

## Graphics

### Synopsis

This module engages with visuals that have a graphic quality to them. These could be imagery created by printmaking and photography; these could be visual representation of information and data; or these could be logos and brand identities.

### Lectures

- 4.1 Graphic Imagery
- 4.2 Visual Representation of Information and Data
- 4.3 Logos and Brand Identities



Fig 4.3.00

### 4.3 Logos and Brand Identities

Logos as carriers of identity and values of organizations, institutions, companies and individuals serve as visual symbols of communication. Pastoral communities branded their cattle and livestock to help in identification and we may trace the logo-making activity all the way back to such times. As occupations

diversified and competition between groups intensified, communicating special abilities and strengths became an important concern for those who regarded themselves as special in some sense.



Fig. 4.3.01

The Indian Institutes of Technology have built a strong brand-image that is associated with the values of a rigorous academic programme. It is important to bear in mind that a successful brand is often the outcome of concerted efforts over a period of time. Clarity of values that are sought by a start-up are important, and should be reflected in the graphics and logo. The logo of IIT Bombay was designed much before the IIT's became a brand. The toothed gear points to the IIT's being technical institutions; the lotus and the book symbolize the quest for perfection and knowledge. The 'tag-line' speaks of the motto of the institution, in Sanskrit, which means that 'Knowledge is the Supreme Goal'.

Before we look at some aspects of brands and brand building, it would be in order to take note of an alternate view on branding. This view suggests that the obsessive inclination to brand is possibly an outcome of an age that has crossed over to regard living as an act of struggle and survival. While there is much visible evidence of strife and stress in contemporary living, it might be worth reflecting on the developments that led to the current state of the world. The birth of individuality coincides roughly with the European Renaissance in the arts and sciences. The subsequent age of industrialization and colonization led us to the global culture of our times when global brands jostle for attention even as local ones mimic them. This is an age that appropriates even the alternate and makes that into a brand. One may draw some wisdom from mystics and poets who suggest that the lust for power emerges from a deep seated insecurity and worshippers of brand would do well to pause occasionally and ponder over their certainties and learn to be a little more at ease with their uncertainties.



Fig. 4.3.02

Some well known brands. Can you decode the brand values from the graphics used to communicate them? Do a study of each of these brands to understand how these were developed.

### Brand elements

Brands have different elements associated with them. These typically include:

Logo: The visual that suggests the brand.

Brand Name: For the company, product, or service.

Theme-line: the phrase that sums up the brand values.

Colours: The colours used for the brand.

Other qualities such as signature tune associated with the advertising jingle, taste or flavor of some product can be linked to the brand.



Fig. 4.3.03  
Logos designed by Saul Bass.

### Approaches to brand names

Given below are some approaches adopted while choosing a brand name.

Owner's name: Carl and Zeiss

Memorable: Apple

Initials: L&T

Descriptive: Mad Over Donuts

Foreign word: Fuji

Local word: Scotch

### Visual brand identity

Visual brand identity manuals provide detailed specifications for the use of various brand elements. They specify the typeface, size, colour, spacing, material, and also provide contextual usage guidelines.

If the brand name has to appear on the uniform of workshop staff, what should be the manner in which it appears and its position? If a logo has to be painted on a delivery truck, what should be its size and position on the body of the truck? If the brand is being advertized on television how should it be integrated into the advertisement?

A brand's visual identity is the common thread that runs through the different media in which the brand is displayed. In order to be effective, visual brand identity, has to adhere to usage that is consistent in terms of fonts, colors, and graphic elements. Graphic elements typically include a logo that is often designed with geometric forms that have a certain simplicity and visual appeal.

### The Branding of Companies, Individuals and Nations

The concept of branding has deep-rooted psychological origins. It is not just companies that seek to build a certain brand image. Individuals and even nations, either consciously or sub-consciously seek to see themselves and project a certain brand-image. The way we dress, the accessories we wear, the people we associate with, the manner in which we speak, the food we eat and the books we read, the entertainment we seek and the way we travel – every little action of ours adds up to the 'brand' that we symbolize. Similarly nations by virtue of their traditional strengths and geographical features are associated with a brand value.

### A Critique of Branding



Fig. 4.3.04

A local entrepreneur puts out a modest hand-painted sign below one of the world's most well-known brand that spends huge amounts for advertising junk that is loved by many, worldwide. The nexus between human desire and human greed makes developing 'brand identities' a much sought after subject in institutes of graphic design and management.

Wally Olins suggests that "branding exploits not just people's gullibility, but their poignant, entirely reasonable desire to belong to some form of corporate existence larger than themselves. Since a social order given to greed and self-interest cannot fulfil this role, Krug, Starbucks or Manchester United have to step in instead."

In writing about branding, Olins has produced an impeccably Marxist study, quite against his intentions. More or less everything he has to say on the subject goes to confirm what the Marxist tradition has long argued about alienation, reification and the fetishism of commodities. In fact, the only rational explanation for the crassness and callowness of this book is that Olins is a left-wing infiltrator among corporate types, out to discredit them by exposing the logic of the logo with such cruel candour.



Fig. 4.3.05

Creative Commons is a movement that assumes a very different position from copyrights by its objectives of make knowledge accessible to everybody. It allows others to use or modify creative output with suitable acknowledgement to the source.



Fig. 4.3.06a





Fig. 4.3.06b



Fig. 4.3.06c



Fig. 4.3.06d



Fig. 4.3.06e



Fig. 4.3.06f

In the products shown in Fig4.3.06a to Fig4.3.06f how many 'brands' can you recognize? These images are from Janpath in New Delhi and the products are mostly made by craftspersons in different parts of India and small and medium business enterprises. For example, if you were to buy an unbranded pair of eye glasses there is a possibility that It might not be of good quality, though it looks the same as a branded product. The word 'brand' has come to be synonymous with 'trust'. We trust that a branded manufacturer shall not cheat us and are willing to pay a considerably larger price for this. In a society where there is disparity, there is bound to be a deficit of trust. One way to address this deficit is to have faith in a brand – but this often means that we no longer have the power to discern subtle differences, based on our own perceptions. The branded product gives us that assurance. What is possibly a loss in such a scenario where the market gets segmented into branded and non-branded products? When the shepherd cannot identify his own flock, he has to go by the branding. Thus, one may observe that branding suggests a distancing of our sense-perceptions from a living contact with nature.

### **The Story of Stuff**

'The Story of Stuff' is a powerful animated film that describes how most global corporations tend to regard economic optimization as their sole objective. The film suggests that such an approach is detrimental to the long term interests of humankind. It is important to understand these voices of dissent that seek to point out the insecurities that give birth to the urge to brand what does not essentially belong to any single individual or community but to the entire planet. Natural resources such as fossil fuels, clean air, water, forests have sought to be appropriated by powerful corporations and branding exercises should not be regarded as exercises in graphic design alone. An environmental awareness and understanding of the fundamental goals of any enterprise is essential in order that one may build, through patient effort, a 'brand' of lasting value.

## References

Bernard Toale, Basic Printmaking Techniques, Davis, 1992

Edward Tufte, The Visual Display of Quantitative Information,

Pictorial Maps: "History, Design, Ideas, Sources" by Nigel Holmes, Watson-Guptill, 1991



Graphis Diagrams: The Graphic Visualization of Abstract Data, Herdeg Walter, The Graphis Press, 1976

## Exercises



1. Study the needs of people in some public environment and design a set of graphics for useful signage.
2. Covert a set of photographic images into black and white images and increase their contrast to create graphic images. Observe which ones appear to work well and explore various graphic possibilities using one image by changing just one parameter – that of colour.
3. Create a graphic timeline for the evolution of any institution of your choice.
4. Develop a logo that symbolizes one quality that you consider as your greatest strength.