

New Trends and Issues
Proceedings on Humanities
and Social Sciences



Volume 6, Issue 4 (2019) 024-031

www.prosoc.eu

ISSN 2547-8818

Selected Paper of 8th World Conference on Design and Arts (WCDA 2019) 27 – 29 June 2019, Tirana International Conference Centre, Tirana, Albania

Choosing of the appropriate symbol in logo design

Adir Victor*, University Politehnica of Bucharest, 313 Splaiul Independentei, Bucharest, Romania

Pascu Nicoleta-Elisabeta, University Politehnica of Bucharest, 313 Splaiul Independentei, Bucharest, Romania

Adir George, University Politehnica of Bucharest, 313 Splaiul Independentei, Bucharest, Romania

Suggested Citation:

Victor, A., Nicoleta-Elisabeta, P. & George, A. (2019). Choosing of the appropriate symbol in logo design. *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences*. [Online]. 6(4), pp 024–031. Available from: www.prosoc.eu

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Ayse Cakir Ilhan, Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey.

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Abstract

This paper presents a study concerning the possibility to choose the right symbol for a logo. For a designer, it is a very hard work to see what symbol is necessary to represent the identity of a company. Our study realised on thousands of logos to understand what message can be conveyed only by a sign/symbol. Also, we have realised that it is not necessary that the symbol be in the field of activity of the company but, it has to be an expressive one for it. The directions of the study were focused to identify the activities for which it is necessary to have an adequate graphic representation and to assure a database concerning symbols used, especially for some activities.

Keywords: Logo, symbols, logo design.

* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **Adir Victor**, University Politehnica of Bucharest, 313 Spl. Independentei, Bucharest, Romania. E-mail address: victoradir@yahoo.com / Tel.: +04-074-625-2428

1. Introduction

The comparison was a method to see the difference between areas of activities and what symbols were used in the graphic representations and 'to translate' the message of symbols. Working in observation, analyse and comments about symbols used in logo design, we have noticed interesting things in our study. First, it was the symbol, secondly, the message conveyed by it and in the end, it was the whole identity of the company. We have spoken in our paper about a few areas of activities because we have seen an universe of logos concerning a lot of activities. About airlines logos, we have discussed in a past paper (WCDA-2017) and it wasn't the idea to represent them now. Our research study was concentrated on automotive (cars and driving schools), dentistry, pet and vet activities and zoo fields.

Also, we have realised that there are symbols tied to the activity field of the company and there are fields where are not necessary to use a symbol to represent the activity of the company. In a few steps, we have presented both characteristics in this matter.

2. Symbols and colours in automotive field

2.1. About cars' logos

It is about the identification of a car/automotive manufacturer using only a logo, as a powerful element of identity. In our research study about this field, we have identified a lot of logos for cars using colours and symbols, geometric shapes and various writing. We have seen the creativity at work and we have tried to develop some conclusions concerning this field.

Many times the graphic representations were a challenge for us to understand the message which was conveyed by the logo. We have studied the colours, shapes and symbols used to realise logos in the automotive field. We have identified circle shape (Mercedes, VW, BMW, Opel, Alfa Romeo, Nissan, Skoda, Volvo), ellipse for Toyota, Ford, Bugatti, Hyundai, Land Rover, Lexus, Subaru and a shield, as geometric shape, for Lamborghini, Porsche, Lancia, Abarth. A rhombus was for Renault and an octagon for MG.

Concerning the colours used we have noticed, for example, yellow for Ferrari, Lotus, Chevrolet, blue and white for BMW, only blue for Ford, Subaru, Lancia, green for Land Rover, red for Fiat, MG, silver for Skoda. Nearby these two elements is another one, the third called symbol. As symbols, we have seen animals (stag—GAZ; horse—MUSTANG, PORSCHE, FERRARI, KAMAZ; jaguar—JAGUAR; bull—LAMBORGHINI; lion—PEUGEOT; bird—MAZDA; scorpion—ABARTH, etc.). For some logos, these graphic representations of animals are included in a circle, ellipse or shield shape.



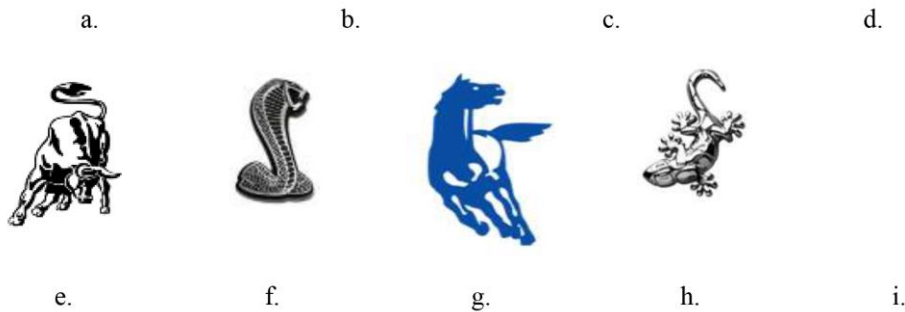


Figure 1. A few graphic representations of animals used in logo design (The Car Book. The Definitive Visual History, 2015; van der Vlugt, 2012; www.car-logos.org; www.carlogos.org); (a) Gaz; (b) Ford Mustang; (c) Jaguar; (d) Peugeot; (e) Lamborghini; (f) Shelby; (g) Kamaz; (h) Wiesmann (i) Mack.

Of course, others symbols represent something else, as follows (figure 2): BMW—a stylised propeller; MERCEDES—three-pointed star; AUDI—four circles; TOYOTA—letter T which is built by two ellipses; OPEL—Z letter, an ancient sign for victory; MASERATI—Neptune’s trident; CITROEN—special V teeth gears; RENAULT—a rhombus; MITSUBISHI—a divine power/a propeller of a ship/three diamonds/a three-pointed star; VOLVO—sign of iron/masculinity; SKODA—winged arrow; SUBARU—Taurus Constellation (called Pleiades); HYUNDAI—letter H/two stylised men shaking their hands.

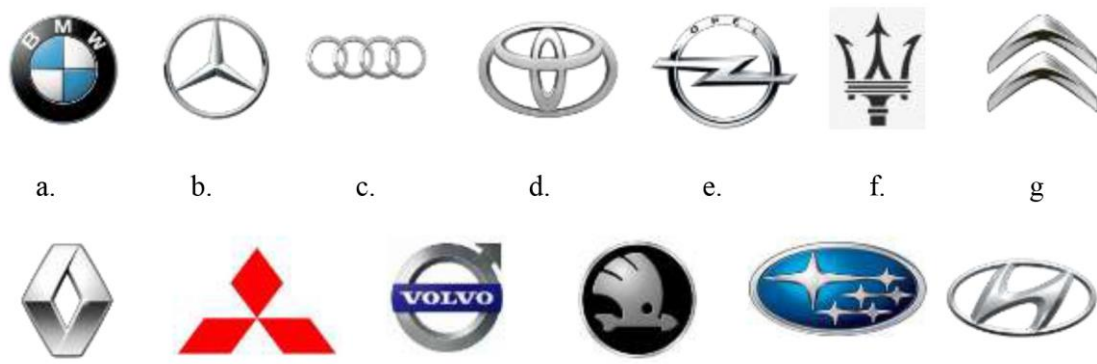


Figure 2. A few well-known logos for cars (The Car Book. The Definitive Visual History, 2015; van der Vlugt 2012; www.car-logos.org; www.carlogos.org); (a) BMW; (b) Mercedes; (c) Audi; (d) Toyota; (e) Opel; (f) Maserati; (g) Citroen; (h) Renault; (i) Mitsubishi; (j) Volvo; (k) Skoda; (l) Subaru (m) Hyundai

It was interesting to see that some Coats of Arms of towns are included in the design of this kind of logos (figure 3), for example, Alfa Romeo (red cross—Coats of Arms of Milan and the serpent devouring the enemy—from Coats of Arms of Visconti family) (van der Vlugt, 2012).



Figure 3. Alfa Romeo logo (van der Vlugt, 2012)

2.2. Driving schools' logos

In this area of activity, we have noticed special graphic representation for logos which have involved parts of a car (wheel driving, wheels, etc.), a stylised car/a real car as photo, a road or a picture including car, people, etc., to achieve the identity of a driving school. The name of these special schools is composed usually by using the text driving school or driving lessons and a graphic representation which speaks about it.

Many times, there is a tagline to define better this activity for the people. And, of course, it's possible to be the name of the school driving. As we have already spoken for this activity, it is necessary to use an adequate symbol to be understood by the people.

We have seen different names for this kind of activity, as follows: Elite Driving School, Lady Luck Driving, Formula Driving School, Defensive Driving School, I Drive, Professional Driving School, etc. In Figure 4, we have drawn a few examples concerning this subject.

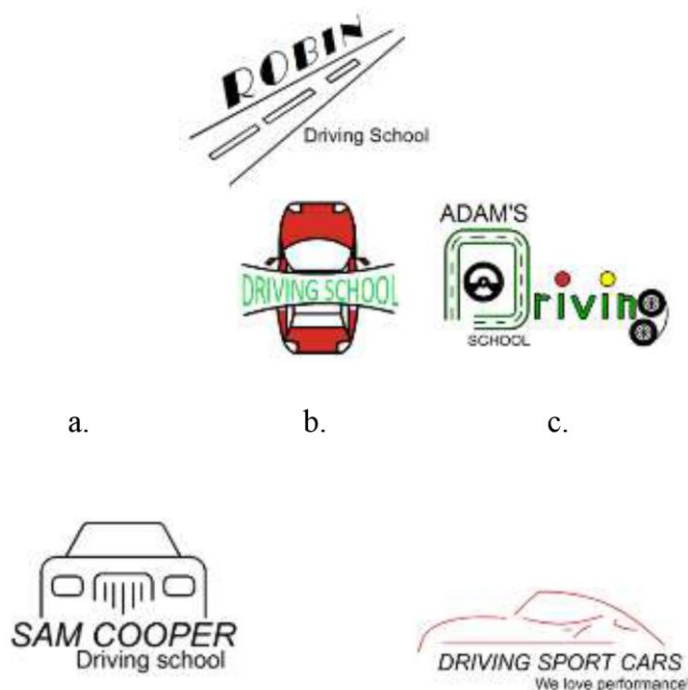


Figure 4. Some logos for driving schools

3. Symbols in logo design for ZOO garden

It was a challenge for us to investigate the area of zoo gardens. As we have seen, the word ZOO is always in zoo logo design, because it's important 'to speak about'. Sometimes, the word ZOO is written as ZOOO because the designer has drawn animals/birds into these letters O. When we have decided to analyze zoo logos (more than 100), we did not know how interesting will be our trip into the universe of animals, birds, snakes and fishes. The general characteristics identified by us were included as follows: a. The name ZOO is unfailling; b. The graphic representations are about the animals from the zoo garden; c. The designer has used the logo design principles to create wonderful logos (the substitution principle, the associative perception, the silhouette principle, etc.); d. It was used usually one or two colours, rarely three or four; e. The real or stylised graphic representation for animals was identified; f. The designer has used in graphics parts of the animal body; g. Animals from

Africa have been represented more than others (lion, giraffe, rhino, eagle, gorilla, monkey, hippo); h. Animals are presented alone or together with other animals; i. To write the name ZOO, the designer has used different fonts; j. The graphic representation has used sometimes geometric shapes like circle, rectangle, ellipse, etc. In Figures 5 and 6, there are presented only 25 logos to certify the founded characteristics.



Figure 6. Zoo garden logos

4. Symbols in dentistry field

This is the domain very well-identified by the logo. Because in a lot of logos, we have noticed an important symbol: the tooth. In many examples, we have seen tooth or teeth in different positions or situations or included in a word in accordance with the substitution principle. And, of course, there were logos which have represented a big smile. This kind of design, created for a special activity,

presents the universe of graphic representations in this field. It was difficult for us to select a few examples, that is why we have created logos for dentistry to mark this activity. What is important to emphasise is the aspect of this kind of design, which is 'friendly with so warming colours'. As denomination, we have found: Pediatric Dentistry, Dental Clinic, Dental Center, Family Dental, White Dentistry, Shine Dentist, Smiling Tooth, Smile Clinic, Dental Wellness, Dental Lab, Advance Dental Clinic, Dental Lounge, Dental Surgery & Laboratory, etc. In this field of activity, the designer uses a tagline for logo to strengthen the graphic representation and the identity of the company. In figure 7, we have presented a few drawings of a tooth or teeth to be used in logo design.

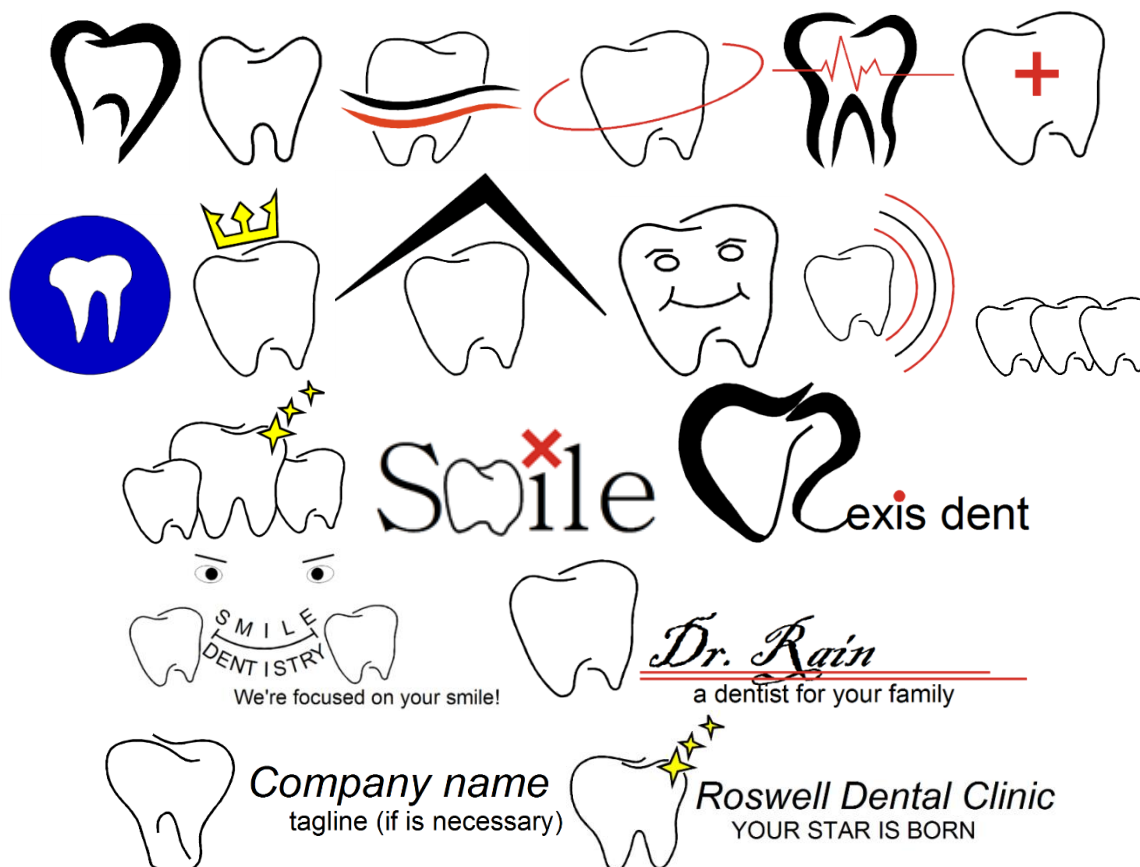


Figure 7. Some drawings of tooth/teeth and logos in the field of dentistry

5. Pet shop/veterinary clinic logos

It was interesting to see, paw/paws, claw/claws, dog house, bones, etc., in different colours and fonts. The denomination of the activity is called: Pet Shop, Pet Shop & Care, Pet Store, Dog House or House Dog, Pet Lovers, Pet World, Pet Clinic, Pet Friends, Veterinary & Pet Shop, Veterinary Center, DogCat Shop, Royal Pets, Doggy—Animal School and Pet Fashion. A lot of logos are coloured (usually two or three and four not in so many cases). In our research, we have seen also many examples, which have chosen the associative visual principle applied in logo design, to create wonderful logos in this field.

We have tried to draw a few examples for pet shop using as symbols animals included or not in different shapes. The result is in figure 8.



Figure 8. Examples of PET SHOP logos

6. Conclusion

A big idea of the study was to understand where is necessary a symbol which may represent the activity of a company and where is not. During our research, we have seen a universe of logos for various activities: breweries, computer software/hardware technology, construction, transportation, education, food & beverage, financial services, galleries & museums, health & beauty, Internet and so on. We have noticed many logos which did not represent the activity of a company but they have tried to convey a message to the people by a special graphic representation. In this paper, we have presented a small part of our study (only a few domains), especially graphics tied to an activity. As we have seen, cars` logos convey a message using interesting symbols and driving schools are focused on specific symbols in the automotive domain. That was a difference which was remarked. In the future papers, we shall discuss about others` activities, symbols and logos because it is much more to say about.

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