctiveness, visibility, adaptability, memorability, universality, and timeliness”. So, the subject matter in the symbolic origin of the Brand Mark depends on the brand personality, the corporate program, on the audience culture, on the competitors and market rules, the media opinion, and in the society interests.

However, Brand Marks “effectively distill a great deal into a concise symbol that is ideally attractive, cohesive, conceptual, distinctive, enduring, legible, memorable, relevant, sophisticated, and versatile: the ten characteristics of a great logo”, argues Gernsheimer (2008, p.19). In this way Brand Marks must have fascination power created by the use of surprising features; a clear visual hierarchy on its components and a semantic reinforcement; the different elements must form a structured group, the symmetry and the use of stylistic features related to the subject, contributing to build attractiveness; nevertheless, meeting the cultural codes of an era and time is recommendable and shouldn't follow trends or be ephemeral; readability, comprehension, and contrast positively help in the process of memorization; the sign must be flexible and have a clear structure to ensure the recognition, regardless its size or medium in which it's been used (Gernsheimer, 2008 and Hardy, 2011).

Besides the shape, color also plays an important role in the recognition process, and particularly to create secondary meanings and for Brand Mark memorization. According to Wheeler (2003), the sequence of cognitions starts by acknowledging the shape, and after comes the color meanings and secondary associations, and then only after the content decoding. This reveals the color importance to Corporate Visual Identity.

The subject of color is vast and complex. As a matter of rigor we will focus on aspects concerning the Corporate Visual Identity. As Mollerup (1987) says, the color may even be part of the verbal identity (name) like "Yellow Cab Corporation" or "Yellow Pages". Or, in this case, although not present in graphical form, color is invoked by the word.

The selection of a color for an Identity project may be related to the corporate culture, with a symbolic reality,
psychology, economics, or technical limitations, to the need to distinguish themselves from competitors or with the intention to join an existing code in an activity sector, also with aesthetic reasons from designers or their customers, fashions or epochs, among others (Wheeler, 2003).

Moreira da Silva (2013, p.80) studied the color as inclusiveness factor and states that the selection of the color may occur "on a number of factors: for their emotional appeal, their implied meaning, their match to a certain printed brochure, or because the designer (or the client) likes a certain colour”.

Heller (2005) states that "there is no color without meaning", but stresses that its effect is determined by its context of use and perception. The approach of Fraser and Banks (2004) is consistent and added that the meaning of the color depends on the culture of the perceiver.

Color can be used to evoke emotions, associations, differentiate or increase the relationship between brand and subbrands – “While some colour is used to unify and identify, other colours may be used to clarify a brand architecture, through differentiation products or business lines,” (Wheeler, 2003, p.128).

In some sectors appears to be a relationship between the corporate color and the represented product or market where it operates, such are the brown for sausages or the green to pharmacies in Portugal. Through associations it's possible that a certain color helps to identify new attributes in a brand, for example, wealth, feminine or male, freshness, elegance, nature or technology, energy, and so on. The color in the Corporate Visual Identity is strongly connected with the cultural context and the market in which the corporation operates. O'Connor (2010) refers to the "Environmental color mapping” as the process by which you select and identify the characteristics of a color in a given context.

To ensure that the colors are properly perceived also for individuals with low vision, particularly for the elderly, Moreira da Silva (2013, p.164) considers the need of ensuring the contrast, the size and space for eye comfort, but also that “older individuals have a harder time distinguishing between colours in the cooler range – blues and greens particularly. Also, some individuals are colorblind and find it difficult to distinguish between red and green.
Therefore, colour is probably not appropriate as the sole differentiating feature between different elements – they should vary in others features as well. Varying the value of colours (the lightness or darkness) by at least two levels enable most people to differentiate between the colours”.

Good design should include a considered relationship between the shapes and colors based on a criteria and code that have to remain consistent in all the Corporate Visual Identity systems.

**Brand Marks denotative and connotative meaning**

The correct understanding of the Brand Mark depends on the semantic level resulting from an intersubjective redundancy between the denotative and connotative meaning.

Denotation refers to the meaning base and concrete, while the connotation corresponds to subjective, figurative, or symbolic meanings that work by association and are beyond the denotative meaning.

Blanchard (2003, p.36) states that "the connotation is an extension of the meaning by the receiver, by interpreting the context created by the sender, in accordance to its own culture, allowing him to perceive what has not been mentioned in words, through secondary associations”.

Referring to this principle is Mollerup (1997), when he argues that Brand Marks produce different types and meaning levels, induced by the graphic expression of the sign; that is, from the different levels of meaning that depend on the connotation, resulting from visual style. A metaphorical Brand Mark that reinforces graphically what it stands for has more meaning levels.

The connotation results from secondary associations created by the graphic symbol in a given culture or context or by the graphic expressiveness. In terms of graphic expression, we refer to the basic elements of any visual message: point, line, direction, tone, color, texture, scale and proportion, movement, space, reality, and appearance (Dondis (1976).

We know that graphic signs can take different levels of iconicity, depending on their formal relationship with reality between two extremes (ranging from hyperrealism to the schematic representation). The scale of iconicity by Morris
and Hamilton (1965) has had many developments promoted by various authors, which will not be included in this discussion. Costa (1990, adapted from his 1989 proposal) explains that the connotative value increases proportionally to the schematic level of the graphic signs, but also his need to be fixed by agreement. But there are many possible ways to draw a schematic sign. Therefore, just not the same object, but also the same structural shape can take different styles or graphic expressions and each one will tend to create distinct connotations. This is different levels of iconicity, from iconography through the geometric synthesis into abstraction, correspond to distinct secondary meanings.

Referring to the design of graphic signs, based on objects or concepts, as proposed by Resnick (2003, p.123), the meaning of the Brand Marks can be divided into different types of connotation, as analogies, metaphors or puns: “Analogy, the term for a description derived from a process of reasoning from a parallel or similar case, explaining what unlike things share in common.

Metaphor is a figure of speech in which one thing is compared to another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them.

A pun is the humorous use of a word or image to suggest alternative meaning, a play on words with more than one meaning.”

In a similar way, Villafane (1999, p.89-90) also established a set of denotative and connotative possibilities that Brand Marks can assume in function of their iconicity and expressiveness:

1 – Analogical association (creating a relationship, a description of a concept which becomes similar);
2 – Allegorical association (recognizable elements of reality combined in an original or unusual way);
3 – Logical association (follows a pattern of signs already in place);
4 – Emblematic association (the appropriation of external positive values);
5 – Symbolic association (adding emotional content);
6 – Conventional association (no attempts to highlight any particular attribute, is especially for identification).

In a similar way, Oejo (2000, p.170) also refers that Brand Marks can empower secondary associations, and
presents its categories:

1 – Analogy (the graphical representation resembles the object);
2 – Allegory (combination of recognizable elements);
3 – Logic (descriptive of the activity or business);
4 – Flagship (heraldry or other institutionalized meanings);
5 – Symbolic (use of ideological elements), convention (elements whose meaning is agreed);
6 – Contiguity (elements that are as a whole).

From the perspective of neuroscience, the authors Ramachandran and Hirstein (1999) present a subset of eight principles or laws underlying all the diverse manifestations of human artistic experience, that they divided in:

1 – Peak shift (fascinating power created by the shape);
2 – Isolation and Allocating Attention (emphasis or isolation of individual components to give them more visibility);
3 – Perceptual Grouping and Binding (ability to distinguish figure and ground perceptually grouped in an environment);
4 – Contrast (distance or approach between the shape and the environment);
5 – Perceptual problem solving (the shape contains an element of surprise, which is not entirely obvious or common, which affects its capacity to fascination);
6 – Abhorrence of unique vantage points (particular and unique point of view from which one looks and designs the sign);
7 – Metaphors (use of metaphors or graphic analogies);
8 – Symmetry (aesthetic notion of well-being and equilibrium).

Talking about the comprehension of graphic signs, Spiekermann and Ginger (2003, p.39) explain that all observers formulate an opinion or mental idea of the message based on the first look that lasts a split second. "In other words, even before you start reading, a general impression is created in the mind of the observer. Something similar to how we respond to the presence of a person before knowing it, and a first impression is hard to change later forms."

However, as we have noted, the language of symbols is only one possibility to create the identity system. It was also
noted that the creation of connotations begins with issues of expression and graphic style. “Unlike logos or brand names, typography may not trigger the usual suspicion or defence mechanism in the consumer. In other words, typography contains a subtle message or soft power, operating in the realm of the subconscious. (…) We see that the font not only carries information or rational meaning, but send other, subtler messages by way of font shape’s characteristics. This, clearly, is where identity surfaces – through the spirit of the letter,” (Spiekermann and Ginger, 2003, p.45). It should be noted that some graphic signs, such as typography, do have a great emotional weight that goes far beyond the merely denotative meaning, as its double nature of being a symbolic and graphic sign (Montesinos y Hurtuna, 2004).

**CONCLUSIONS**

Following the premises of Graphic Design, the designer is the indirect mediator of the corporate message. The designer concerns about the Corporate Visual Identity project, selecting and manipulating the intersubjective codes required for the proper decoding in a given context.

The Visual Identity project refers to a system of integrated Brand marks that gain a new semantic meaning when drawn to express certain global meaning.

From Design’s perspective, Brand Marks are identity signs that influence the embodiment of the graphic-semantic positioning in the Visual Identity project, but there is no data on the graphic capabilities of the letter in influencing the definition of Corporate Image.

When the designer develops its projects in disregard of corporate reality or its intention focuses on his personal style, rather than design, he makes styling. It's a deformation of the semantic meaning of Corporate Visual Identity and interference in its effectiveness, since it forgets the corporate image to be obtained.

As observed, Brand Marks efficiency depends on its adjustments to human factors to promote the correct understanding, such as cultural codes and perception requirements.

From different perspectives and fields of knowledge, we observed how authors consider that the efficiency of Brand
Marks to be recognisable relies on its need to have a well-defined structure and profile compatible with a specific mental scheme.

On the other hand, that the graphic expression or style given to this same Brand Mark can increase the number of secondary associations in result of the comparison with mental images.

The different possibilities to draw connotations are approaches to establish connections between sender and receiver, creating the audience's interest by giving them something more fascinating and unreal. To do this, designers must consider the different levels on the scale of iconicity as well as the better graphic style.

Visual Identity is the leading factor during the formation of the corporate image, i.e., the set of perceptions and mental images created by the public for positioning a company compared to others.

The complexity of the visual language allows the designer to develop a vast number of meanings to be used in different cultural and market contexts. But when there is a program to accomplish, it is fundamental to seek for the appropriate signs, and to coordinate them in accordance to corporate purpose and human factors of the audience. So, it isn’t possible to use graphic sign randomly.

The meaning of signs is mutable because meanings belong to people, not the graphic shapes. But graphisms express certain types of denotations and connotations able to articulate the mental images of that which live in individuals. The Corporate Image results from this mediated social process in which Corporate Identity is the message content, i.e. of the Visual Identity.

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