Cultural Identity and Passport Designs

Cumhur Coskun [a]*, Fine Art Faculty Graphic Department, Hacettepe University, 06800 Ankara, Turkey.

Abstract

A passport is an identity given to an individual by his country, to travel to other countries. With globalisation, 'passports' that were papers stamped at the entrance and exit by customs during the past centuries have increasingly become critical documents. It is not only a personal document, but it also represents the country to which it belongs. The designs should reflect the cultural identity of a nation, in the form of visual elements, illustrations and photographs. Countries that are aware that their passports reflect their cultural values are able to combine their passport designs with the modern design concept of the times creatively and stylishly, as an artistic work. This qualitative study is aimed at evaluating passport designs in terms of being a representative of a cultural identity and examining passport designs that are re-examined with innovative and modern understanding cultural identity.

Keywords: Passport design, cultural identity, graphic design.

* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **Cumhur Coskun,** Fine Art Faculty Graphic Department, Hacettepe University, 06000 Ankara, Turkey.
E-mail address: cumhur.coskun1@gmail.com/Tel.: +90 (312) 2976890/147

1. Introduction

The term 'passport' comes from the word 'pass' (passieren) and means passing through the main gate of a city, entering the city or leaving the city. Today, passports are documents that show which country the person belongs to and, according to the Turkish Language Institution, those who will go to foreign countries are given the certificate of authority, which is valid during the examination of the identity by foreign authorities.

One of the earliest references to passports was made in about 450 B.C. Nehemiah, an official serving King Artaxerxes of ancient Persia, asked permission to travel to Judah. The King agreed and gave Nehemiah a letter 'to the governors of the province beyond the river' requesting safe passage for him as he travelled through their lands. Today's Canadian passports still carry such a letter of request. Inside the front cover is a letter issued in the name of Her Majesty the Queen. Like Nehemiah's letter, it also asks for safe passage and protection for the holder of the passport' (www.cic.gc.ca; Figure 1).

Figure 1. Canada passport

Throughout history, the passport document has been changed and adapted to meet the varying demands made upon it. Many of these early documents were not called passports – the laissez-paper, the safe conduct – and some documents which called themselves passport we would not today recognise in that form. We tend to think of a passport simply as something a person needs in order to travel, but this ignores the fact that the passport and its ancestors are also concerned with such concepts as identity, nationality and allegiance. They were not only issued to facilitate the passage of persons, they have been issued to goods to allow them to be moved from a country (Lloyd, 2008, pp. 19–20; Figure 2).

Figure 2. French merchant ships passport

The first use of the term passport was made in 1548 when the British regulated the military and the war and formed military transition permits. Documents relating to the passage of foreign nationals from port and city gates constitute authentic documents enforcement by Charles I in France on 18 June 1641 (www.historynet.com). These documents are single-page sealed papers with examples close to the current passport understanding.

The use of the passport in its current meaning is accompanied by a folded cardboard cover that was used by foreigners in the U.K. after the First World War broke out in 1914 due to international security concerns. This folded cardboard cover included a photograph, signature 'Get: wide Nose: big Eyes: small face like shape, skin details, personal explanations and create valid documents for two years' (www.cic.gc.ca; Figure 3).

Figure 3. First passport in the form of a booklet

In the past, passports consisted of a printed paper with a stamp of entry and exit from the customs officer; it became more and more a critical document as the world became crowded, travel frequency increased and border crossings became more secure. Today, passports are almost impossible to imitate; they are prepared using special printing technologies with different design phases and special security elements. In addition to these safety features, it is seen that special designs are also included in the interior design. In these special designs, every country seems to reflect its own cultural elements gracefully.

2. Method

This research is a qualitative study aimed at evaluating passport designs of various countries in terms of visual design and content analysis. In this research, first field research was done and the necessary literature was prepared. The passport designs to be used for the research were determined after examining whether there are other similar researches. The passport designs discussed in this study were selected from recently renewed designs. Passports of China, New Zealand, Australia, Hungary, Finland, U.K., Norway, Canada and Sweden are examined. These recently renewed passports are given in detail by examining the interior designs in particular.

3. Cultural Items in Passport Designs

Today, corporations are perceived by images of society as a whole. Identity, culture and image are the direct communication with the public. It is not possible to create a positive image of an institution that has not been able to produce its identity and culture. Institutional identity plays an important role

in the formation of brand or corporate image. Corporate identity design is the process that starts with the design of corporate colours and corporate logos.

From this information, it can be said that the passport design should reflect the image of the country. A good image of the country is also an important factor here. This image can be provided by the cultural values and artistic activities of a country. At this point, it is important that these values and important structures carry the passport design one step ahead of the others.

An ID is all the properties that distinguish any object, distinguishing it from its neighbours. If you do not have an identity, then you are nothing in the consumer's eye. The whole form of an institution representing itself forms the identity of that institution.

Elements such as symbols, colours and slogans designed as a result of institutional identity studies are tools to reach the buyer. Identity should be prepared in accordance with the identity of the institution (Tuna & Tuna, 2007). If it contains the colour, symbol and commonly known elements of that country in identity, it appeals to more people and reaches them quickly.

Passport designs do not differ greatly from country to country. In particular, it can be said that they have the same moulds in terms of size and construction. However, in recent years, countries have changed their passport designs that are contrary to classical interior page designs, bringing many cultural elements compatible with their own countries to their designs and presenting them to their citizens. The fact that every country has its own icons, structures and persons on its inside pages has caused its cultural identities to be reflected on their passports. In this section, what is emphasised by these countries and what kind of design concepts they have in these interior designs and passport and cultural identity relation are examined.

The pages of China's national passport include the most famous monuments and natural beauty of the country. On the other hand, İreland's passport page contains historical as well as new national monuments and music, poem and architecture with illustrations that demonstrate the country' topographic map. The shapes in its page border seemed to be combined with each other and are pointer of the importance of the cultural heritage of the Gal archaic tombstones (Figure 4).
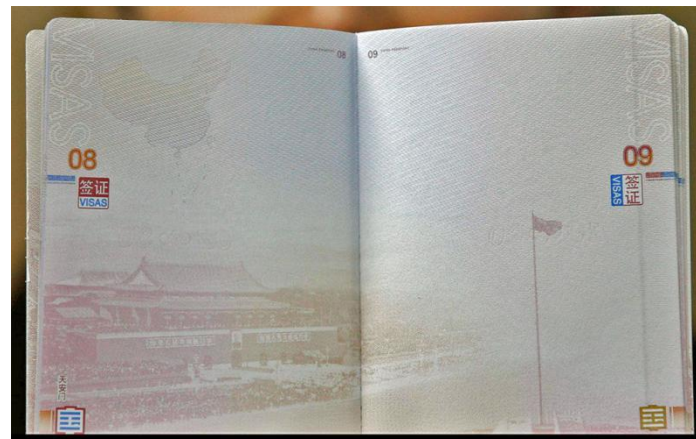

Figure 4. China passport (http://gezzio.com/dunyadan-yaratici-10-pasaport-tasarimi/**)**

New Zealand takes a graphical place in ornamenting its passport design, which is bedecked with the ferns that are found widespread their country. When we look under from up to the page, the light orange colour that typifies the morning turns purple and then turns into night. The passport is prepared with cultural objects set out in a lot of detail.

Figure 5. New Zealand passport (http://gezzio.com/dunyadan-yaratici-10-pasaport-tasarimi/**)**

The Australian passport resembles a catalogue having plant and animal delineations. A kangaroo is seen in ultraviolet (UV) light going from one corner to the other corner in all the pages. The graphics hiding under the UV light makes the passport special and secure.

Figure 6. Australian passport (http://gezzio.com/dunyadan-yaratici-10-pasaport-tasarimi/**)**

There are graphics that cannot be imitated in Hungary's passport's pages, which can only be seen under UV lights. What differentiates Hungary's passport' from others is that their national anthem can be found in the passport design, seen only with UV lights.

Figure 7. Hungary passport (http://gezzio.com/dunyadan-yaratici-10-pasaport-tasarimi/**)**

The U.K. passport which came into use in 2015, illustrates famous British scientists, explorers, artists and architects. In the U.K. passport, all the pages have different cultural factors. Shakespeare can also be seen there. It effectively illustrates the country's prosperity. The placement of so many cultural elements in it is a reference to the deep roots of the country (Figure 9).
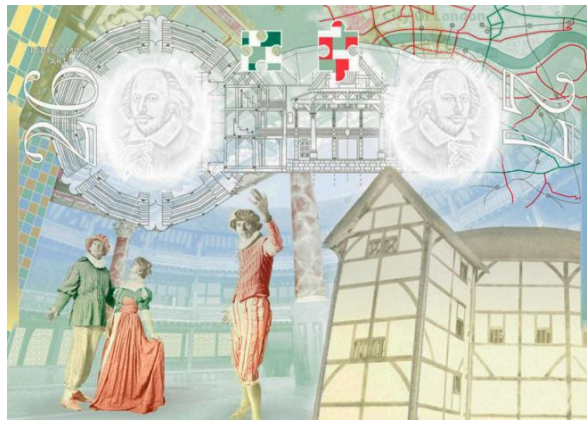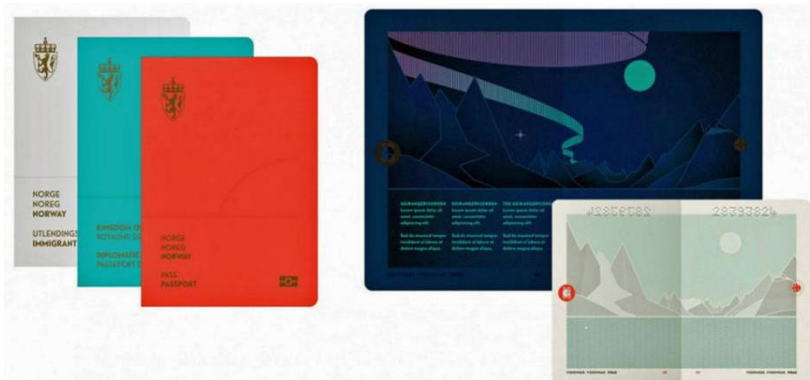

Figure 8. U.K. passport (http://www.turizmglobal.com/dunyanin-en-etkileyici-pasaport-tasarimlari/**)**

Figure 9. Norway passport (http://www.turizmglobal.com/dunyanin-en-etkileyici-pasaport-tasarimlari/**)**

The redesigned Norwegian passport is crafted with a more innovative approach, embellished with minimalistic design and natural landscape illustrations that change colour and shape as you change the look of each page. When we look up with wide aspect, colours become dark and Aura Borealis North Lights demonstrate and reflect one of the country's national heritages. Passport colours vary according to the citizenship status in Norway, contrasting with the same cover colour in most countries. So if you are a normal citizen you are in red, if you are immigrant white and diplomats have turquoise colours in their passports (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Canada passport (http://www.turizmglobal.com/dunyanin-en-etkileyici-pasaport-tasarimlari/**)**

Beginning in 2013, the new Canadian passport design draws attention with its superb colours and creative graphics in UV light. From the exploding fireworks, to the parliament building with its lights, to the canal leaves from the starry sky over Niagara Falls, there are many cultural elements in the Canadian passport.

Sweden's national passport design is also embellished with city and nature graphics. This passport, which contains different images of nature and city on every page, leaves the impression of a complete cultural guide.

Recently, renewed passports are seen to have become more special with innovative and different design elements, especially in the interior design, where elaborate work is done on every page. It is clear that the elements included in the internal page design are chosen from the important cultural elements of the country known.

4. Results

Passport designs, which we have examined in terms of providing corporate identity and cultural elements, generally feature their own cultural and artistic elements on the inside pages. Passports, which are an important institutional identity, should be given the necessary adjective considering that they reflect the image of the country, where original designs should be preferred with a subtle design understanding.

In this survey, where we examined the passport designs of countries, it is seen that the cultural items carefully prepared by the designs are carefully placed in passports prepared recently and presented to the citizens. In many passport designs examined, it is seen that especially the depictions of important people of the past, the geographical features of the country, old buildings and the monuments are included. These elements, which are preferred in the passport design, play an important role in the identity of the countries. It shows that passports are not only an identity document but also an identity in the country. In addition to giving individual information about passport designs, it may be the result of being a visual guide to the country.

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