The Implications of Modern Day Design

Elements of Modern Day Design

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Introduction

Have you ever found yourself stuck in an aisle at the grocery store, choosing between different brands of one product? Although it often goes unnoticed, there is a lot of work that goes into the way something appears on the shelf in front of you. Brands use design elements to capture our attention, draw in an audience, make statements, and ultimately, create a relationship with the consumer. You may find yourself returning to the same brand again and again. When branding sticks, it creates a relationship that can last the test of time.

Brands can gain a following, people will align certain aspects of their identity with brands that mean something to them. Maybe they want to "Skate and Destroy" alongside Thrasher Magazine, or feel that they too, are "Built Ford Tough."

These myths, or unique stories, make it easier for people to align themselves with the brands that stand out to them. In the book, *How Brands Become Icons* (2004), Douglas Holt further explains how brands can create myths to create value.

> Iconic brands create value differently…they require a different type of consumer understanding. Great myths are grounded in an empathetic understanding of people's most acute desires and anxieties…Resonant myths spring from an understanding of people's ambitions at work, their dreams for their children, their fears of technology, their difficulties in building friendships, and so on. (p. 212)

Brands can become powerful. Branding and design can spark movements and create change. Debbie Millman, branding expert and author of Brand Bible, speaks about how branding and design can unite people for the purpose of social change;

> The Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street proved how the internet could amplify messages and connect like-minded people with powerful beliefs to inspire change. We witnessed a cultural shift via social media with hashtags like #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter. In its wake, the discipline of branding has transformed more in the last 10 years than it has in the last 10,000. And for the first time in modern history, the most popular influential

brands are not brands being pushed down by the corporation. They are brands being pushed up, by the people, for the people for the sole purpose of changing the world and making it a better place…Our greatest innovations are the creation of brands that can make a difference in our lives and reflect the kind of world that we want to live in. (Millman, 2020).

Good branding can also help us eliminate choices and shorten the "decision-making process" we undergo every time we need to buy something new. Due to the sheer number of choices available to us today, we are obligated to go through this process quite frequently.

Sheena Iyengar, who is currently a business professor at Columbia Business School, is known for her research and expertise on choice. In a TED talk about her book, The Art of Choosing, Iyengar discusses the plethora of choices we see in America;

> In America, the primary locus of choice is the individual. People must choose for themselves, sometimes sticking to their guns regardless of what other people want or recommend, it's called being true to yourself. But do all individuals benefit from taking such an approach to choice?… To insist that they choose independently might actually compromise both their performance and their relationships. Yet that is exactly what the American paradigm demands, it leaves little room for interdependence or an acknowledgment of individual fallibility, it requires that everyone treat choice as a private and self-defining act…The second assumption which informs the American view of choice goes something like this; the more choices you have, the more likely you are to make the best choice. So bring it on Walmart, with one hundred thousand different products, and Amazon with 27 million books, and Match.com with -- what is it? -- fifteen million date possibilities? You will surely find the perfect match! (Iyengar, 2010).

As we continue to be surrounded and overwhelmed by our choices, Iyengar questions the American mentality and approach when it comes to making a decision. In order to compete with countless available options, branding is the most important tool a company can use to stand out in the crowd. As previously mentioned, when branding sticks, it creates a relationship with the consumer that both benefits them by shortening their decision making process, and the brand, by building loyalty with the consumer.

However, we rarely question what part of the branding drew us into a particular brand in the first place. Frequently, it comes down to the design, the way it appears on the shelf and the perceived benefits based on its branding design. There are "rules," or best practices based on psychology and research that give insight on how to effectively use design elements to optimize understanding. These best practices can help brands make better decisions in a multitude of ways.

Best Practices

Before anything else, design as an information tool must function to serve its purpose; to effectively convey information. If using design elements to their maximum potential as tools, design choices can always be backed up by logical explanations. For example, you might argue that you chose a green background because green promotes clarity and energy in the mind of the viewer, rather than choosing it simply because it looks nice. Sean Adams, in *The Designer's Dictionary of Color* (2017), further stresses this importance;

> Design is 90% persuasion: not to push a client to do something simply because it is cool, but because it is right. Every designer needs the tools to make an informed decision and critically explain the choices. To describe the logic for using a bright yellow background with terms such as 'bright' or 'nice' is the first step to rejection and disagreement. To explain that this background color communicates optimism and warmth based on association from 10,000 years of human culture will lead to approval. (p. 11)

In design among many things, the rules are meant to be broken and challenged. However, you must first learn the rules before you can properly break them. In this literature review, we will take a look at the three main design elements, color, typography, and form, in order to better understand these "rules" or best practices, and discover design as an information tool. This information will also be later used as a basis of understanding for the research section of this project.
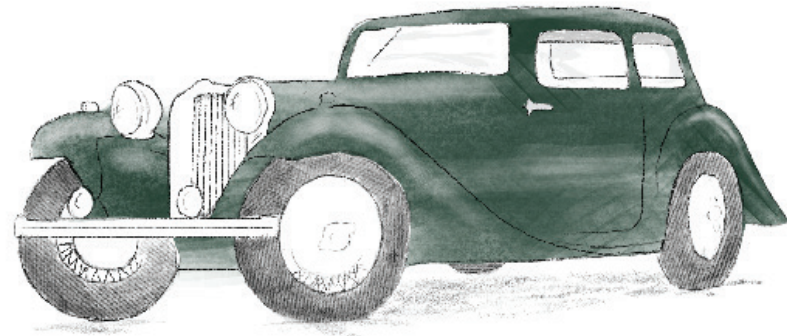
Color

According to Thomas Madden in a study of the reception of color across cultures, "One marketing cue that global managers can use regardless of location is color. Color is one of the many marketing tools that global managers use to create, maintain, and modify brand images in customers' minds" (Madden, 2000). Colors hold different meanings in different cultures and locations, and this is an important thing to truly understand the significance of color. According to Sean Adams (2017), colors will be received differently by different people, cultures, and circumstances.

> Color is subjective and emotional. It is often the most volatile element of a project. To declare that the choice of a favorite color is inferior is to personally attack a person's core. A client may arbitrarily demand a specific color or reject another based on outwardly irrelevant reasons. Our response to a color is based on our life experiences and cultural associations. If locked in a green closet for most of childhood, a person may be green averse. Regardless of the numerous rational reasons presented, and backup of research, that individual will forever despise green. (p. 10)

As Sean Adams describes in the premise of his book: *The Designer's Dictionary of Color*, color is a deeply personal element. In his example, one may become averse to the color green after a bad experience. Conversely, one may become more fond of a specific color as a result of an enjoyable experience. When asked about their favorite color, one could simply reply; "turquoise, because it's pretty." However, if asked to think deeply on the question, there is usually an experience that led them to favor that color so heavily. "Turquoise. When I traveled to Thailand, the water was the most beautiful shade of tropical blue and green." Adams (2017) further explains this in his book, with a client of his that Jaguar Green had taken a hold of;

> Years ago, a client asked me for a specific color of green, Jaguar Green, After exhaustive research on the paint colors of jaguar automobiles from 1922 to the present, I could not

pinpoint the exact color he insisted existed. This green was a color that lives only in his imagination, based on a memory of a green Jaguar on a sunny afternoon in his youth. Only after I articulated the logical, cultural, and aesthetic reasons for the green I chose was he convinced that the final green was, indeed, Jaguar Green. (p. 11)

We frequently see colors organized in the traditional academic categories, primary colors, secondary colors, and tertiary colors. However, I have decided to categorize colors as warm, cool, and neutral, as has Adams. The rationale behind this layout is to examine color in better alignment with the creative process, the more instinctual way of grouping color in our minds.

Warm Colors

Red

Starting with the most intense color we will look at, red. Red represents extremity, intensity, passion, desire, violence, anger, vibrance, energy, and heated emotions (Adams, 2017, p. 83). Red is polarizing. It brings about thoughts of war, fire, and blood, but also love, warmth, and deep feeling. The expression "seeing red" or to say that a person "saw red" means that they've become angry and are beginning to lose self-control, they may begin to yell or be consumed by a flash of anger. It is believed that this expression originated from the Spanish sport, bull-fighting. In bullfighting, the toreador uses a red cape to deceive the bull, and attract them into the fight. This explanation is supported by the existence of an earlier phrase; "like a red flag to a bull" (Martin, n.d.).

Cultural Meanings

Popular in Asia, red is the color of good luck. It is the most popular color in China, according to Madden's study (Madden, 2000, p. 91). However, there is a difference between Chinese red and red used in other Asian cultures. Brides in India wear red saris. In western culture, red is generally connected with its companions, for example red, white, and blue result in patriotic connotations. Red, yellow, and blue, are childlike and juvenile. Red and black together can make one think of fascism (Adams, 2017, p. 83).

Best Practices

When purchasing an automobile, red ranks highly and represents favorable price and quality (Madden, 2000, p. 91). The most successful applications of red include Coca-Cola and the Virgin Airlines logo (Adams, 2017, p. 83).

Orange

An incredibly subjective color, orange sits between red and yellow. Different levels of red or yellow can result in orange appearing as a lighter shade closer to yellow, or as a deep, bright orange, closer to red. Orange is a charged, vibrant color. Positive attributes link orange to childlike joy and youth, happiness, being carefree and spontaneous, sunsets, flames on a campfire, creativity and exploration, energy, and immediacy. Negative attributes lead to feelings of annoyance, loudness, and overbearingness. Orange can be provoking (Adams, 2017, p. 51). Additionally, it can be distressing, disturbing, or upsetting (Madden, 2000, p. 92). According to Madden's research, orange can denote cheapness, which is why we generally do not see it used in banks or insurance companies (Madden, 2000, p. 91).

Cultural Meanings

Orange is the color of the sacral chakra in Eastern philosophy (Adams, 2017, p. 51). According to Patricia Mercier in The Chakra Bible, the sacral chakra is how we experience enjoyment, playfulness, creativity, pleasure, fun, and joyful moments (Mercier, 2007, p. 36). In India, orange is considered the most sacred color. The Ndembo in Zambia do not even consider

orange a separate color (Madden, 2000, p. 93).

Best Practices

Orange is used to create a sense of immediacy and spontaneity. Successful uses include Nickelodeon and Harley Davidson. As mentioned above, orange can convey cheapness. However, this can still be used to an advantage, Wienerschnitzel added a little orange to their buildings to imply that the chain sold inexpensive hot dogs. After this change, they reported a 7% increase in sales! (Madden, 2000, p. 91).

Yellow

Yellow is universally known to be cheerful, and sunny, representing happiness, optimism, and creativity. A negative connotation of yellow is that it can be used to describe cowardice (Adams, 2017, p. 109).

Cultural Meanings

Yellow represents courage in Japan and royalty in China. In the middle ages, Jewish people were forced to wear yellow patches and yellow Stars of David in Europe (Adams, 2017, p. 109).

Best Practices

Notable uses of yellow include Snapchat, McDonald's, National Geographic, Ikea, UCLA, and Harvey Ross Ball's famous Smiley Face Symbol.

Pink

Pink is used to communicate femininity and romance. It is indicative of compassion, innocence, softness, sweetness, sensitivity, and fragility. Pink is a politically charged color, its heavy connection with gender is often questioned specifically in terms of its use for young girls' rooms and clothing.

Cultural Meanings

In the 1930s and 1940s, the Nazis used pink triangles in concentration camps to label homosexuality (Adams, 2017, p. 67). As mentioned, pink is a politically charged color. The Feminist Movement has rejected pink as being an identifier for girliness and domesticity (Adams, 2017, p. 67). In modern Western culture, pink is associated heavily with Valentine's Day and Easter.

Best Practices

Successful uses of pink in branding include Dunkin' Donuts, T-Mobile, Lyft, and Baskin Robbins.

Cool Colors

Blue

Blue is one of the most popular colors for a logo. Blue represents honesty and loyalty, power, authority, trustworthiness, and strength. It also represents wealth and security (Madden, 2000, p. 91). Blue is reliable and stable. Blue brings about ideas of serenity and calmness, it is heavily associated with the sky on a clear day and the ocean. Negative connotations include dullness or overuse, due to its popularity (Adams, 2017, p. 129).

Cultural Meanings

In Judaism, blue is the color of holiness, and in Hinduism, blue represents the god

Krishna (Adams, 2017, p. 129). Similar to pink, blue is connected to gender in Western culture. The color blue is seen as masculine and is used to represent boys, although modern culture pushes back against this alignment of color and gender. According to Madden's study, blue was the most popular color among adults (Madden, 2000, p. 93).

Best Practices

Blue is a very popular color, at times making it commonplace, dull, or boring. Blue is not usually a color that stands out, however, an unexpected dramatic use of the color can help bring it to life. Among numerous successful applications, AT&T, Facebook, Skype, Twitter, IBM, and Ford are highly regarded uses of blue.

Green

Green represents earth and all things originating from nature and the environment. Green is lively, unpredictable, and adventurous. Negative connotations of green include its relation to illness and disease (Adams, 2017, p. 147).

Cultural Meanings

Green is used in Ireland and symbolizes St. Patrick's day. In western culture, green is linked to good luck, as is finding a green four-leaf clover. It also represents environmental awareness, wealth, and jealousy. Some Eastern cultures link green to fertility, life, and regeneration (Adams, 2017, p. 147).

Best Practices

Due to its connection with sickness, green was often avoided on food packaging. However, after the start of the "green" or organic movement, green became more common in grocery stores (Adams, 2017, p. 147). Created to keep children from accidentally ingesting poisonous chemicals found in common household items, the Mr. Yuk! Stickers made in 1971 by the Pittsburgh Poison center were created in a bright, sickening green color. Other popular

uses of green include Starbucks, Animal Planet, Whole Foods, Spotify, and John Deere.

Turquoise

Like yellow, the brightness of turquoise brings a happy tone. Turquoise is the color of communication, self-awareness, and initiative. It is associated with tropical oceans, paradise, and escape. It is soothing and relaxing (Adams, 2017, p. 181).

Cultural Meanings

In Islam, turquoise is a holy color. In Native American culture, turquoise is a spiritual stone of protection. In Tibetan culture, it is a symbol of wisdom and the cycle of life and death. It is closely associated with the Middle East and the American Southwest (Adams, 2017, p. 181).

Best Practices

In the 1950s, turquoise gained a lot of popularity and was commonly used on cars and appliances, giving the color a retro and nostalgic feel (Adams, 2017, p. 181). In 1845, Tiffany adopted the brand color "Tiffany Blue," a robin's egg shade of turquoise, the most successful adaptation of this color to a brand.

Neutral Colors

Black

Black is the absorption of all colors or light, or any color shifted to its darkest value, making it technically not a color itself. Aesthetically, it is a great choice for making clear type due to it being very bold and legible. Similar to red, black is a bold and dramatic color. It is also formal and sophisticated, confident, and mature. Too much black however can read as sad and depressing (Adams, 2017, p. 198).

Cultural Meanings

In contemporary society, black represents death, the night, darkness or hard times, tragedy, mourning, and mystery. In medieval Western culture, black represented power and secrecy (Adams, 2017, p. 198). Madden's study revealed that participants designated black as a "sad" color (Madden, 2000, p. 92).

Best Practices

Due to the sophisticated feel of Black, it has been adopted by many high fashion brands such as Chanel, Louis Vitton, Prada, Yves Saint Laurent, and Coach. Other successful applications include Adidas, Nike, Honda, Uber, and the World Wildlife Fund.

White

Blank areas can be described as "white space." This does not mean that the color white is boring and dull, however. It can create great contrast when used with a darker element. White is a tool that provides space for a viewer to take in other information (Adams, 2017, p. 227). White is clean, sophisticated, pure, minimalistic, and simple.

Cultural Meanings

In Asian cultures, white is the color for death and mourning. A white flag symbolizes surrender, truce, or peace. In Japan, the combination of red over white represents celebration and life (Madden, 2000, p. 93). In Western culture, white represents purity, innocence, and cleanliness.

Best Practices

Apple's clean and minimalist branding is one of the most successful uses of the color white. We frequently see white paired with black in logos to create contrast. Cartoon Network, BBC, and Vans are all examples of this.

Brown

Brown can vary greatly in its appearance when altered to be darker or lighter or be mixed with more of one color. Brown is earthy and solid, it is perceived as wholesome and stable.

Cultural Meanings

Most cultures link brown to the earth. In the United States, brown is the color of the Thanksgiving holiday. In India, brown is the color of death and mourning (similar to black in the United States) as it relates to how leaves turn brown when they die and fall to the ground (Adams, 2017, p. 209).

Best Practices

A great use of brown to communicate stability is the UPS logo. Due to its common relation to chocolate, mocha, and hazelnut, other uses of brown include Hershey's Chocolate, Nespresso, Nutella, and M&Ms.

Typography is a Tone of Voice

The first page of *Thinking with Type* by Ellen Lupton, reads: "Typography is what language looks like" (Lupton, 2004, pg. 1). Lupton's way of concisely explaining typography brings about the right idea. She emphasizes the importance of type as a tool for communication, not just as an aesthetic. "Typography is a tone of voice" is another phrase that describes typography as more than just the way words appear on a page. Typography is one of our most effective tools of communication. It can be used in conjunction with other design elements to increase understanding. In the mind of the viewer, it can create feelings, assumptions, and read in a certain "tone." Type can be expressive, It can yell or whisper, it can create the illusion that something is of higher quality, or of a lower one. Typography can be juvenile or mature, serious and grave, or playful and lighthearted. Choosing the best typeface for your message can be the deciding factor for how it is received by the reader.

A Brief History

In early fifteenth-century Germany, Johannes Gutenberg changed the world with the invention of the movable printing press (Lupton, 2004, p. 13). This sparked the print revolution. Before Gutenberg's press, type had to be copied by hand, making information and literature costly and easily accessible only to the elite. The price of books fell by two-thirds, transforming the ways ideas were disseminated and the conditions of intellectual work (Dittmar, 2011, p. 1133). Gutenberg's press did not just make it easier to copy type. It advanced the ability to spread information. It revolutionized writing in the West (Lupton, 2004, p. 13).

In 1517, Martin Luther famously pinned his 95 theses to the door of the Catholic Church. Luther challenged the church for its sale of "indulgences" that would theoretically help

people dissolve themselves of sin. Luther viewed this practice as corrupt and exploitative of those practicing Catholicism (Dittmar, 2011, p. 1161). But what did this have to do with typography? The development of Gutenberg's movable printing press made it possible for Luther's ideas to be dispersed. Through printing and sharing pamphlets with the world, he was able to gain traction. Without being able to use the printing press to gain support from like-minded thinkers, he would have been viewed as completely radical. Luther and Gutenberg's press shook the Catholic Church by putting their corrupt practices into question. Ultimately, this went on to spark the Protestant revolution, which was heavily influenced by Luther's ideas.

This may be the first example of print used to garner support in service of a major structural change. Since then, we can see a revolution of other social, political, and cultural developments made possible through print. Luther's pamphlets show the importance of typography in the spread of information and ideas, and how it can be used to change the world, even in early fifteenth-century Germany.

Typography Tools

In the modern day, the potential of typography is not limited by lacking technology or ability, in fact, we are confronted with a world of resources and options. Best practices are founded on a general idea of how information can be best delivered to the viewer, in terms of legibility, clarity, organization, and purpose. Sans serif fonts, such as Times New Roman, are best used in the body text. The feet, or the decorative ends of the letters, improve legibility when faced with a large amount of text. Additionally, when used for branding, Sans serif fonts come across as more modern and exciting whereas serif fonts can feel old-fashioned and trustworthy.

In English among many languages, the text is read from left to right. In other languages such as Arabic, Farsi, Syriac, and Hebrew, the text is read from right to left. It is widely

understood that the layout must reflect this in order to make sense. However, it can become more complicated. Imagine you come across a protester holding a sign that reads the below image:

At first glance, you may read; "Buy Vegan, Meat is Unhealthy!" a widely considered belief in America. Or, you might first see; "Buy Meat, Vegan is Unhealthy!" another widely accepted belief. You will likely come to the conclusion that although they are completely opposite messages, both are entirely possible, and be left confused about which message the protester wants to get across. Typography and layout are not just questions of aesthetics, when used improperly they could completely hinder the purpose of the text.

In "Technical Communication" (1993), Elizabeth Keyes describes typography as "Visual Information Structures," or, a function of conveying information to the viewer. She provides a familiar example; "undifferentiated text." When faced with a page of writing without visual landmarks, the reader must create their own;

Undifferentiated text - without any headers or highlighting - requires more effort from the reader, and the writer loses control over how the reader will make his or her way through the text and interpret and remember it. When we're confronted with a page of solid, undifferentiated text, what do we do? We use a colored highlighter. In highlighting, we create visual landmarks. (p. 639)

Keyes exemplifies the importance of typography as a tool of communication. The confusion that comes with being faced with vast amounts of undifferentiated text can be combated with organizational tools. Hierarchy, for example, is used to speak to the viewer in order of importance. It tells the viewer what to look at first, second, third, followed by extra details. Headers and bolder fonts can be used to tell the reader that they are looking at the main topic. Smaller text underneath can be used as a subtopic, and so on.

Consider Jif peanut butter as an example of the use of hierarchy. At first glance, we read "JIF" in big bold letters. Next, we move on to notice other details on the jar. "Creamy" lets us know the type of peanut butter. Lastly, underneath the type of peanut butter reads; "peanut butter."

"Jif" is the largest and boldest thing on the packaging, making it the first and most important for the viewer to see. "Creamy" peanut butter was decided to be the next important detail. If you are in the market for crunchy peanut butter, there is no need to waste more time with this product.

In 1956, the JIF logo created by Donald Deskey featured the use of hierarchy in a similar but slightly different way On this package, we see "Peanut Butter" in slightly larger letters beneath the brand name. The type, "crunchy," located in the top left corner as well as along the lid of the jar is much smaller. In contrast to the modern Jif logo, "peanut butter" is a larger priority than the type. It is likely that this change occurred due to JIF becoming a highly recognized brand in 1984. Widespread knowledge of JIF as a peanut butter brand made it less important to emphasize this second on the packaging.

Although it occurs unconsciously in the mind of the viewer, the use of hierarchy in this design helps speed up the viewer's decision-making process. Keyes explains how hierarchy and other type differentiations are used for organization and legibility; "Headers, type changes, and color can communicate the structure and organization of the content. This visual information structure in effect pre-processes the content by revealing its underlying organization…This visual organization is perceived unconsciously (pre-attentively) by the reader" (Keyes, 1993, p. 639).

Form

It is common to see the primary use of form in a branding design in the brand's logo. Frequently, there are extra forms used in branding, but they are created to benefit the design and are comparable in look and feel to the logo of the brand. Excessive form can be ineffective and feel busy or juvenile. There are seven different types of logos, a certain type is usually more appropriate for a particular brand than another.

Starting with a lettermark, a typography-based logo that is usually made up of the company's initials, such as NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), or IBM (International Business Machines) (Morr, 2018). Lettermark logos emphasize simplicity, making them ideal for a company with a particularly long name.

A wordmark or a logotype logo is similar to a lettermark logo, except that it focuses on the brand name (Morr, 2018). Unlike a lettermark, a logotype uses the whole brand name. Typography and color become especially important in a logotype. A wordmark logo is best used for a brand that has a succinct name, such as Ikea, Google, and Coca-Cola (Morr, 2018). The choice of typeface can be used to convey different messages about the brand as well.

A pictorial mark is an icon that represents the brand. The Twitter bird or the Apple "apple" logo are examples of pictorial logos (Morr, 2018). A pictorial logo is just a picture, something recognizable to the everyday person. Because of this, it can be difficult for new companies to adopt a pictorial logo because, without strong brand recognition like Apple or Twitter, they are not always as memorable.

A mascot logo is an illustrated character that represents the brand (Morr, 2018). Mascots work well when appealing to families, children, or creating long-term relationships with the audience. Mascots that we get attached to at a younger age can bring us an extra feeling of nostalgia into adulthood.

A combination mark is a logo that includes a combination of a wordmark or a lettermark logo with a pictorial mark, an abstract mark, or a mascot. The picture and type are combined in some way to create an image (Morr, 2018). A popular example of this is Burger King. Burger king combines type and image to create the idea that the words are the inside of the hamburger. Lacoste uses their mascot, the alligator, in combination with "Lacoste" written in their brand font.

The emblem logo is often the most intricate-looking, appearing like a badge, seal, or crest. They look very traditional, making them a popular choice for universities. This logo uses a font inside a symbol or an icon. Some companies, such as Starbucks and Harley-Davidson, have successfully modernized the emblem logo (Morr, 2018).

Abstract logos are the opposite of pictorial logos. While pictorial forms are easily recognizable, abstract marks take on a shape that is new and unfamiliar. Abstract logos are harder to create meaning around, without relying on cultural implications that a recognizable shape has (Morr, 2018). The benefit of using them is that the brand creates entirely new meaning from the form, without having to share its meaning with anything else in the world. When done correctly, a brand can create an entire culture around the shape. One of the best examples of the use of an abstract logo is Nike, a brand that successfully gave its logo a culture, life, energy, and meaning.
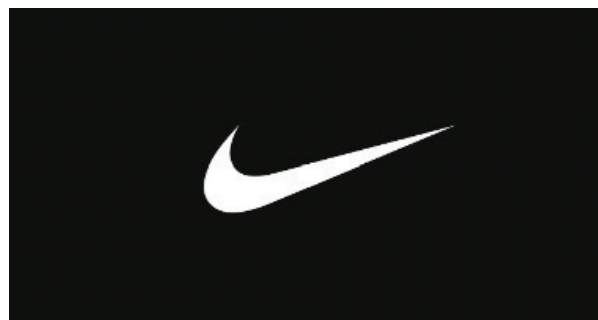
Research I: Case Studies

Now that we have taken a look at the best practices in color, typography, and form, it is important to consider the brands that have been successful in using them. To start, consider the way IKEA used blue and yellow to pay homage to its Swedish roots as well as create a cultural reminder of the IKEA brand.

IKEA

According to The IKEA Museum, IKEA's logo has come a long way. Having started in 1943, the logo saw many changes and developments before the creation of the iconic blue and yellow-colored logo that has become so memorable and effective worldwide ("History of the Logotype," 2021).

IKEA represents its brand using a logotype and a wordmark. As previously mentioned, a logotype is a branding element made up of the company's name that forms part of the brand's identity ("History of the Logotype," 2021). Being what will stand out most in the mind of the consumer, choice of typography and color is particularly important in a logotype. In the case of IKEA, the use of blue and yellow (primary colors), is simple and digestible, yet powerful, it has become effective internationally.

IKEA, created by Ingvar Kamprad in 1943, is a brand of humble beginnings. Starting with its name itself, "IKEA" represents the life of Ingvar Kramprad and Sweden itself. "IK" (Kramprad's initials), are followed by "E" and "A," The farm (Elmtaryd), and the village (Agunnaryd) where Kramprad grew up and began his start in business ("The IKEA Logo," 2022).

Even long before IKEA, Kramprad had a natural interest in sales. As a child, Kramprad began working on finding the most profitable ways he could sell. Starting with matches and fish, he eventually began selling wallets, watches, and school supplies to his classmates. Then came the start of IKEA in 1943. However, furniture first appeared in the 1948 brochure, when Kramprad realized the opportunity furniture presented in post-war Sweden ("History of the Logotype," 2021).

The logo developed alongside IKEA's development as a brand ("History of the Logotype," 2021). When IKEA's logo was first created in 1943, there was a focus on creating trust around the new brand ("History of the Logotype," 2021).
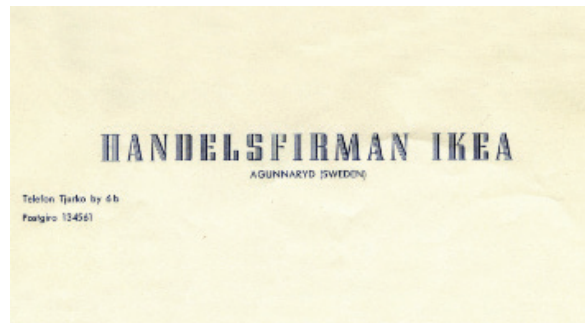
After seeing an acceleration in business, we see a drastic change in the IKEA logo. First, an accent is placed over the E, and "Agunnaryd" is added, the village where Kramprad grew up, and the "A" in IKEA ("History of the Logotype," 2021).

The text at the bottom is the address for a railway in Liatorp, Sweden, this suggests an expansion akin to the one IKEA was seeing in business at the time ("History of the Logotype," 2021).

This phase of the IKEA logo is still wordy like the previous. However, it begins to take on a more modern look with a sans serif font, especially in the word "IKEA."

New ideas developed in the 1940s, which became apparent in the updated logo. "Import-export" was added, to show the direct import to mail-order business model used by Kramprad ("History of the Logotype," 2021). This version actually strays away from the modern one, however, we see the first use of form to contain the logo.

In 1948, we see the start to the serif-font logo we see today. There were versions of this logo in both lowercase and uppercase, and modifications were added depending on its use. For example, here we see "Möbelfirman," or "furniture company" because Kramprad was selling furniture through mail order by this time ("History of the Logotype," 2021).

In the 1950's, IKEA's logo began to look much more modern.

This version, known as the "cloud version" was designed by Gillis Lundgren in 1952 ("History of the Logotype," 2021).

From this point on, Lungren became instrumental in the modernization of the IKEA logo. In the 1960s, he was chosen to standardize the logo ("History of the Logotype," 2021). The version he worked on in the 1950s seen above is already quite simple, especially when compared to the versions that came before it. However, in the 1960s, even the details are simplified or removed altogether. The texture and the accent above the E are removed, and the font is recreated to be more recognizable ("History of the Logotype," 2021). The cloud shape is exchanged for an oval, everything is framed by a rectangle, and the text is set horizontally ("History of the Logotype," 2021).

At the time, these logos were created by hand, with ink and a brush, and in-house typefaces ("History of the Logotype," 2021).

The version developed by Lungren gets very close to the modern version. "MÖBEL- ÄLMHUT" is included to indicate IKEA's growth and the opening of the store in Kungens Kurva, Sweden ("History of the Logotype," 2021). "Möbel" translates to "furniture" and "Älmhut" is the location of the first IKEA store. IKEA was expanding at the time, and the company needed a logo that could expand with it.

However, "MÖBEL- ÄLMHUT" disappeared in the 1970s, when IKEA grew internationally. With the addition of color in this stage, IKEA truly becomes a piece of Sweden despite its newfound global reach.

IKEA saw growth in Scandinavia in the early 1970s, and then opened a store in Switzerland ("History of the Logotype," 2021). As new markets appeared, so did customized graphics. These graphic designs show some clear deviations from the logo Lungren had created. However, it can be argued that this phase was beneficial or even crucial in IKEA's global expansion. Just as IKEA's first-ever logo was created with the intention of building trust around this new brand, these logo deviations helped settle IKEA stores in new places.

In Germany and Austria, a Swedish elk appeared holding the sign. They even had an elk statue outside the Austria store!

Canada and the United States used Vikings...

And so did Japan in another version.

Denmark, wanting to separate itself from Sweden, used a teddy bear ("History of the Logotype," 2021). Unlike the other locations, they did not use the Blue and Yellow colors of the Swedish flag.

IKEA and Color

The blue and yellow colors have become nothing less than iconic for IKEA's brand. Since 1991, only blue IKEA stores with the yellow wordmark have been built ("History of the Logotype," 2021). The stores themselves have become part of IKEA's identity. Unique in their size and use of color, they are massive blue and yellow cultural reminders of the IKEA brand. IKEA was able to create a brand culture around color and create associations in our minds along with the colors blue and yellow. Fans wear IKEA like fashion, creating hats and clothing from

the blue and yellow IKEA bags has become a popular trend. It is only fitting that these are the colors of the Swedish flag as well, a homage to the heritage of the company and another important brand association that IKEA has been able to uphold. The two work hand-in-hand to stick in our minds whenever we spot blue in yellow outside the car window.


This would not have been possible without the development of the logo itself alongside the choice of color, however. These changes allowed IKEA to become more globally recognized. IKEA is an example that shows how a simple design with a strong identity has the potential to become an international force.

Google

Planting Seeds and Googol

Before Google had its name it was called "BackRub," which was started in 1995. "Google" began in 1997 and has stuck ever since ("Google Logo," 2021).

"Google" is derived from the word "Googol." Googol was coined in 1938 by a nine-year-old boy, naming what might've been the largest known number (Origlio, 2022). However, numbers are infinite and there is no one largest number. Other than imagining a very large number (ten raised to the power of a hundred), Googol serves no real purpose (Schwartz, 2009). Regardless, the word still gained some popularity, especially with children just starting to understand math and vast numbers (Schwartz, 2009). Due to its connotation to a very large number, in this case, a very large amount of data, googol was thought of as a name for the search engine. Likely the result of a spelling accident between Google founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin, "Googol" becomes "Google," and "Google.com" is created ("Google Logo," 2021).
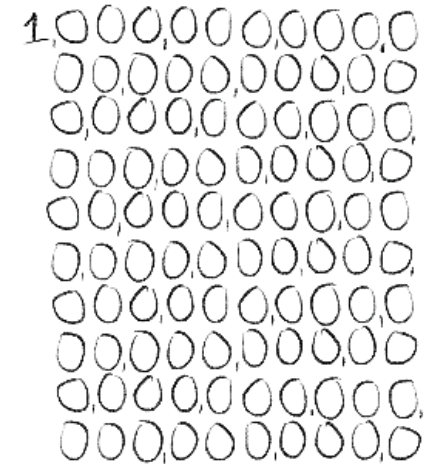
The Google Logo History

In 1997 after the name change, the first Google wordmark logo was created ("Google Logo," 2021). Although it is almost unrecognizable compared to the one we are used to today, it was the start for all the variations to come ("Google Logo," 2021). Even the first version of the logo includes the many colors we still see, a decision made very early on.

The next logo, typed in Baskerville Bold font, was designed in 1998 ("Google Logo," 2021). The logo had a three-dimensional look to it using gray shadows ("Google Logo," 2021). In this variation, we see the colors still used today, but in a different order.

In 1999 a shadow was added along with a different, more elegant typeface, the Catull BQ serif font ("Google Logo," 2021).

In 2010 the shadow was removed and the colors were brightened, a few small adjustments that make a big difference ("Google Logo," 2021).

While the colors and the typeface stay the same, the 2013 version is more minimalist, and appears much more modern than previous versions. The three-dimensional shading is removed, and the serifs become even more defined ("Google Logo," 2021). The logo takes on a more professional, flat appearance.

In 2015 the current logo was created, with only minor alterations since. The font is changed to a sans serif font that was created specifically for Google, called Product Sans ("Google Logo," 2021). Additionally, Google's G symbol is created using the same iconic colors. Google's colors have likely contributed to the success of the company ("Google Logo," 2021).

Choosing many colors was a risky decision, but it is one that has paid off for Google and has made the company stand out even more.

A Versitile Logo

Google's versatile wordmark logo is utilized in many creative ways that have helped shape Google's identity and brand. For example, in unhappy circumstances, Google has used a colorless logo to align itself with the mood of the situation. On the day that Lech Kaczynski, the President of Poland, died in a plane crash, a gray logo was displayed in Poland for many days ("Google Logo," 2021).

However, Google is most known for its daily celebration of holidays, historical moments, current events, famous birthdays, and more. These spirited logo modifications are known as "Google Doodles." The doodles began in 1998 when the Google founders attended the Burning Man festival and wanted to indicate that they were out of office. They placed a stick figure drawing behind the second "o" ("Google Doodles," 2013).

Two years later, the Google founders asked Dennis Hwang, an intern at the time, to create a version for Bastille day. That was the first holiday doodle that Google published. It was so well received, the doodle became a regular thing ("Google Doodles," 2013). According to Google, "In the beginning, the doodles mostly celebrated familiar holidays; nowadays, they highlight a wide array of events and anniversaries … Over time, the demand for doodles had risen in the U.S. and internationally" ("Google Doodles," 2013).

Sylvia Plath's 87th Birthday (2019).

Anniversary of the Ice Cream Sundae (2011).

Nike

Swoosh! Inside Nike

Swoosh! Inside Nike is a documentary created by CNBC in 2008. The documentary takes a look at the development of the Nike brand, their collaboration with Michael Jordan, and their overall journey.

Nike started as a simple shoe company that wanted to stand out from the rest. Nelson Ferris, one of Nike's first employees talks about their first days as a company; "We got started with no knowledge, no brand. We did things under impossible odds! We had the courage to change, we innovated like crazy to compete" (Switzen, 2008).

One thing they did in order to compete was offer Michael Jordan an endorsement deal of 500,000 in 1984 (Switzen, 2008). After Jordan was on board, the brand caught fire, and its popularity skyrocketed. According to the documentary; "people wanted the shoes worn by the kid who could fly through the air" (Switzen, 2008). The shoes became so popular, some people waited in line for up to five days, anticipating the release of the Jordan 23s.

The Swoosh

Michael Jordan helped create the renown around the Nike brand, but how was the famous "swoosh" created? The Nike logo was created by Carolyn Davidson in 1971. Phil Knight, chairman and former CEO of Nike, explains the process in Swoosh! Inside Nike.

> Phil Knight: So I just went to the graphic arts department at Portland State…and there was a young lady looking for a way to pay for her dress for the dance in a month, and so we paid her $2 an hour to come up with the mark!
>
> Interviewer: And so she shows you, basically, a sheet of bloated check marks?
>
> Phil Knight: Yeah! In 25 words or less that's right, she had several renditions of what ultimately became the swoosh. (Switzen, 2008).

In the end, Davidson was paid just $35 for the logo. When considering the financial success that Nike would become, Davidson was certainly underpaid- although at this time, neither

Carolyn Davidson, Phil Knight, nor anyone else involved knew what a great success Nike would become in time.

When thinking about the use of form in design, Nike immediately comes to mind. Nike is a brand that has championed abstract shape in a way that stands out when compared to other logos in the same category. Abstract logos are not a safe nor a common choice, this is because they are not easily recognizable and cannot be equated to real-life figures (for example, Apple's pictorial logo is easily recognizable to anyone who has ever seen the shape of an apple). This absence of a real-life meaning can make an abstract logo less memorable, but there is a silver lining. When a brand is able to champion an abstract shape, it takes on a life of its own. An abstract logo doesn't share its meaning with anything else, therefore the shape belongs to the brand and to the brand only. Nike was extraordinarily successful with their abstract logo, and with it, they were able to develop a strong culture around the brand. The Journal of Marketing provides some insight on how this became the case for Nike;

> Similar to our findings, Interbrand Schechter found that logos low in natural (highly abstract) generally are poorly recognized and not always well-liked. Our guidelines explain

these results and suggest recognition, affect, and familiar meaning all can be improved by making abstract logos more meaningful, natural, elaborate, and harmonious in their design. For example, the Nike and Coca-Cola symbols have been made more meaningful by being named (swoosh and wave). The Nike symbol is linked to the company, as it communicates speed or motion, whereas the Coca-Cola symbol has been used in slogans such as "Catch the Wave." These linkages improve recognition and recall. Both logos are more natural in design (use non-geometric shapes), have appropriate elaborateness (achieved by an active design), and achieve harmony (without being too symmetric) (Henderson, 1998, p. 27).

As described in the Journal of Marketing, Nike and Coca-Cola both had success with their abstract logos because they were able to give the shape meaning. The Coca-Cola wave is an abstract ribbon that reflects the shape of the original Coca-Cola contour bottle. Unlike Nike, you may not recognize Coca-Cola's wave without any other context clues, the wave is most recognizable when combined with Coca-Cola red and white.

Additionally, the name Nike's logo was given; "Swoosh" brings about ideas of speed, movement, and exercise. "Swoosh" is the sound of Michael Jordan racing across the court. The logo itself, although unsymmetrical, brings about ideas of aerodynamics, swiftness, and ease. The swoosh is cohesive with the brand as well, according to Nike, "If you have a body, you are an athlete" (Nike, 2022). Nike wants those who wear the swoosh to feel like the swoosh as well, swift, aerodynamic, and athletic. Their pursuit of motivating Nike wearers is not an accident, according to *Swoosh! Inside Nike*; "The mission stays the same: instilling aspirations, rather than catering to consumer desires" (Switzen, 2008).

According to Complex Magazine, "Nowadays the Swoosh represents all things Nike. It

stands alone as a mark, signifying both brand and culture. The Swoosh represents more than just a logo … Michael Raisch, now a senior designer at the NFL, says the Nike mark has a simplistic nature about it that brands today crave. 'It was aerodynamic in its shape, gesture, and boldness" (Newcomb, 2021).

As described above, when a brand is able to champion an abstract shape, it takes on a life of its own. An abstract logo's shape belongs to the brand and to the brand only. Nike has been so successful with its use of an abstract shape, that many viewers may read "*Nike*," "*Just do It*," or "*swoosh*" through their minds when looking at their logo.

Research II: Informal Interviews

These informal interviews were collected in Denver, Colorado's Santa Fe art district on March 24th, 2022. I had the honor of speaking with the following artists, Susan Helbig, Jon Nelson, Elsa Sroka, and Patricia Humiston Ramey in the Artists on Santa Fe Gallery. These vignettes are presented in "as told to" style, and the notes are edited slightly for readability. I went to the art district to speak with local professional artists, and hear about their experiences and perspectives on current design and the elements studied in the literature review portion of this project.

Susan Helbig

Susan Helbig is a contemporary abstract artist, who focuses on painting and drawing. Helbig got her BFA in fine arts at Metropolitan State University in Denver Colorado, with an emphasis on drawing.

"I would say line is probably the most important thing to me…When I was in school, drawing was my emphasis, if you're drawing you're using line. That's how I started out, and I'm still partial to line. I think there's a lot of great design right now, and I think a lot of it has to do with the internet- there's so much access to images. Technology, it certainly has made things easier, but it might affect creativity a little bit."

Jon Nelson

Jon Nelson is a 3D print artist. He is working on a project about where the human subconscious begins, and questioning if it starts in our senses. It includes a large 3D printing of a receptive nerve inside of the eye.

"Branding is a whole other world at the moment. In fact, I kind of hate the word branding because it has lost meaning to a certain extent. At one time, branding wasn't just a look. It was how a company was approaching the world, and now branding can just be the name of a boxed dinner. It doesn't talk to you anymore. I think that the original concept of branding was too much for people to carry around with them in their head. So they just drop whatever they don't want to deal with, and it becomes simpler and simpler and of course less valuable and less valuable for the understanding of what a company really is and is doing. Part of that I think is at the feet of advertising, but I think a lot of it is at the feet of the viewers, of us looking at it going; that's too complicated for me, that's too hard, can they deliver it tomorrow? What's your personal brand? I don't know that there is such a thing as a 'personal brand.' Who are you? Where are you? It's that simple, and it's been around since the beginning of time."

Patricia Humiston Ramey

Patricia Humiston Ramey is a contemporary artist, her primary medium is watercolor painting. When I met her, she was taking her turn at the front desk of the gallery. She had her work hung up behind her, bright, colorful watercolor paintings.

"Pantone puts out the color of the year, so in terms of design, you're going to see a lot of that color. This year it's periwinkle blue. You'll start seeing the influence of color all around. It's hard, probably impossible, to not be influenced by the stuff around you. Everything has been done before- everything! But not your interpretation. We beat ourselves up thinking we have to come up with something so original. We can find a way to put all that junk aside and realize that just trying to be true to yourself, and do what's in your heart, in your mind, and what you're feeling, it'll be your creation. Everything's been done."

Elsa Sroka

Elsa Sroka, from Colorado, is a contemporary painter. Much of her art is inspired by animals and various landscapes she has traveled to. She is known for her series on cows, imagining them in unconventional settings.

"I like more contemporary works. I see a lot of contemporary work out there, and I think that's the appeal right now. I think there's a lot of young people collecting art. They're much more attracted to something that's more fresh, and there are more young collectors, they're not going to be collecting things that the old generation has. And digital art too, I think that people have been using computers and Photoshop to tweak designs, digital art is coming in. I think being more fresh in your vision is the trend, for sure. You don't want to do something a million other people are doing. In the design world, there are certain colors and things that are very popular, and I think I am very influenced by that in my work, and that translates into what people want. Subconsciously or not we are all influenced by that."

Conclusion

In conclusion, we are heavily influenced by all the design surrounding us, even when it goes unnoticed. From my understanding, this can have both positive and negative effects. It can help us feel connected, shorten the "decision-making process," and spark change. Conversely, it can also make us feel disconnected, anxious, buried in too many choices, and forced to tune it all out.

So much of design is influenced by the world around us, yet so much of the world around us is influenced by design. It is a positive feedback loop that will always be interconnected. To take a look at design is to take a look at the world around us, too. For example, green, and seemingly environmentally-friendly packaging, grow in popularity after heightened concerns about the environment. Bright colors and wild forms become more enjoyable after months spent confined in a world locked down by a pandemic.

Additionally, so much of the world *is* designed. From *Vogue* magazine to soda cans, to a simple exit sign, there is thought and intention put into the creation of almost everything around us. However, it almost always goes unnoticed. More frequently than not, these details are not actively considered, and our interpretations occur subconsciously.

That being said, this can be the intention. Design can be loud and bold, but it can slip under the radar too, and sometimes this is just as effective. Design as a successful information tool does not overpower and convolute the message being presented, the message becomes the main point of focus.

This is especially the case when thinking about branding and being persuasive. Even beginning to consider how your favorite brand might've gone about convincing you to favor them so heavily is overwhelming. As we continue to be surrounded by a myriad of choices, it can seem as though everything around us is branded. This would not be an incorrect interpretation. However, paying active attention to design can help us hold onto our personal power and control.

Some limitations of this project included time and research ability. Going forward I believe that there will always be room for further exploration of this topic, as it is both multifaceted and constantly changing over time. One area for further research would be to continue investigating the number of choices we face, and the potential connection between this and a lack of attention to design in America (possibly due to either the overwhelm or desensitivity caused by these choices). I am also interested in further research on the effects of being exposed to so many branded *things;* especially products, but also services, institutions, locations, ideas, people, and more.

The cultural and historical significance behind the elements of design is imperative to understanding their uses as information tools. It is also directly related to how they are interpreted throughout time and today. The influence of these factors should not be underestimated. Cultural and historical significances are foundational in what we now consider best practices, especially in the case of color.

With this project, I was able to learn so much valuable information about best practices in design through the qualitative research in the literature review portion of this project. I collected information from a variety of different sources, authors, designers, and professionals in branding and design. Through the research section of this project, I was able to learn from some of the most successful brands through case studies. I also had the chance to talk with local artists and designers and hear about their experiences.

After this project, I want to continue actively consider design not just when it is striking, but whenever I can, taking into account the significance behind the elements of design. I am thankful for the beautiful, open-to-interpretation nature of this area of study. I look forward to keeping my eye on design as it continues to fluctuate for the rest of time.

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