A Comparative Study Concerning Airlines Logos

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Abstract

This paper is a study concerning the design of airlines logos all over the world, that is, what symbols, signs and colours are used to create this special identity. This study, which was realised on a hundred airlines, revealed interesting facts related to the main principles that govern the logo design. We were interested to see if special drawings that express a company are related to the represented country, because we found a lot of similarity in this. In the centre of the study was the logo, as an important graphic element to identify an airline company. We identified the typology of logos, known as iconic, logotype and complex logos. This paper is a plea for this wonderful graphic element, that is, the Logo.

Keywords: Airline, logo design, typology, symbol, logotype.

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1. Introduction

The corporate identity is an important element for a living company. It is the communication strategy for it to be seen, to be accepted and, of course, to be used. The graphic element logo is a main gear in this strategy and a special element of a corporate identity. Its role, as a strategic factor, is to make visual an entity all over the world. For us, to study this element was a challenge and a privilege at the same time. We hope we have managed in this aim.

2. The Logo: Its Attributes, Functions and Typology

As it is known, the attributes of a logo are very clear and the designer has to select the best of symbols, signs or colours to realise a wonderful drawing. Briefly, a logo has to be legible, distinct, versatile, memorable, reproducible, a survivor in time and attractive.

The functions of a logo are as follows (Adir, Pascu & Adir, 2016):

i. The contact function – allows the connection between the company and the public;
ii. The explanation function – indicates the identity and the personality of the company;
iii. The translation function – decodes the message;
iv. The information function – conveys knowledge about the company;
v. The identification function – shows the target public;
vi. The beauty function – talks about sensibility, pleasure and emotion.

The logo typology is of three types:

- Iconic (symbolic): graphic representation of a sign, symbol, object (from our daily life), animals, insects, fruits, ordinary objects, etc.;
- Logotype: as letter/letters, figure/figures, words;
- Complex logo (mixed logo): to put together a symbol and words in an integrated concept.

3. The Essential Principles for Designing Logos

In our book Design de logo (Adir, Pascu & Adir, 2015), written in Romanian, we have presented the principles to design logos. These principles were defined after a study of thousands of logos all over the world. Briefly, they are:

- The substitution principle (changing a letter with a symbol);
- The graphic reproduction (different sizes for a logo, without losing the clarity of representation);
- The juxtaposition principle (being two graphic elements, a static one and a dynamic one);
- The repetition principle (a letter or a symbol is repeated in the graphic structure of a logo);
- The stylisation principle (a stylised graphics without losing what is represented);
- The graphic opening/closing principle (involving a symbol or logotype in a geometric shape);
- The 3D optical illusion (making a 3D graphic illusion);
- The 3D graphic representation (building a 3D logo);
- The combination of different fonts (combining fonts to an interesting visualisation);
- The real graphic representation principle (a picture of the real object and not stylised);
- The chromatic principle (monochrome/coloured logo).

4. The Research Study

From the beginning of our research there were three questions:

a. What is the main symbol of the airline logo?
b. What colours were used for the logo (different colours or country's flag colours)?
c. What is the typeface concerning the complex logo of an airline?

We hope the answers to these questions are there in our research. We have studied 100 logos and we found very interesting things to discuss in this paper.

The main symbol discovered in these logos about flying is a stylised shape for a plane or a real/stylised bird. In many cases, these birds are the national symbol of a country (Konemann & Fecker, 2012). These graphic representations are monochrome or coloured (Figure 1).
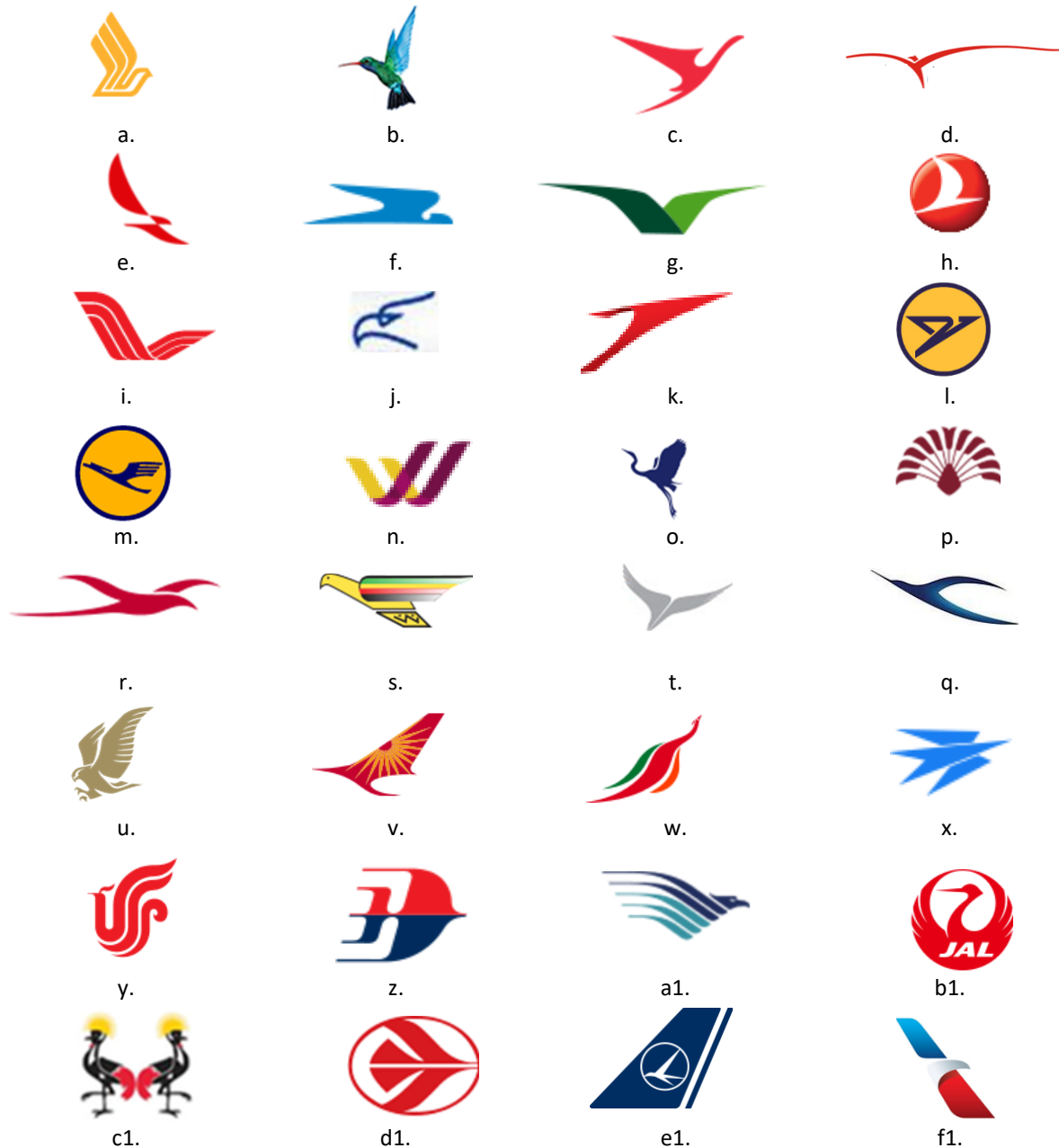

Figure 1. Thirty-two design symbols captured from airlines complex logos. (a) Singapore Airlines. (b) Carribbean Airlines. (c) Surinam Airways. (d) Aero Condor (condor). (e) Avianca. (f) Aerolineas Argentinas.

(g) Wideroe. (h) Turkish Airlines. (i) Macedonian Airlines. (j) Montenegro Airlines. (k) Austrian. (l) Condor. (m) Lufthansa (flying crane). (n) German wings. (o) Air One. (p) Air Madagascar. (r) Air Mauritius. (s) Air Zimbabwe. (t) Nigerian Arik Air. (q) Kuwait Airways. (u) Gulf Air (hawk). (v) Air India (red flying swan with the wheel of Konark sun temple painted in orange). (w) Sri Lankan Airlines (stylised, colourful peacock). (x) Ariana Afghan Airlines. (y) Air China (phoenix). (z) Malaysia Airlines. (a1) Garuda Indonesia. (b1). Japan Airlines (a crane with extended wings). (c1) Air Uganda (red-crested crane). (d1) Air Algerie. (e1) Romanian Air Transport (tarom). (f1) American Airlines.

It is important to notice that for an airline the following words are used: airlines, airways, air, and air transportation, to define this kind of business. In our research study, we have found other interesting symbols from airlines (Konemann & Fecker, 2012) that are qualified to be presented in this paper (Figure 2).

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)
(i)	(j)	(k)	(l)
(m)	(n)	(o)	(p)
(r)	(s)	(t)	(u)
(v)	(w)	(x)	(y)
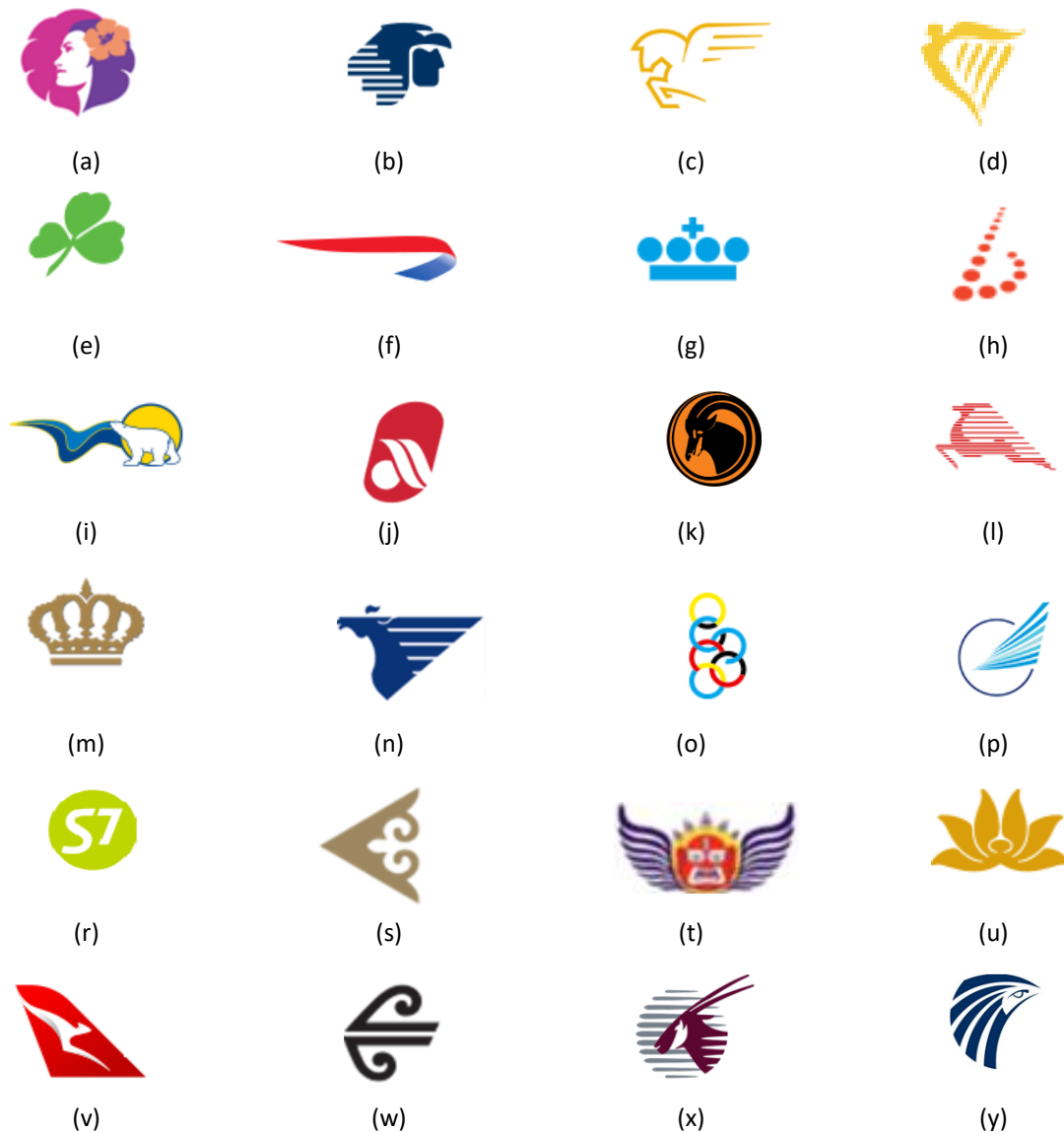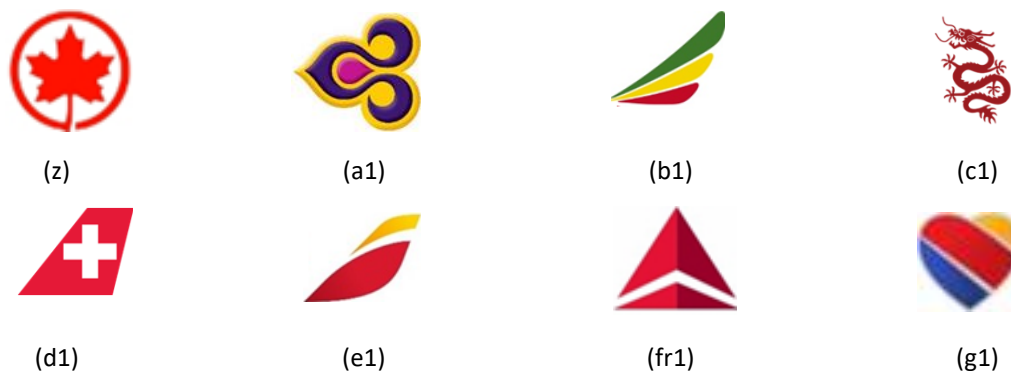
Figure 2. Some interesting symbols and their meanings. (a) Hawaiian Airlines (island girl, called flower of the sky). (b) AeroMexico (the head of an Aztec eagle warrior). (c) Air Iceland (flying horse). (d) Ryanair (combination of an angel and a harp). (e) Aer Lingus (shamrock). (f) British Airlines (red and blue coloured ribbon). (g) KLM (blue crown). (h) Brussels airlines (signage for a take-off area). (i) Canadian North (bear, midnight sun, 'the lights of North'). (j) airberlin. (k) TAAG (giant sable antelope). (l) Tunisair (dama gazelle). (m) Royal Jordanian (crown). (n) Mongolian Airlines (a flying horse). (o) Olimpic Airlines. (p) Azerbaijan Airlines. (r) S7 Airlines. (s) Air Astana. (t) Nepal Airlines (the Hindu god of sky protection). (u) Vietnam Airlines (a water lily). (v) Qantas (kangaroo). (w) Air New Zealand (Maori symbol). (x) Qatar Airways (oryx-national animal of Qatar). (y) EgyptAir (the head of Horus, the god of sun). (z) Air Canada (maple leaf). (a1) THAI (magnolia blossom). (b1) Ethiopian. (c1) DragonAir (red dragon). (d1) SWISS (a white cross). (e1) Iberia. (f1) Delta (a 3D illusion for a triangle). (g1). Southwest (heart).

Another direction of the study was about logo colours. We found that for many of them, their colours were the same as that on the flags of the countries that owned the airlines. Below, we have given a few examples concerning this interesting aspect.

The colours of airline logos = the flag colours of the owner countries

For example, South African Airways (red, white, green, yellow, black, blue) – South African Republic flag; Cubana (blue, white, red) – Cuba flag; British Airways (red, blue) – United Kingdom flag; Czech Airlines (red, white, blue) – Czech Republic flag; B&H Airlines (blue, white, yellow) – Bosnia & Herzegovina Republic flag; Croatia Airlines (red, white, blue) – Croatia Republic flag; Austrian (red, white) – Austria flag; SWISS (white, red) – Suisse confederation flag; Alitalia (red, white, green) – Italy flag; Iberia (yellow, red) – Spain flag; Air Zimbabwe (green, yellow, red, black) – Zimbabwe flag; Aeroflot (white, blue, red) – Russia flag; Philippine Airlines (blue, red, yellow) – Philippine flag; Fly Solomon (white, blue, yellow, green) – Solomon Islands flag.

The third answer in the research is about the airlines logotype. The name of the airline is written in English and Arabic letters when it is from Middle East. For Air China there are Chinese letters also. Some of logotypes have a tagline, e.g., The Pride of Africa (Kenya Airways), Puerta de Cuba al Mundo (Cubana), The warmth of the islands (Caribbean Airlines) and The New Spirit of Africa (Ethiopian). In Figure 3, there are a few representative examples.

Figure 3. A few examples of airline logotypes

To summarise our study, it was really a pleasure for us to put together the symbol and the logo type to have the whole logo of the airline. We think that only eight examples in this paper will explain the 'building' of great logos as they are at this moment (Figure 4).

Symbol   Logotype   airline logo

Logotype	Symbol	airline logo

logotype	Symbol	airline logo

Symbol	Logotype	airline logo

Symbol	Logotype	airline logo

Symbol	Logotype	airline logo

logotype	Symbol	airline logo

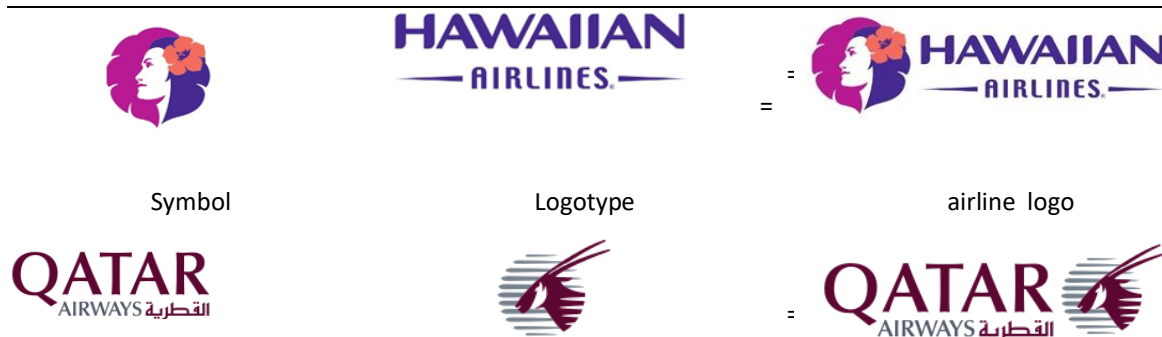| Symbol	Logotype	airline logo

Figure 4. A few examples of airline logos

5.Conclusions

We have tried in this paper to open an interesting direction of research in a field that presents wonderful and very good graphic representations. We have investigated only a hundred logos. We have proven the connection between colours of the logo and those of the countries' flags in many examples. We have seen that a lot of symbols (animals, birds, etc.) of a country may be the symbol of an airline logo. This paper is a beginning for a new way of investigation in this universe of graphic representations concerning logos. In a future research we will develop the study to find more interesting things about logos in this field and in others.

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