

Effectiveness of values communication through cross-cultural corporate symbol design

by

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ABSTRACT

Intercultural communication occurs between people whose culture, language, and visual perceptions are distinct enough to alter the communication event between them. In this arena, the graphic designer plays the role of a visual ambassador, creating vehicles of communication intended to carry messages within or across cultural barriers. The task is challenging and necessary because of the contemporary tendency toward globalization. In today's global market, multinational corporations are creating brands to express their corporate values. As a result, these corporations are more connected to their customers and are differentiated from their competition.

This study tested the effectiveness of communicating values instead of products in the design of a symbol for a cross-cultural corporation. For this study, the existing corporate symbol of a Colombian coffee company was redesigned into three different versions in an attempt to communicate values to a cross-cultural audience. Each symbol was tested by means of a survey completed by participants from different parts of the world who were studying at Iowa State University. The first survey tested the effectiveness of a symbol that communicates values only. The second survey tested the effectiveness of a symbol that communicates the same values when accompanied by a reference to a product. The final survey tested the influence of values perception when the symbol uses a universally recognized icon. This methodology provided a clear idea of the possibility to universally communicate values through a corporate symbol.

The results of this study showed that the corporate symbol which combined product and values had the highest percentage of values recognition. It can also be suggested that by

using this corporate symbol redesign, the Colombian coffee company would effectively communicate what the company is and its brand values to a cross-cultural audience.

INTRODUCTION

Every culture expresses its purposes and conducts its affairs through the medium of communication. Cultures exist primarily to create and preserve common systems of symbols by which their members can assign and exchange meanings. Unhappily, the distinctive rules that govern these symbol systems are far away from obvious.¹

Intercultural communication occurs between people whose cultures, languages, and visual perceptions are distinct enough to alter the communication event between them. One example of this is a national company expanding its products or services to a different country. In this arena, the graphic designer plays the role of a visual ambassador who creates vehicles of communication intended to carry messages within or across cultural barriers. The task is challenging and more necessary because of the contemporary tendency toward globalization.

The homogenization of mankind is rooted in culture and linked to the progress of communications. Western culture is deeply rooted in the idea that the fragmentation of mankind² should be overcome. This fact can be traced back in history to biblical times with the story of the tower of Babel and the subsequent ways used to overcome this conflict of fragmentation. Technological innovations have contributed to better communications among people by removing sources of misunderstandings between individuals. The advances in technology and communication during the last decades have shrunk time and space, converting diverse societies into a single world community.³ This fact contributes to the

¹ D. Barnlund. *Communication between cultures*. "Intercultural communication: interaction in a changing world." (1995): 3

² Stephen Lax. *Access Denied in the Information Age*. (2001): 219

³ James Gregory. *Branding across borders*. (2002): XXI

phenomenon of *globalization* which, for the purposes of this study, refers to the transmission or diffusion of messages across national borders through various media.

These advances in technology and communication are also making possible the equalization of high quality standards for manufacturing products and/or delivering quality service among corporations. In other words, most corporations today have the same technology to produce products. If any corporation gains a slight advantage in terms of price, quality, or service, its competitors usually catch up quickly.⁴ The *quality* of a product that was key for customer loyalty toward that product in the past has become common and shared by modern corporations.

New criteria, therefore, are required to compete in today's market. Making the difference to the customers are the values and identity of the corporation. This involves the concept of *brand*. A brand is the promise, the big idea, and the expectations that reside in each customer's mind about a product, service, or a corporation. It is the core meaning of the modern corporation⁵ that makes the difference today. By differentiating products and services from those of competitors, a corporation becomes less vulnerable to competitive marketing actions of multinational corporations.

Our visual experiences are tied directly to our intellectual and emotional experiences that are constructed and learned culturally and socially. We don't just "see"; we learn how to see and what to see through the lens of culture. History has shown that culture is dynamic and constantly changing, yet solid in the root values or structures that support it. For example, it is surprising the number of cultural variations that can be found in different

⁴ Wally Olins. *Corporate Identity: making business strategy visible through design*. (1989): 35

⁵ Naomi Klein. *No Logo: taking aim at the brand bullies*. (1999): 5

regions of the same country. Even though the culture is the same, every region has its own characteristic practices that are learned by its members through time. This also applies to visual communication among different cultures as is the case of the use of signs and symbols that are also learned.⁶ For this purpose, semiotics (the science of signs)⁷ provides the study of the way people interact with and through different symbols which imply more than their obvious and intended meanings. Symbols have a variety of meanings because every culture assigns meaning to them and uses symbols for different purposes.

Today an increasing number of corporations are combining marketing with strategic design programs. Many corporations are redesigning and adapting their visual identity in response to the tendency toward globalization. They are describing their operations in the form of symbols, slogans, and identity-creating processes.⁸ The logo is the primary face of the company, visually communicating what the corporation does. However, the logo also needs to communicate the values and identity of the corporation in order to differentiate it in the market. The most important task for a graphic designer is to communicate a specific message to a specific audience using graphical language to convey not only the message itself but also emotions in order to make easier the perception of the message. When designing a logo that is going to communicate cross-culturally, graphic designers should comprehend the importance of understanding, appreciating, and communicating effectively with people from diverse cultures.

Many current socioeconomical issues make intercultural communication an active influence in today's world. New technology and information systems that facilitate cultural

⁶ Arthur A. Berger. *Seeing is believing*. (1989): 29

⁷ Arthur A. Berger. *Seeing is believing*. (1989): 30.

⁸ Lena Holger & Ingalill Holmberg. *Identity, Trademarks, Logotypes, and Symbols*. (2002): 9

interactions, the rapid increase in migrations, and the shifts in the world's economic arena are some of the aspects that drive people across cultural boundaries. This is translated to the phenomenon of globalization that is causing audiences from all around the world to interact with each other. Cross-cultural designer Henry Steiner argues in his book *Cross-cultural Design* that this fact is allowing a transformation where the influence is being assimilated and “the once foreign becomes personal and natural.”⁹

The importance of cross-cultural communication in this study is twofold. First, the importance lies on the tendency that corporations are communicating through brands, and that brands communicate values. Secondly, with globalization brands are communicated in many cultures, and they need to be differentiated by what the brands are and what values they express.

This study tests the hypothesis that it is more effective to communicate values instead of products when designing a symbol for a cross-cultural corporation. Multinational corporations are selling themselves as values and emotions rather than high quality manufacturers. The global and rapid communication of these values suggests the possibility for an equal perception of values among the different cultures in which these multinational corporations interact. The effectiveness of values communication over product communication is tested by comparing the responses of audiences from different cultures that were surveyed on three different symbols. One group was exposed to a symbol communicating only a set of values. A second group was shown a symbol that communicated both values and product. The last group was surveyed about a symbol that made reference to a universally recognized symbol (i.e., the eagle).

⁹ H. Steiner & K. Hass. *Cross-cultural Design*. (1995): 2

In this study three symbols are designed with different objectives and tested on the audience in the context of a survey. In the first symbol, the effectiveness of value communication is provided by the response of many audiences from different cultures when they are shown the same logo (focused on values communication). To measure the effectiveness of communicating values instead of products through symbol design, a second symbol is designed to communicate both values and product. A third symbol is designed to study the effectiveness of communicating values by referring to a universally known symbol. The study is encouraged by the rapidly increasing number of brands that appear in different countries, and by the tendency of multinational corporations to communicate values in their identities in order to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

By applying the concepts of communication, globalization, and culture to a symbol design, this study attempts to prove the effectiveness of values communication to different audiences of the world. The results gained in this study are important for the graphic designer, especially the corporate symbol designer whose work needs to be multilingual and multicultural.

Purpose of Study

The existing literature suggests that globalization has contributed to a tendency for modern corporations to communicate themselves as a brand, communicating values or emotions through branding which involves their corporate symbol. While there are a number of corporate symbols with which designers have tried to communicate qualities and values, very few research studies exist on the effectiveness of communicating qualities and values through corporate symbols, especially from a cross-cultural perspective. This study attempts

to study the effectiveness of communicating values instead of product in a cross-cultural corporate symbol for the following reasons:

1. With the technological advances in communication, far more people are exposed to global communications than ever before.¹⁰ These advances are bringing cultures closer, turning them into a single world community where image, text, sound, and objects also converge in the social production of meaning. This allows the possibility to use corporate symbol design to communicate from a global perspective.
2. These advances in technology and communication are making possible the standardization of the quality of products among corporations, especially in multinational corporations. This fact is producing a tendency for successful corporations to rely on brands to forge an emotional bond with the customers in order to differentiate themselves from the competition. Graphic designers are challenged to deal with this global tendency.
3. There is a lack of existing research on value communication through a cross-cultural corporate symbol design.
4. The implications of eliminating product reference from a corporate symbol for a multinational corporation need to be investigated.
5. Symbols are everywhere and wedged into all areas of culture.¹¹ This study explores the influence of globalization on the shared perceptions of a corporate symbol shown to individuals from different cultures.

¹⁰ Terry Flew. *Understanding Global Media*. (2007): 1

¹¹ John Fraim. *Battle of Symbols*. (2003): 38

Research Questions

1. Is it possible to communicate values through corporate symbol design cross-culturally?
2. Is it more efficient to communicate values instead of product among different cultures in a corporate symbol design?
3. Which graphic elements (color, shapes, and figures) are helpful in the global communication of certain values (belonging, tradition, and expertise) through the design of a cross-cultural corporate symbol?
4. Is it possible to communicate only values without making reference to product in the design of a corporate symbol?
5. Does the use of a universally recognized icon (i.e., the eagle) influence the communication of values in a corporate symbol?
6. What are the implications of eliminating product reference from a cross-cultural corporate symbol?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions

Brand. A product (or a class of products) including its trademark, its brand name, its reputation and the atmosphere built around it.¹² It is the core meaning of the modern corporation.¹³

Branding. The connection of the various processes of a corporation in order to attach the customers to the purposes and principles of a brand.¹⁴

Brand identity. A set of aspects that convey what a brand stands for: its background, its principles, its purpose and ambitions.¹⁵

Corporate identity. A set of visible and tangible features representing a corporation or firm (e.g., logos, products, visual communication materials, building features, uniform designs).¹⁶

Corporate symbol. An essential part of a corporation's branding. It can be expressed as a logo.¹⁷ It can also be expressed as a typeface that reflects the expression of a corporation's culture, personality, and the products or services it has to offer.¹⁸

Icon. A sign that looks like or resembles the thing that stands for. This makes the icon very easy to interpret (e.g., the signs in airports—they are pictures that most people, regardless of the language they speak, should be able to understand).¹⁹

¹² Per Mollerup. *Marks of Excellence: The Function and Variety of Trademarks*. (1997): 56

¹³ Naomi Klein. *No Logo: taking aim at the brand bullies*. (1999): 5

¹⁴ Sicco Van Gelder. *Global Brand Strategy: Unlocking Brand Potential Across Countries, Cultures & Markets*. (2003): ix

¹⁵ Sicco Van Gelder. *Global Brand Strategy: Unlocking Brand Potential Across Countries, Cultures & Markets*. (2003): 35

¹⁶ Lin Lerpold. *Organizational Identity in Practice*. (2007): 151

¹⁷ Marc Gobé. *Emotional Branding: The new Paradigm for Connecting Brands to People*. (2001): 121

¹⁸ Lena Holger & Ingalill Holmberg. *Identity: Trademarks, Logotypes and Symbols*. (2002): 142

¹⁹ Arthur Berger. *Seeing is believing: An Introduction to Visual Communication*. (1989): 28

Logo. A graphical element (symbol, sign, or icon) that accompanied with type forms a trademark. “Logo” sometimes refers to short names, acronyms, or abbreviations, and it is designed for immediate recognition. Today a logo has a close and important connection to the brand. It has become an instrument to express the personality of a corporation and a visual expression of the brand that makes it memorable.²⁰

Sign. Any physical entity to which a community attributes meaning (i.e., words, images, facial expressions, clothing, hair styles, etc.).²¹

Symbol. A form of sign that has conventional meaning which has to be learned. There is no logical connection between this meaning and the symbol itself²² (e.g., visual symbols such as flags, a cross, words, or music that we have to learn in order to find their meaning).

Visual identity. The design elements and other manifestations that help customers to recognize a brand.²³

Visual Communication

Communication is the process by which we share our ideas and feelings. A complex process involving several elements, communication becomes even more complex when culture is added to the mix. But it is this complexity which explains the connection between communication and culture. Our customs, the way we dress, how we eat, how we greet—all these behaviors are also part of how individuals communicate. Communication and culture

²⁰ Marc Gobé. *Brandjam*. (2007): 81

²¹ John Morgan & Peter Welton. *Seeing what I Mean*. (1986): 36

²² Arthur Berger. *Seeing is believing: An Introduction to Visual Communication*. (1989): 28

²³ Sicco Van Gelder. *Global Brand Strategy: Unlocking Brand Potential Across Countries, Cultures & Markets*. (2003): 35

are inseparable, and when the elements of communication change, the elements of culture differ or change and vice versa.²⁴

Most of our human communication is done through symbolic means (words, signs, and symbols)²⁵ that we have learned through culture. In 1974, Worth and Gross saw communication as a social process within a context in which signs are produced and transmitted, then perceived and treated as messages from which meaning can be inferred.²⁶ Since this study involves the influence of culture on visual communication, this is probably the best definition of communication for this paper. In this definition we can understand the context of communication in which signification occurs and how communication is the vessel of customs, traditions, and perceptions.

The process of communication is an interaction between the individual or source that sends the message (sender) to its destination (receiver). This interaction relies on the fact that communication has an aim, a purpose, in which both sender and receiver must be active. In this sense, it is important to understand the components of the communication process, how they are interconnected, and to realize that there are outside elements that can interrupt the process of communication. *Noise* is an event in which the communication process is altered. Our cultural difference can act as *noise* because it interferes with the receiver's ability to perceive the message the way the sender wants. In other words, it detours the effect that the individual sending the message (sender) wants to have in the individual who receives the message (receiver).

²⁴ Larry A. Samovar. *Intercultural communication*. (1995): 44

²⁵ Arthur A. Berger. *Seeing is believing*. (1989): 1

²⁶ Sol Worth & Larry Gross. (1974, Autumn). Symbolic Strategies. *Journal of communication*, 24, 30

To say that communication is a process is to emphasize that it is dynamic.²⁷ As participants in the communications process, individuals are constantly affected by other people's messages and by the culture that surround them (which is also dynamic). Using the analysis of the effectiveness of communicating a message (values) through the filter of cultural perception, this study explores the dynamics of the communication process from the perspective of visual language communication.

The following model of communication developed by Berlo (1972) provides a framework to analyze the process of communication:

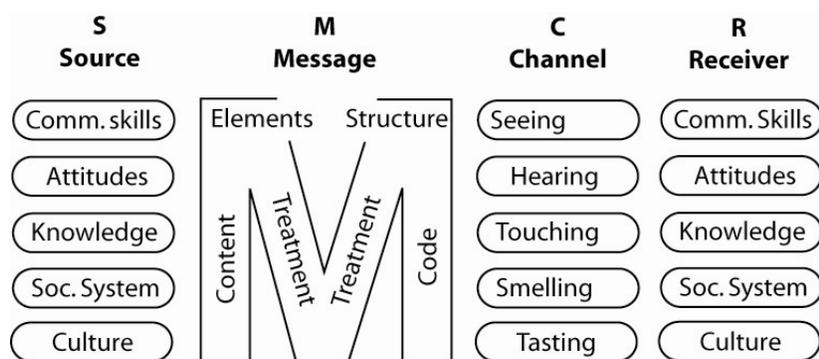


Figure 1. Berlo's SMCR model of communication

This diagram exposes the components and their interaction to translate a message from the source (sender) to the destination (receiver):

1. The **sender** and the **receiver** need to interact using the same code or language and in the same way. This is possible through the sharing of the same **social system** and **culture** (the values, rules and beliefs through which people live). As

²⁷ John Morgan & Peter Welton. *See what I mean*. (1986): 28

discussed earlier, communication and culture are linked, and here we can again perceive that interaction; for the graphic communicator (graphic designer) it is important to understand the cultural conventions of the receiver in order to avoid misunderstanding in the communication of a message.

2. The two main components of the communication process (sender and receiver) must be linked by a **channel** or medium of communication. In visual communication, the designer conveys the message using different channels such as printed materials (posters, booklets, catalogs, etc.), websites, and logos.
3. The **message** consists of various inseparable components. The interaction of these components is what produces their effect on the communication process. In the model, Berlo uses the “M” figure to bind them together.
 - a. **Content:** The information which is the topic of the message.
 - b. **Elements:** The individual items (words, sounds, gestures, pictures) which are assembled to form the message. In the case of a logo, the items can be brush strokes, colors, and recognizable objects.
 - c. **Structure:** Refers to the way in which the elements of the message are assembled. When combined in a different way, the same elements can produce different messages (i.e., “dog bites man” is not the same as “man bites dog”).
 - d. **Treatment:** The elements and structure may be combined in the same essential way, but the communicator has the skill to introduce subtle variations to vary the impact of the final message. For example the word *expertise* can be communicated as precision or as a high quality craft

obtained through time. The final result depends on the subjective contribution of the communicator.

- e. **Code:** The rules and conventions on which the message is built; for example, the grammar of a language.

The proper use of the signs that we use to communicate is what gives meaning to our surroundings. *Sign* can then be defined as any physical entity to which a community attributes meaning. Words, clothes, gestures, possessions, pictures, colors—we give meaning to all of these in our daily lives.²⁸ In this sense a sign can be much related to what a symbol is; in fact, many communication researchers consistently use the word sign as a synonym for symbol.²⁹ For this study, sign is considered as the general category, and the term symbol is considered as a variety of sign.

The American philosopher C. S. Peirce identifies three kinds of signs: iconic, indexical, and symbolic. An *icon* is easy to interpret; it is a sign that looks like or resembles the thing it stands for (e.g., the signs used in airports are icons because most people, regardless of the language they speak, should be able to understand them). An *indexical* sign is connected to what it represents, and we learn this connection from everyday life (i.e., smoke indicates fire). A *symbol* has a conventional meaning and is also something that we have to learn (i.e., the cross, the Star of David, or corporate logos). Symbols often generate enormously powerful emotional responses in people.³⁰

There is also a close interaction between the creation and implementation of signs and culture. In order to recognize the objects that surround us, we all have to be taught what

²⁸ John Morgan & Peter Welton. *See what I mean*. (1986): 36

²⁹ Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz. *Semiotics and Communication*. (1993): 22

³⁰ Arthur A. Berger. *Seeing is believing*. (1989): 29

these different objects are. Most of us don't even recognize this learning experience because it happens very fast and almost unconsciously. The knowledge that we need to recognize those symbolic elements is learned through culture. Ferdinand Saussure argues that a sign is divided into two parts: *signified* and *signifier* (Figure 2). For Saussure, a signifier is a sound or object that calls to mind a concept or signified. The relationship that exists between these two parts of a sign is arbitrary or conventional (Figure 3), and, therefore, this relationship is not natural and must be learned.³¹

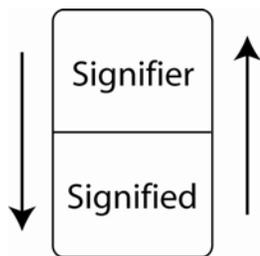


Figure 2. Parts of a sign.

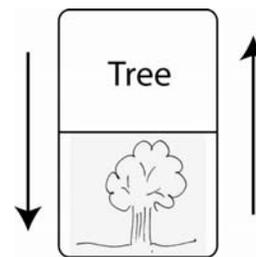


Figure 3. Relationship between parts of a sign.

Thus far, this paper has discussed from the perspective of semiotics how signs and symbols are related to culture. Symbols are defined by the interaction that we discussed; they are not established by nature. From this perspective symbols can be defined as social objects used to represent whatever people agree they shall represent.³² For example, holding two fingers in the air stands for victory or peace.

For this study, a symbol will be discussed as a graphic form of expression. Symbols are perceptual concepts rather than real objects,³³ and through design they simplify what they represent. Another feature or nature of symbols is that they communicate messages

³¹ Arthur A. Berger. *Seeing is believing*. (1989): 30

³² Joel M. Charon. *Symbolic Interactionism*. (2004): 48.

³³ Rudolf Modley. *Sign, image, and symbol*. (1966): 119.

internationally³⁴ (i.e., musical symbols or mathematical symbols that are used around the world to communicate). Based on these features, the symbols designed for this study attempt to communicate values through different cultures using graphic forms. The effectiveness of how well the graphic forms enhance the communication of values will also be tested in the surveys.

Branding

Over the last fifty years the economic base has shifted from production to consumption. It has gravitated from the sphere of rationality to the realm of desire, from the objective to the subjective, to the realm of psychology.³⁵ With industrialization, machine power replaced animal power. It appears that we are now undergoing another transition—a transition to mastery of work that, for the first time, places a premium on mental rather than physical work. We are not managing tools; we are managing human development. The advances in technology and communication are making possible the equalization of high quality standards for products and/or service among companies. In other words, if any corporation gains a slight advantage in terms of price, quality, or service, its competitors usually catch up quickly.³⁶ What is making the difference to the customers and/or users are the values and identity of the corporation. By differentiating products and services from those of competitors, a corporation becomes less vulnerable to competitive marketing actions. This involves the concept of “brand.” The brand idea originated when ordinary products like soap, tea, or coffee were granted with a distinctive name and packaging.

³⁴ Wendy T. Olmstead. *Comprehensibility estimates of Symbols for Public Information Signs in Health Care Facilities*. (1991): 17.

³⁵ Herbert Muschamp. “Seductive Objects with a Sly Sting,” *New York Times*, 2 July 1999.

³⁶ Wally Olins. *Corporate Identity: making business strategy visible through design*. (1989): 35

Corporations use brands to individualize goods that otherwise may be difficult to distinguish from those of other corporations; this individualization gives way to the creation of an identity of values.³⁷

A brand is the promise, the big idea, and the expectations that reside in each customer's mind about a product, service, or a corporation; it is the core meaning of the modern corporation.³⁸ It took several decades for the world to adjust to this shift where corporations might make products and offer services, but what the customer is now buying are brands. A brand is the reason why a corporation buys another for several times the price it is supposed to be worth (i.e., Philip Morris purchased Kraft for six times what Kraft was worth on paper³⁹); what costs is the "name" of the corporation that carries the set of values that integrates that identity the customer is buying. Another term used when talking about companies is branding, which is the emotional connection with the brand. It includes the visual manifestation of values and can take many forms⁴⁰ (i.e., the colors of the stores of a company, its advertisements, TV commercial, posters, magazine ads, etc.).

In our increasingly information-loaded world, brands will become more important as sources of identity. The brands will be the stories for the customer to believe in, providing the criteria by which the customer will make the final decision when choosing one product instead of another. For example, Starbucks' Vice President of Marketing Scott Bedbury recognized that consumers don't believe there's a huge difference between products. That is why the Starbucks brand must establish emotional ties with customers through the

³⁷ Per Mollerup. *Marks of excellence*. (1997): 56

³⁸ Naomi Klein. *No Logo: taking aim at the brand bullies*. (1999): 5

³⁹ Naomi Klein. *No Logo: taking aim at the brand bullies*. (1999): 7

⁴⁰ Mono. *Branding: from brief to finished solution*. (2004): 8

“Starbucks experience.”⁴¹ According to Starbucks’ CEO Howard Shultz, this experience, accompanied by the feeling of warmth and community, is what gets people into Starbucks stores.

Branding creates the personality of a company. It refers to the process of selecting and applying personality values and characteristics to the corporation’s vision and mission. These values and characteristics must not be complex. The most core values found in a company will differentiate its brand among the competition, and at the same time these values will make it easier for the customer to identify the brand.

Logos expressed as symbols (Nike), logotypes (FedEx), or a combination of both (the AT&T logo) are an essential part of branding. The design elements of the logo (color, shapes, or forms) are important as a catalyst for good and bad feelings and need to be managed carefully.⁴² In the global arena of branding, the logo designer must be aware of the cultural perceptions that the audience has when exposed to the design elements of a logo. In fact, new logos are being designed to bring people and corporations closer, emotionally connected; this helps to better communicate the desired personality of the company.⁴³

The practice of applying emotions to logos comes from a social shift. In the 1970s and 1980s, the world was absorbing ideologies that were the result of socioeconomic facts such as the Vietnam War and human rights. Corporations needed to apply to their business practices new ideas representing philosophies of justice, equality, and sensitivity to the environment, so they started implementing a new language to communicate concerns about the impact of business in the world such as the case of Benetton which has been expressing

⁴¹ Scott Bedbury (vice president of marketing with Starbucks, speaking to the Association of National Advertisers) as quoted in *The New York Times*. October 20, 1997.

⁴² Marc Gobé. *Emotional Branding*. (2001): 122

⁴³ Marc Gobé. *Emotional Branding*. (2001) :123

its concern for issues of violence, racism, and AIDS. The Body Shop is a corporation that built its success by being very enthusiastic about issues of human condition, the environment, and animal rights.⁴⁴ Patagonia, a multinational clothing corporation, includes in its mission to use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis; it does so by manufacturing products and working with processes that cause the least harm to the environment. Another example is Nike; this corporation is more focused on “the magic of sports alive”⁴⁵ enhancing people’s lives through sports and fitness. The essence of a brand is a set of values; and the emotional connection between a product or service and the customer is what gives loyalty to a brand among the other 3,000 brands that are introduced every year.⁴⁶

The corporate logo then has to reflect this new language; it becomes not just a means of identification, but a means of communication.⁴⁷ Virgin, for example, evokes a personal and approachable feeling by using a handwritten signature as its corporate logo (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Current Virgin logo

⁴⁴ Marc Gobé. *Emotional Branding*. (2001) :126

⁴⁵ Donald Katz. *Just do it: The Nike spirit in the Corporate World*. (1994): 25

⁴⁶ Marc Gobé. *Emotional Branding*. (2001): xxvi

⁴⁷ Conway Lloyd Morgan. *Logo, Identity, Brand, Culture*. (1999): 10

What then is the influence of values in modern corporate symbol design? And if brands are becoming globally recognized, would the values expressed through these brands become globally recognized as well?

In the early 1990s, designer Wally Olins stressed the connection between values and symbol design. For him the greatest graphic symbols are those that come straight out of the imagination, defy logic, and appeal to the emotions. The symbol designer should, wherever possible, look for opportunities to introduce concepts that both represent the particular organization and are directly accessible to people through the visual representation of universal human values.⁴⁸ For example, the cross (Figure 5) is a symbol that has great resonance and emotional power for many Christians; it summarizes the essence of Christianity and symbolizes sacrifice. Amazon.com communicates what the corporation is about through its trademark (Figure 6). It does so by using the metaphor “from A to Z” to refer to the variety of products that the corporation offers, and the satisfaction offered to the customer is communicated by the universally recognized symbol of a smile.



Figure 5. The cross



Figure 6. Current Amazon logo

⁴⁸ Wally Olins. *Corporate Identity*. (1989): 186

Globalization

Globalization is seen as being only a recent occurrence, but it actually dates back at least five centuries with the science revolution and European exploration (expansion of knowledge in physics and mathematics, development of finances, trades, travels). It has been spreading exponentially through technology such as the telephone, trains, radios, automobiles, airplanes, and now the Internet. Globalization indicates a pattern of social change where things that have been separate become increasingly integrated. Modern corporations experience this idea in their change of organizational strategy when they plan to go global in order to operate more internationally.

Political and economical interests have also fueled the race of technology, contributing to globalization as well. The removal of political barriers to communication is chief among them. In the last few decades, governments have reduced barriers to the movement of goods, capital, and information, thus encouraging the development of cross-border activities. All these innovations make the interaction between people, nations, and cultures inevitable, and make communications a development priority.

Marshall McLuhan introduced the phrase “global village” to recognize that new technology and instantaneous communication had shrunk time and space, converting diverse societies into a single world community.⁴⁹ Globalization refers to the transmission or diffusion across national borders of various forms of media,⁵⁰ and in doing so, it contributes to the dynamism of cultures. Currently some companies have operations in more than 100 countries, emphasizing the importance of companies to communicate effectively in this era.

⁴⁹ Branding across borders. XXI

⁵⁰ Diana Crane. *Global Culture*. (2002): 1

The methodology employed in this research will analyze the influence of globalization in graphic design, more specifically in corporate logo design. Most of the individuals interviewed in the survey have been exposed to globalization by living in a culture that is foreign to theirs; therefore, the results of this study can also measure the interaction of globalization in symbol perception.

For this research, globalization will be analyzed from the perspective of consumerism and mass communications. The best known model to analyze globalization from this perspective is the cultural imperialism theory that emerged in the 1960s as part of a Marxist critique of advances in capitalist cultures.⁵¹ This theory argues that the global economic system is dominated by a group of countries that are considered advanced while the third world countries have little control over their economic and political development.⁵² But this domination is not only economic. Multinational corporations control markets, and, by doing so, they also impose on cultural and national beliefs, values, behavioral norms, and style of life, thereby shaping and reshaping cultural values, identities, and perceptions. In this model of cultural imperialism, globalization acts as an aggregation of cultural flows in which cultural influences move in many directions.⁵³ It is this aspect of globalization that is going to be explored in this research—its contribution to overcome cultural perceptions in visual communication.

Mass media have been greatly influenced by globalization. The advances in communication technologies, such as Internet or cable television, allow a variety of methods to communicate messages quickly and around the world. These rapid changes in

⁵¹ Diana Crane. *Global Culture*. (2002): 2

⁵² John Tomlinson. *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical introduction*. (1991): 37

⁵³ Diana Crane. *Global Culture*. (2002): 3

communication and distribution of messages are affecting the values, knowledge, and norms of cultures.⁵⁴ For instance, satellite television has been of great importance in disseminating television programs from first world (advanced) countries to less advanced countries, thus communicating customs, language, and beliefs from other parts of the world. In the perspective of visual communication, symbols and signs are also being communicated quickly around the world, and these symbols are being assumed or adapted by cultures in order to communicate in the same language that the world is speaking.

Corporate identity is also affected by globalization. There are many companies that are going global; they are taking their brand (including advertising messages) with them in order to conserve the identity that defines each company. For instance, multinational companies like British Airways, Coca-Cola, Ford, and Procter & Gamble have created persuasive global strategies involving a global corporate vision with a single voice or theme.⁵⁵ The rapid spread of communication and the high frequency with which these themes or messages are communicated around the world through a variety of channels (i.e., Internet, cable television, cinema, etc.) allow their assimilation in different cultures. For example, with its advertising Nike communicates a way of life—an attitude—of living through sports and fitness. They branded this idea by saying “just do it,” accompanied by its swoosh which became an internationally recognized symbol capable of communicating the “just do it” message around the world. In other words, globalization can allow individuals to perceive the world as one place where singular messages can be used globally.

⁵⁴ Lee Artz & Yahya Kamalipour. *The Media Globe*. (2007): 1

⁵⁵ Thomas L. McPhail. *Global Communication*. (2002): 161.

Cultural Background

Perhaps the most complete definition of culture would be that culture is “[The] integrated system of learned behavior patterns which are characteristic of the members of a society and which are not the results of biological inheritance.”⁵⁶ Culture is a system of beliefs, traditions, and habits through which a community identifies itself. Language, laws, religion, values, shared habits, and tastes are all aspects of culture. It is culture that gives us the criteria of perception and the way we think about visual phenomena, which is also affected by the knowledge we learn from our culture. The cultural conventions that we learn are intrinsic in each culture, which make them different from every other culture. In the visual communication field, these conventions prevent receivers from performing a free play of imagination when perceiving an image. In other words, cultures set the conventions and educate the receivers as to what they should and should not perceive when exposed to an image.

Even though the physical mechanism of perception (i.e., eyes, ears, and nose) is the same in all individuals, the process of perception is not. Since this process is learned and influenced by one’s primary culture,⁵⁷ different cultural groups evaluate and place meaning to the information received by the sensorial system in a different way. For example, the Western perception when seeing an elephant is different from the perception of an individual from India when seeing the same elephant. These perceptions can also be called cultural experiences, since they are the way a social group experiences the world. These experiences

⁵⁶ E. Adamson Hoebel & Everett L. Frost, *Culture and social anthropology* (1976): 6

⁵⁷ Larry A. Samovar. *Communication between Cultures*. (1995): 80

are not secret anymore; they are being discovered and globally communicated to other cultures as well.

With technological advances in communication, far more people are exposed to global communications than ever before.⁵⁸ These advances have shrunk time and space, turning diverse societies and cultures into a single world community where image, text, sound, and objects also converge in the social production of meaning. Following this idea, Samovar observes that culture can be translated as a set of symbols that we use to communicate our internal states or to represent something; they help us to let other individuals know how we experience the world.⁵⁹ Global communication allows the interaction of these symbols and meanings with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, in turn influencing their cultures.

But there are forces that contradict the possibility of a common or global culture. One of them depends on how culture is defined. If the concept of culture is taken in its anthropological sense of being a lived set of values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, then we can only talk about cultures and not a culture. In other words, the idea of a global culture is a practical impossibility.⁶⁰ However, this anthropological definition is not enough to define culture in a global perspective. Many theorists (i.e., Williams, Frow, and Morris) agree that culture also considers “symbolic or signifying systems;”⁶¹ similarly, Frow

⁵⁸ Terry Flew. *Understanding Global Media*. (2007): 1

⁵⁹ Larry A. Samovar. *Communication between Cultures*. (1995): 32

⁶⁰ Anthony Smith. *Towards a Global Culture?*. (1991): 171

⁶¹ Raymond Williams. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. (1976): 18

and Morris observed that every aspect of interaction within a culture is shaped by a set of representations (image, text, sounds, behaviors).⁶²

The current interaction among different cultures and the fact that cultures entail a system of social, linguistic, and psychological relationships are a critical refinement to the definition of culture. It is critical because communication media (radio, television, film, Internet) provide materials by which we “forge our very identities; our sense of class, of ethnicity and race, nationality, of sexuality, of ‘us’ and ‘them’.”⁶³ Communication media provide the symbols, myth, and resources through which we constitute a common culture. They also help to shape our view of the world and what we consider good or bad, positive or negative. These arguments propose that the current levels of cultural interaction, which have no precedent, communication media are providing similar patterns of communication and assimilation of messages for a common culture.

Corporate Identity

Corporate identity is the expression of a corporation’s culture, personality, and the products or services it has to offer.⁶⁴ The need for corporations to express a character or a set of characters in order to identify itself with customers and be differentiated among other corporations has prompted corporate identities to be increasingly more personal identities designed around emotion(s). This need of differentiation is increased by the amount of multinational companies.

Every corporation is unique, with unique purposes that come from the corporation’s own roots and personality. Its identity must be visible, tangible, and all-embracing.

⁶² John Flow & Meaghan Morris. *Australian Cultural Studies*. In J. Storey (ed.) *What is Cultural Studies? A Reader*. (1996): 345

⁶³ Douglas Keller. *Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism and Media Culture*. (1995): 5

⁶⁴ Marc Gobé. *Emotional Branding*. (2001): 121

Everything that the corporation does must be an affirmation of the corporate identity.⁶⁵

Products or services, buildings, communication materials (annual reports, brochures), and advertising must have a consistent quality and character that reflect the whole corporation and its purposes or aims. Since corporate identity communicates a personality, human resources become an important factor. Not only do the tangible part of the corporation (products, advertising, buildings, or trucks) reflect and communicate the corporate identity, the nontangible part is also essential. The nontangible part refers to employers, managers, suppliers, and customers.⁶⁶ Through all aspects of its identity, the image of the corporation is received and perceived and will generate impact and differentiation among customers.

Corporate identity is expressed in the names, symbols, logos, and colors used by the corporation to visually distinguish itself among the competition. When designing cross-culturally, the designer must find the essence of a culture to get in touch and experience it in order to understand the symbolic and representative objects that embody a culture and inspire designers for their aesthetic and semiotic value.⁶⁷

The identity process starts when the corporation introduces a program to help clarify and make visible the structure and strategy of the corporation and articulate its vision. The corporation will do this to differentiate itself from the competition, gain market share, and underline and emphasize the new direction it is taking. Corporate identity embraces a complex network of management disciplines such as organizational behavior, marketing,

⁶⁵ Wally Olins. *Corporate Identity*. (1989): 7

⁶⁶ Wally Olins. *International Corporate Identity*. (1995): 7

⁶⁷ P. Cué. (2006). Freshly baked: U.S. students brand a Mexican panadería. AIGA, The professional association for design. Retrieved August 22, 2007, from <http://designforum.aiga.org/content.cfm/freshly-baked-us-students-brand-a-mexican-panadería>

communication and research, and almost always design in its various forms.⁶⁸ After the personality and culture of the corporation is defined, the process continues by launching and maintaining the identity. This part of the process requires an investigation to monitor the identity of the corporation; it is carried out in both internal (employees, managers) and external (clients, suppliers) audiences. The results will provide a landscape of how the corporation is perceived, how well it is known, where, what for, and by whom. According to Olins, the real risks when launching and maintaining a corporate identity lie not so much in what is defined as the personality of the corporation or what is created around it, but in how it is communicated, implemented, and subsequently maintained. Technological advances are beneficial for the communication of corporate identity, since electronics are replacing or supplementing paper. Multimedia is increasing the possibilities to communicate emotions that contribute to the experience of the identity.

Today, graphic identities are created not only for corporations but for major brands.⁶⁹ Wally Olins, in his book *International Corporate Identity*, notices some factors that affect corporate identity in an international perspective. One of these factors is that in today's market environment, modern corporations have to distinguish themselves emotionally, and therefore a successful graphic identity works not only on product and services but in environments and behavioral issues as well. Another factor noted by Olins is the acceptance of the rise of the global idea in corporate identity. In other words, the graphic identity work is becoming more universal and less national in its appeal. The brands of

⁶⁸ Wally Olins. *International Corporate Identity*. (1995): 8

⁶⁹ Wally Olins. *International Corporate Identity*. (1995): 10

global corporations tend to eliminate, so far as they can, their original national characteristics in favor of trying to develop an international corporate style.⁷⁰

Examples of Corporate Symbol Redesign

The following part of the research shows examples of corporations that have redesigned their corporate symbol in order to fit the global market, as well as examples of multinational corporations that have removed product or service references from their corporate symbols and considered the expression of values in their redesign.

China Youth Press

The first case serves as an example of how a local corporation needs a more international identity when expanding its frontiers internationally. China Youth Press, founded in 1949, is one of the largest publishing houses on mainland China. The original logo (Figure 7) that identified this publisher had been the calligraphy of “Lu Xun,” the Chinese literary giant of the 1930s.⁷¹ The new global economy of the last 20 years and the more open economic policy in China has provided open doors for the global market. Seeing this reality and comparing its identity with other foreign identities, China Youth Press felt the need for a new and more competitive identity. Although the original mark (Lu Xun) was very comfortable in China, it was confusing in foreign countries where the publishing house was expanding. This led to the redesign of the corporate symbol as part of the new identity.

⁷⁰ Wally Olins. *International Corporate Identity*. (1995): 12

⁷¹ Andres Clay. *Identity Design Sourcebook*. (2004): 320.

Strong competitiveness was the value that the corporation wanted in their new identity. The new corporate symbol was designed based on the consideration of the letter “C” for China and an abstracted hand, the fingers of which make reference to the pages of a book (Figure 8). When appreciating the symbol as a whole, it resembles the head of a lion. Using this icon, the designer attempts to express the values of the arousing and strong competitiveness for which the publishing house was looking. This case of corporate symbol redesign also exemplifies the communication of values in a cross-cultural corporate symbol while having a reference to product. The new corporate symbol didn’t go completely away from the product reference within it (references to the pages of a book), but it communicates the values to compete and be differentiated in the global market.



Figure 7. Original China Youth Press logo



Figure 8. redesigned China Youth Press logo

United Parcel Service of America (UPS)

This corporation has changed its corporate symbol through time to reflect the evolving business strategy of the company. In its latest corporate symbol redesign, and as part of the rebranding strategy in 2003, UPS removed the graphical reference of service from its old symbol. The bow-tied package that was part of the corporate symbol designed by Paul Rand in 1961 (Figure 9) was restraining UPS’s ability to represent the new variety of services that the corporation was now offering (freight services, financial services,

business mail services, etc).⁷² The current corporate symbol (Figure 10), introduced in 2003 is designed to reflect the evolution of the corporation and expresses a stronger visual presence in the global market. The corporation maintains the shield as a symbol to communicate the values of reliability and integrity of UPS. Through the removal of the bow-tied package, the new corporate symbol allows UPS to express its variety of services. By emphasizing the symbol of the shield, the company communicates its values.



Figure 9. UPS logo (1961)



Figure 10. Redesigned UPS logo (2003)

Hankook Tires

The number one tire company in Korea has also crossed national borders. Among the changes within the corporation, Hankook considered the redesign of its corporate symbol (Figure 11) to face the global market. In the redesigned symbol (Figure 12), the two illustrated tires are removed and replaced by a symbol that suggests wings and speed. There is a controversy on whether or not the public can recognize the wings, but the issue here is that the redesigned corporate symbol expresses the speed of innovation that the company invests in its products. By using a universally recognized symbol—the wings—in the

⁷² UPS. (2006). The UPS logo: A Brief History. Retrieved February 13, 2008, from <http://www.pressroom.ups.com/mediakits/factsheet/0,2305,1060,00.html?mkname=brand>

revised corporate symbol, the company attempts to express its speed of innovation from a global perspective.



Figure 11. Original Hankook logo



Figure 12. Revised Hankook logo

The following cases are examples of mergers and acquisitions between corporations, which is becoming a very common strategy among corporations when they decide to enter the global market. This wave of mergers and acquisition of companies has been driven by globalization and technological change.⁷³ The purpose of mergers and acquisitions is to improve the current and future status of the corporation in a global arena, which is achieved by acquiring new technologies, products, and services in order to have a bigger presence in the global market.

British Petroleum (BP)

Rather than a case in which product reference was eliminated from a corporate symbol, the new BP identity is a case that shows the importance that cross-cultural corporations invest in the communication of values and visions through their brand and corporate symbol design. In the year 2000 the world's third largest oil corporation branded itself to move beyond the petroleum sector. In 1998, BP Amoco was the result of the merging of BP and Amoco. Two years later BP Amoco acquired two oil corporations,

⁷³ D. Schweiger & P. Goulet. *Advances in Mergers and Acquisitions, Volume 1*. ed. Cooper, C. & Gregory, A. (2000): 61.

ARCO and Castrol, which made BP Amoco an oil and gas giant with wide-ranging oil, gas, and energy operations worldwide. This new alliance realized that it needed to create a strong brand identity focused on the communication of its vision of the future. The identity needed to symbolize the new organization and reflect the values to which it aspires: performance, environmental leadership, innovation, and progressive ideas.⁷⁴ The corporation's vision for its new identity was to communicate that BP Amoco is not about business as usual and that it is more than an oil company.

The new identity included a name and a brand mark. After a process of research and analysis of the brand assets, Landor (the company in charge of the new identity design) concluded that neither the BP shield of the original logo (Figure 13) nor the torch-and-oval symbol of Amoco (Figure 14) brand mark were appropriate to represent the new corporation and its goals.

The next step was to develop the corporate symbol that needed to communicate globally the values for which the company wants to be differentiated and to reinforce BP's environmental commitment. Research showed that the BP color palette of green and yellow was unique in the petroleum sector and was identified as an important brand asset to retain.⁷⁵ At the end, the "Helios" symbol was selected (Figure 15), a sunflower-shaped mark consisting of interlocking planes and colors. The use of natural forms in this new corporate symbol communicates the values of leadership and alternative energies that are essential for the BP brand. In this symbol, the color palette of BP reflects the determination to respect the

⁷⁴ Andres, Fishel, Knapp. *Identity Design Sourcebook*. (2004): 88

⁷⁵ Andres, Fishel, Knapp. *Identity Design Sourcebook*. (2004): 90

communities where people live by protecting the natural environment. Its shape also represents the sun, a priority in BP's search for new sources of energy.



Figure 13. Original BP logo



Figure 14. Amoco logo



Figure 15. New BP "Helios" logo

Stephen Williams, BP's Vice President of Strategic Marketing, states:

It [the new corporate symbol] helps us to tell the history of a company that's about oil, but also about solar energy, clean fuels, and making our world a better place. It's dynamic, it's bold, and it's something you wouldn't expect from an oil company. It's a tangible reminder of the progress and change we strive for every day.⁷⁶

Fortis

Fortis is a financial service provider with market leadership in Belgium and Luxemburg and niche business across Europe, the Far East, and the United States. In 1990, N.V. AMEV (a large Dutch insurer) and AG Group (a Belgian insurer) merged operations to complete cross-border financial services, giving birth to Fortis, the first full transnational merger in European insurance. The name Fortis, according to the corporation's website, is a Latin word that means "strong and determined."⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Andres, Fishel, Knapp. *Identity Design Sourcebook*. (2004): 95

⁷⁷ <http://www.fortis.com/general/onestrongbrand.asp>. Revised November 20, 2007.

For the initial logo of Fortis (Figure 16), the designers attempted to use two letters to make a cross-cultural logo. The combination of two “f” letters was used to unify the two cultures (Dutch and Belgian) and to evoke the Belgian Franc and the Dutch Florin,⁷⁸ the monetary currencies at the time. In a short period of time the corporation established itself as a contender in Europe and later as a global contender in insurance.

As the corporation expanded across the ocean (Fortis was acquiring business in the United States), it became necessary to create a mark to communicate in a global perspective. In 1998, this global perspective led Fortis to redesign its identity. The new mark intended to communicate the values of experience, diversity, integrity, and community and to take Fortis



Figure 16. Original Fortis logo



Figure 17. Redesigned Fortis logo

to the global sphere (Figure 17). Fortis is no longer a two-cultures corporation; it is no longer limited to its stability and strength. Fortis is now presenting itself as a brand based on experience interacting in diverse markets and focused on values to the customer. The new corporate symbol needs to express this evolution and therefore, the new logo is twofold. The

⁷⁸ Tony Spaeth. ‘Logomania’ in *Across the Board*. March, 1993

corporate symbol reflects a village through the use of a variety of circular and rectilinear shapes with different colors. This attempts to express the values of community and the diversity of markets in which Fortis now operates and serves. The second part of the logo is the visual aspect of the name of the corporation (FORTIS), through which the values of strength and stability are maintained in the new logo.

These examples reflect the tendency of modern multinational corporations to redesign their corporate symbols. They show the merging of corporations to compete in the new global society in which we live. Moreover, they show the importance that these corporations place on their branding in order to have a better connection with not only the customer, but society as well. As discussed before, the brand is based on values and emotions; it is the differentiator among the global market. In this part of the research, it is notable how the power and weight of the corporate symbol has the capacity to convey the values and attributes that the brand needs to express.

METHODOLOGY

The hypothesis of this study states that it is more effective to communicate values rather than products when designing a symbol for a cross-cultural corporation. In order to test this hypothesis, a set of three symbols are shown to a group of individuals from different countries. Each individual of this group is exposed to only one of the three symbols. Each symbol is tested in the context of a survey to document the perception of values represented in the symbols and to determine if these company values are more effectively communicated than the company's product. It has to be clear that each individual member of the audience is shown only one symbol—not all three symbols—in order to get more accurate data for the perception of each symbol.

The three symbols tested are the redesigns of the current symbol of a Colombian coffee corporation, Café Aguila Roja. This company has been providing coffee to the national Colombian market for nearly 80 years. Like many local companies, Café Aguila Roja is considering expanding to the global market. As part of the strategy to go global, the company needs to adapt its corporate symbol to communicate its brand to the new audience in a more universal way.

When translated to a cross-cultural corporate symbol, the main problem with the current logo is that the symbol of the eagle can contribute to miscommunication of what the corporation is about, since the symbol of the eagle will not carry its original meaning to the global audience. Since diverse cultures have different perceptions regarding the product of coffee and the symbol of the eagle, Café Aguila Roja cannot count on these particular perceptions; it needs to communicate more universally its values through a cross-cultural corporate symbol that will identify the company in the global market.

The redesigned symbols for this study attempt to communicate the values of tradition, expertise, and belonging. They also have a subtle reference to product. Each redesigned symbol has a different objective to test:

1. symbol “A” attempts to test the universal perception of values;
2. symbol “B” attempts to test the connection between the product (coffee) and the perception of values; and
3. symbol “C” attempts to test the connection between the company’s existing symbol (eagle) and the perception of values.

This last corporate symbol attempts to express the values of tradition and expertise, and it also incorporates a reference to a symbol, in this case, an eagle. The reason behind expressing different values in this corporate symbol lies in the attempt to globally communicate the current values that characterize this Colombian corporation. It is also intended to test the effectiveness of communicating these values cross-culturally using the eagle in the corporate symbol. The referent and objective for each corporate symbol are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Corporate symbol referent and objective

<i>Referent</i>	<i>Objective</i>
<i>Symbol A. Values</i>	To test the universal perception of values.
<i>Symbol B. Product and values</i>	To test the connection between values and product.
<i>Symbol C. Symbol and values</i>	to test the connection between values and a symbol.

If the findings of this study show that most of the audience group perceives the same values in symbol “A,” then it is correct to suggest that there is a possibility of communicating values more effectively than products in a cross-cultural corporate symbol.

The richness of the information collected lies in the audience’s exposure to globalization. The population for this study consists of international faculty and students at Iowa State University with diverse cultural backgrounds. This population interacts with other individuals who have different customs but use the same language (English) and share a global culture (exposed to the same information and messages communicated around the world). These factors provide a good environment to test the effectiveness of communicating values instead of products in a cross-cultural symbol.

Survey Objectives

The values to be expressed in the redesigns were selected according to the coffee product in Colombia and the Colombian coffee company. These values are: (a) *tradition*, (b) *expertise*, and (c) *belonging*. The value of *tradition* comes from the historic importance of this product in Colombia. In this country, coffee is more than an agricultural product; it is considered a cultural and social part of the country. Coffee has been consumed in Colombia since 1723, and its production was virtually the first source of employment in this country. For that reason, coffee is considered a traditional beverage in Colombia. The value of *expertise* reflects the company’s production process. For the initial phase of production, Café Aguila Roja employs farmers who use natural and traditional processes to grow and collect coffee beans. For this study, *expertise* will make reference to the craft and natural processes used by the farmers in the collection of the coffee beans. *Belonging* is the value

that expresses the sense of community when people gather together in small groups to have conversations while drinking coffee.

The three surveys test the perception of the same set of values (tradition, expertise, and belonging) in three different symbols on an audience group from around the world. In order to test the effectiveness of communicating values instead of product in a cross-cultural corporate symbol, each survey has specific objectives that provide useful data to develop comparisons between the results of the surveys.

Survey objectives for symbol A (values):

1. Measure the recognition of values: tradition, expertise (to depict the craft and natural process of coffee production), and belonging.
2. Percentage of audience that recognize the correct values.
3. Recognition of the design aspects that contributed to value perception.
4. Determine if the most of the cultures interviewed recognize the same values.

Survey objectives for symbol B (product and values):

1. Measure the relation between values and product recognition.
2. Percentage of audience that find a connection between the values and product.
3. Determine if the most of the cultures interviewed find this relation (percentage of audience that relates values and product).
4. Recognition of the design aspects that contributed to the perception of the relation between values and product.

Survey objectives for symbol C (product with a symbol reference):

1. Percentage of audience that recognize the product (coffee).
2. Percentage of audience that recognize values (tradition and experience) through the symbol (eagle).
3. Recognition of the design aspects that contributed to the product perception.

Development of the Survey

The methodology is divided into three parts. The first part relates to the design process of each symbol and what each attempts to communicate. The second part contains the procedure used to gather the data from the surveys. The third part describes the method used to analyze the data gathered on each survey, revealing the perception of the study participants when facing each corporate symbol. The last portion of the third part is dedicated to the comparison of the study results and to determine if the results support the hypothesis of the study.

Design Process

Problems with the current logo of Aguila Roja

For the global audience, the symbol of the eagle in the current logo of Café Aguila Roja (Figure 18) will lead to miscommunication of what the company and its brand stands for. The current logo relies on Colombian tradition to express what the company is. There might be difficulties to communicate what Aguila Roja is to the global audience, however, if the company uses this code (Colombian tradition) to communicate to the global audience. The new audience won't find a connection between coffee and the eagle. For the Colombian audience the use of this bird in the logo of Café Aguila Roja is to make a tribute to the eagle that inhabits the region where coffee is grown, as well as to graphically represent the name

of the company “Red Eagle” (Aguila Roja). In this sense, the symbol of the eagle in Colombia has a different meaning than in other countries. For instance, in the United States of America the eagle symbolizes freedom and courage; in Germany, the eagle might have a military connotation.

As a brand, Café Aguila Roja expresses the values of tradition, expertise, friendship, and human warmth to the Colombian audience. It does that through its advertisements (television and radio commercials); its current corporate symbol, however, doesn't communicate those values.



Figure 18. Current logo of “Café Aguila Roja”

Design of the symbols

Corporate symbol for values (symbol A). This corporate symbol was designed to communicate only values (Figure 19). The three values that this symbol attempts to communicate cross-culturally are: tradition, belonging, and expertise. The last of these

values has different connotations such as technological quality; for the purpose of this study, *expertise* will be treated as the skill of an expert,⁷⁹ a natural skill gained through time, not technology.

In this corporate symbol each of the different values were expressed through different graphic elements. The values of tradition and expertise were connoted by the rough line quality of the elements in the symbol. This particular line quality is meant to depict the handcraft essence of the farmers' labor in the collection of the coffee beans. This line quality of the outlines of the symbol signals guarantee, responsibility, and quality,⁸⁰ and attempts to communicate high quality and care gained by experience through time. There is also a subtle reference to product in this symbol; the different colors represent the landscape where the coffee is grown in Colombia. From the bottom to top, the green represents the cool mountains; the brown refers to the earth where coffee is cultivated; blue depicts the sky; and the yellow line on top makes reference to the sun. The values of belonging are communicated through the general shape of the corporate symbol. The spiral shapes of the top and bottom lines create unity for the symbol, depicting the value of belonging or community.

The main idea for the design of this symbol was to create an abstract form that would communicate the intended values. The design process of the symbol started by finding images and pictures of the process of coffee collection in Colombia, in order to communicate the values of expertise. The image selected is an abstract representation of a landscape where the Colombian coffee is grown. Originally, the symbol was vertical to

⁷⁹ <http://m-w.com/dictionary/expertise>

⁸⁰ Per Mollerup. *Marks of Excellence*. (1997): 159

evoke the steam that comes out of a fresh cup of coffee. However, having the symbol horizontal represents more clearly the idea of a landscape. Finally, the similarity of the shapes was meant to help communicate the value of belonging.



Figure 19. Corporate symbol for values (symbol A)

Corporate symbol for product and values combined (symbol B). This corporate symbol is designed to communicate both product (coffee) and values (Figure 20). The values attempted to be communicated are the same as in the symbol for values. The main objective of this corporate symbol is to test the effectiveness of values communication when accompanied by a reference to a product (in this case coffee). The comparison of the results of the test of this symbol with those of corporate symbol A will determine if it more effectively communicates values by themselves or if it's necessary to have a reference to a product.

The values of tradition and expertise in this symbol are expressed the same way as in the previous corporate symbol (symbol A). The hand-drawn line quality of the

outlines of the symbol attempts to communicate the values of expertise gained through time.



Figure 20. Corporate symbol for product and values combined (symbol B)

Besides representing the coffee product, the coffee cup is used in this symbol to express the value of belonging. This icon (coffee cup) is often used in the logos of places where people gather in small groups to have conversations; such is the case of coffee shops or Internet cafés. The product of coffee is depicted through the coffee bean shape in the middle of the symbol. The colors for this corporate symbol are analogous to create visual unity and to depict the true color of a coffee bean.

The design process for symbol B started by collecting images of the coffee product. There was also a collection of logos of companies that produce coffee. This was in order to have an idea of how companies communicate the product of coffee in their corporate symbol. The elements chosen for the symbol are the coffee bean and the coffee cup. The curved shape of the coffee bean was used to depict the liquid of the beverage in the cup. After experimenting with these two elements the plate was included in the symbol to create

a base and balance the mass of the coffee bean. The rough stroke was used in the symbol in order to convey the values of tradition as used in symbol A. The colors were chosen to reinforce the communication of coffee product.

Corporate symbol for values and symbol combined (symbol C). This corporate symbol (Figure 21) has a slightly different function than the previous symbols. The results of the test of this corporate symbol are used to measure the influence of a universally known symbol in the perception of values by respondents from around the world.



Figure 21. Corporate symbol for values and icon combined (symbol C)

This corporate symbol attempts to express the values of tradition and expertise, and it also incorporates a reference to the symbol of an eagle. However, the value of belonging is not attempted to be expressed in this corporate symbol, as in the previous designed corporate symbols. There are two reasons for this. First, this corporate symbol attempts to globally

communicate only the current values that characterize this Colombian corporation (tradition and expertise). Second, this corporate symbol is also intended to test the effectiveness of communicating these values cross-culturally using the symbol of the eagle in the corporate symbol.

Sometimes animals are given human characteristics, which is a reason why many logos for corporations use references to animals to communicate an attribute or value. For example, a tiger can stand for strength while an elephant can represent reliability;⁸¹ an eagle can stand for freedom, confidence, or speed. But the reason to include the particular symbol of the eagle in this redesign (symbol C) lies in the name of the Colombian coffee company that is being used for this study. The company is named *Aguila Roja*, which translates as “red eagle.” The current logo of the company includes a representation of an eagle with its open wings in red color (Figure 18). There is no literature available regarding the purpose of the eagle in the current corporate symbol of *Aguila Roja*. However, historical research of Colombian iconography reveals that this particular bird has been present since before colonization. The motif of birds with wings unfolded is often found in much Colombian native culture’s gold work.⁸² Archeological findings in Colombian territory as well as written records of the first Spanish explorers assure that the eagle was an object of interchange and legacy among members of native cultures.⁸³ Besides the meaning of

⁸¹ Per Mollerup. *Marks of Excellence*. (1997): 128

⁸² Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff. *Goldwork and Shamanism: an Iconographic Study of the Gold Museum of the Banco de la Republica, Colombia*. (2005): 149

⁸³ Sáenz Samper, Juanita. 2001. The Golden Eagles: Beyond Frontiers and Time. *Boletín Museo del Oro*. No. 48, January-June 2001.

interchange, the eagle also symbolized political power. The chiefs of the tribes, called “Caciques,” used to wear jewelry ornaments (Figure 22) in the shape of eagles.⁸⁴

There is no logical connection between the icon of the eagle and the production and consumption of coffee, not even for native Colombians. However, the research done about the history of the eagle in Colombia might reveal an association between this icon and coffee. The influence of this bird on early native indigenous cultures from Colombia and the physical presence of the eagle in the places where coffee grows might explain why this corporation uses the eagle in its corporate symbol. With this in mind, the icon itself has no intended connection with the values attempted to be communicated in symbol C; however, it will be interesting to see if the eagle carries any useful connotations for an international audience.



Figure 22. Pectorals used in gold work by Taironas (native Colombian culture)

The corporate symbol for values and icon combined (Figure 21) attempts to express the values of tradition and experience through different qualities of strokes. The head of the eagle is represented by solid strokes in order to express its importance in the symbol. As in

⁸⁴ J. Oliver. 1999. "Gold Symbolism among Caribbean Chiefdoms: Of Feathers, Çibas, and Guanín Power among Taíno Elites". Paper to be published in *Pre-Colombian Goldwork: Technology and Iconography*.

the previous symbols (symbols A and B), the rough line quality expresses the values of experience and tradition.

There is also a subtle reference to product in this symbol as well. The reason for the vertical strokes to have a transparent quality lies on the attempt to communicate steam to make reference to a hot coffee beverage; at the same time they are the representation of the open wings of the eagle. The color attempts to depict the true color of the coffee bean making a reference to product and also unifies the two elements of the corporate symbol (the eagle and steam). Finally, there is no an intended reason for having the eagle's head facing to the left; it is established like this in the original symbol (Figure 18). However, this could be a recommendation for further studies.

The design process for this symbol was similar to the ones used for the previous symbols. It included a collection of images of the eagle and examples of how some companies symbolize the eagle in their corporate logo. The next step was to find a way to integrate the symbol of the eagle and the values to be communicated. The curved quality of the eagle's wing was used to attempt to communicate the values of tradition and expertise. As in symbols A and B, the hand-drawn quality of the vertical strokes attempts to communicate the high expertise that is gained through time.

Data collection

The target population for this study consists of international students enrolled at Iowa State University. By the time the survey was conducted (Fall 2007) there were 2,244 international students enrolled.⁸⁵ Eighty-four students were the sample size for this study.

⁸⁵ Iowa State University of Science and Technology. (2004). International Students and Scholars Office: ISS Office Information. Retrieved February 21, 2008, from <http://www.isso.iastate.edu/Office/>

This was based upon a sample size determination that will be appropriate for many common sampling problems.⁸⁶ Each participant of the sample population is shown only one symbol (not all three symbols) in order to get more accurate data for the perception of each symbol: (a) 26 participants were interviewed for symbol A, (b) 29 participants were interviewed for symbol B, and (c) 28 participants were interviewed for symbol C.

The data for this study were collected through the context of a survey designed by the researcher (see Appendix A). A total of 1three surveys were implemented to gather data according to the objectives of each symbol. Each survey contains its respective symbol in full color and centered on the first page. The first pages contain multiple choice questions regarding the perception of the symbol. The last page is a general information questionnaire where the participant is asked to provide their demographic information (country of origin and age).

The enrollment process of participants for this study was made by contacting international student organizations at Iowa State University. A letter of invitation to participate in the surveys was sent through email to the organizations' presidents in order to interview their members. Another method used to enroll participants was the direct interview with international students. All the participants were informed of the objectives of the research and the importance of the participation of international individuals to the accuracy of the results of this study.

⁸⁶ J. E. Bartlett, J. W. Kotlik, C. C. Higgins. (2001). Organizational Research: Determining Appropriate Sample Size in Survey Research. *Informational Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Spring 2001, 43-50.

All three surveys were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Iowa State University. The IRB is a federally mandated committee responsible for review of all research involving human participants for compliance with the federal regulations.

Methodology used for data analysis

This study uses symbol understandability methods to measure the perception of values in the corporate symbols in the surveys. The symbol understandability has been defined as a measurement of the viewer's ability to perceive and understand the message.⁸⁷ By using techniques of open-ended and multiple-choice questions, the surveys attempt to measure the direct perception of the symbols by the participants. These methods have been adapted from previous studies on understandability and comprehensibility of public symbols (e.g., Olmstead, 1991; Foster & Afzalnia 2005).

This study uses the multiple choice method to assess symbol understandability. In this method the surveyed individuals choose from a list of answers regarding their perceptions. The surveys, however, also have open-ended questions that provide deeper explanations of the symbol interpretation of the respondents. Each respondent's interpretation can be compared with the intended one and with the rest of the data from other respondents.

The lack of research on the effectiveness of value communication through symbol design has been an obstacle to develop a standardized method that tests this effectiveness. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has developed methods for assessing the comprehensibility of graphical symbols (ISO 9186:2001). However, these

⁸⁷ Olmstead, Wendy. *Comprehensibility Estimates of Symbols for Public Information Signs in Health Care Facilities*. (1991): 31.

methods are designed to test the interpretation and meaning of nonverbal information such as public symbols used in airports. Such symbols don't communicate values or attributes; therefore, this study did not apply the ISO testing methods to measure the effectiveness of value communication through symbol design.

DATA ANALYSIS

This part analyzes the information gained from the surveys and is divided into three sections. The first section analyzes the demographic aspects of the population. The second section analyzes the data collected in relation to the objectives of each survey. The third section is focused on the comparison of results from the information gathered by the three surveys.

Section I. Demographics

The target population for this study consists of students from different cultural backgrounds. The reason for using this population is to explore the perception of individuals exposed to globalization and interaction with cultures and customs different from their own. The countries of the surveyed respondents are grouped by continents of the world (see Appendix B). The population sampled was grouped in age groups as well with a majority of respondents aging between 20 to 30 years old (Figure 23). This result was not planned, but it allows for the collection of more accurate data for this study since the individuals within this age range are more in contact with the effects of globalization (Internet, communications, media, etc.) than older individuals.

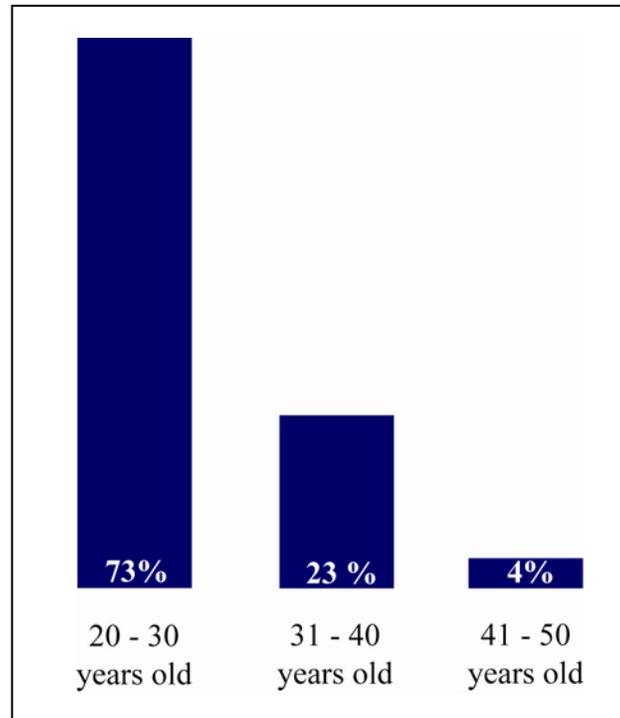
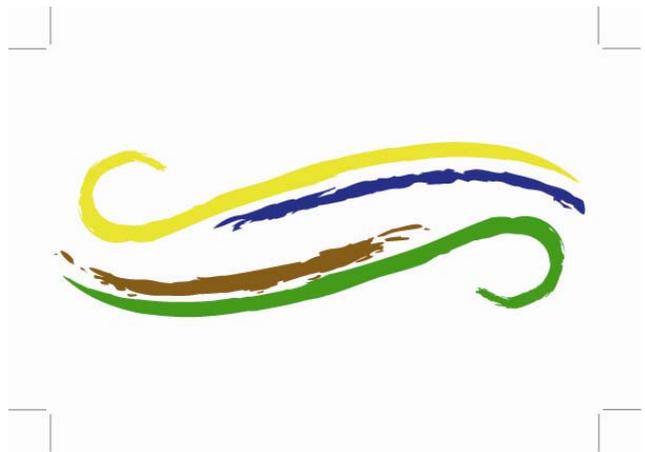


Figure 23. Age group percentage of respondents

Section II. Analysis of Data Collected

Analysis of data gathered in survey for symbol A (Corporate symbol for values)

The data gathered from this survey reveal that only half of the respondents could perceive at least one of the three values intended to be communicated through this corporate symbol (Figure 24). The other half of the respondents perceived other arbitrary values not attempted to be communicated (exotic, harmony, speed). It is shown, then, that the results of this study are not high enough to affirm the possibility to communicate only values



Corporate symbol for values

cross-culturally in a corporate symbol. The analysis of the open-ended questions of the surveys suggests that the cultural background of the participants is still an obstacle to a global and equal perception of values among different cultures (see page 78).

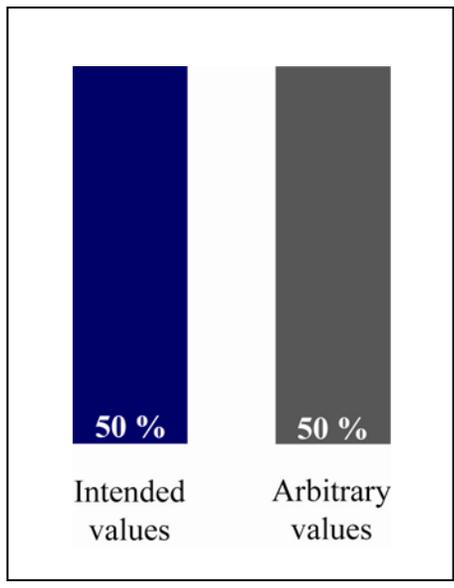


Figure 24. Perception of intended values in respondents for symbol A

The value with the highest perception in this corporate symbol is harmony (Table 2). This is an arbitrary value that was not intended to be communicated through the symbol. Harmony was equally perceived by most of the cultures interviewed in this survey. Respondents seem to have been highly influenced by the graphic elements of shape and color towards the perception of harmony as a value above the others (Table 3). More specifically, the graphic element of shapes was the most influential element that guided the respondents to the recognition of harmony (Table 3). This was measured by asking the participants the level of influence that they perceived of the graphic elements in a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest). In one of the open ended-questions, most of the respondents commonly answered that the curves and line quality of the shapes of this symbol convey a peaceful and relaxing feeling, which explains the high perception of the arbitrary value of harmony.

Table 2. Percentage of intended versus arbitrary values perceived in symbol A

Intended values	Arbitrary values
Expertise (9%)	Exotic (7%)
Belonging (12%)	Harmony (37%)
Tradition (16%)	Speed (19%)

Table 3. The influence of graphic elements in the perception of symbol A

Graphic element	Percentage	Average score of influence
Color	37 %	3.5
Shapes	35 %	4.0
Figures, objects or images	28 %	3.0

The influence of the shapes of this redesigned symbol might be the reason why the participants didn't perceive the intended values more successfully. Since symbol A is more abstract than the other redesigned symbols, this might have caused the participants to perceive other values such as harmony and speed rather than the intended values. It can also be concluded that the symmetry and flow of the lines of symbol A communicate harmony cross-culturally.

For symbol A, most of the participants could not relate the symbol to a geographic region or did not recognize a place where the symbol might have originated (Table 4). However, the Latino participants could associate the graphical elements in symbol A (such as rough strokes, shapes, and colors) to depict the regions of Africa and South America. This can be suggested by the fact that the Latinos were the ethnic group with the highest participation for this symbol (Table 5), and that the regions of Africa and South America have been highly perceived as the regions of origin for symbol A (Table 4).

Table 4. Region of origin of symbol A perceived by participants (percentage)

Region of origin	Percentage
Africa	25 %
Central America	8 %
The Caribbean	8 %
South America	25 %
No idea	34 %
Spain	0 %

Table 5. Participation percentage of ethnic groups in survey for symbol A

Ethnic group	Percentage of participation
Asians	28 %
Americans	8 %
Latinos	38 %
Europeans	13 %
Africans	13 %

Another question in the survey has to do with the kind of business that the symbol expressed to the participants (Table 6). For this question, the participants believe that symbol A represents an air travel company. Some of the participants also explained that they

related symbol A to an airline. This might be related to the fact that the second value most perceived by the participants is speed. However, it should also be highlighted that coffee

Table 6. What participants think symbol A advertises (percentage)

Type of Business	Percentage
Financial business	8 %
Internet service	8 %
Coffee company	29 %
Air Travel	47 %
Other	8%

company was the second highest answer by participants. The participants who believed that symbol A advertises a coffee company agreed that color and the shape of the symbol influenced their answer. For these participants, color reminds them of the region of South America and nature. The shape of symbol A was considered to promote exchange and equilibrium, which may explain why many participants identified the value of harmony.

Analysis of data gathered in survey for symbol B (Corporate symbol for product and values combined).



Corporate symbol for product and values combined.

The survey reveals that a very high percentage of the participants recognized at least one of the values intended to be communicated in symbol B (Figure 25). Of the three intended values attempted to be communicated through this corporate symbol, tradition was the most perceived by the respondents, followed by the arbitrary value of community (Table 7). A possible reason for the high perception of tradition can be related to the fact that 73% of the symbol B respondents consider coffee as a traditional drink (Table 3, Appendix C), and they were able to recognize the coffee reference.

Community is considered as a whole, as a society, and belonging is considered as a separate group. In other words, a community is a culture, and belonging is a subculture. The reason why belonging is an intended value instead of community lies in the sense of affinity that is shared in a small group of persons having a conversation and drinking coffee, which is the value that is attempted to be expressed in the symbols.

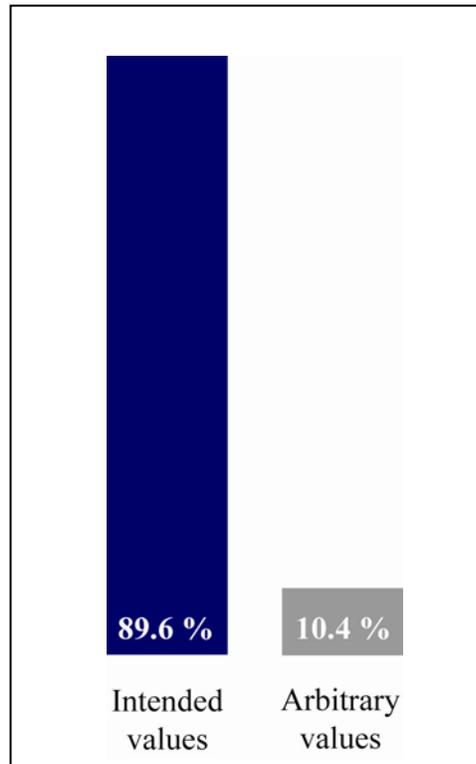


Figure 25. Perception of intended values in respondents for symbol B

The results of this survey reveal a correlation of the representation of product (coffee) and the perception of the values intended to be communicated. The respondents successfully recognized the presence of a mug and a coffee bean in the symbol (Table 8). This fact suggests that the reference to a coffee beverage contributes to the cross-cultural perception of the values of belonging and community. Table 9 reveals the level of influence of each graphic element perceived by the participants. It shows that the level of importance of the graphic elements of this corporate symbol are mostly equal. However, there is a slightly higher rating for the graphic elements of figures, objects, or images, which suggests

Table 7. Percentage of values and attributes perceived in symbol B

Intended values	Arbitrary values
Belonging (10%)	Heat (18%)
Tradition (34%)	Community (19%)
Expertise (11%)	Exotic (8%)

Table 8. Percentage of elements perceived by the participants in symbol B

Element	Percentage
Coffee bean	49 %
Mug	45 %
Other (keys, duck, hammer, screen, jar, iron)	6 %

that the communication of values through a cross-cultural corporate symbol is more effective when the symbol has a recognizable image that identifies the product.

Symbol B, which includes product and values combined, is the symbol that best communicates the product of coffee across the different cultures surveyed in this study (Appendix C, Table 1). This symbol also has the highest percentage of intended values perceived among the three corporate symbols being tested (90% of the participants surveyed for symbol B recognized at least one of the intended values attempted to be communicated through the symbol). It can also be said that symbol B successfully communicates the values of community and tradition cross-culturally. The Latino and Asian cultures had the highest

Table 9. The influence of graphic elements in the perception of symbol B

Graphic element	Percentage	Average score of influence
Color	34 %	3.2
Shapes	25 %	3.2
Figures, objects or images	41 %	3.9

Table 10. Participation of ethnic groups in survey for symbol B

Ethnic group	Percentage of participation
Asians	40 %
Americans	17 %
Latinos	40 %
Europeans	3 %
Africans	0 %

participation in the survey for this symbol (Table 10). This suggests that symbol B is able to communicate the same values to very different cultures, such as Latinos and Asians.

A comparison of the results of symbols A and B suggest that to effectively communicate values in a cross-cultural corporate symbol, it is necessary to have a reference to a globally recognized image such as, in this case, a coffee beverage.

Not surprisingly, symbol B also communicates effectively the product of coffee. In Table 11, it is shown that of all the three redesigns, symbol B has the higher clarity of coffee product among the participants. This can also be noted by the fact that most of the participants relate symbol B to a coffee company (Table 12).

Table 11. Average rating of clarity of coffee product per symbol (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest)

Symbol A	2.1
Symbol B	4.6
Symbol C	2.0

Table 12. What participants think symbol B advertises (percentage)

Type of Business	Percentage
Financial business	3 %
Internet service	3 %
Coffee company	91 %
Air Travel	0 %
Other	3 %

The region of South America was perceived by 43% of the participants as the region of origin of symbol B (Table 13). It was found that the two ethnic groups with highest participation in the survey for symbol B come from different cultures. Besides the high

participation of Latinos, there is also an important part of the participants that are from the Asian region (Table 10). This can suggest that if Aguila Roja uses this symbol as their cross-cultural corporate logo, it would help to communicate the Colombian origin of the company in Asian cultures.

Table 13. Region of origin of symbol B, as perceived by participants

Region of Origin	Percentage
Africa	7 %
Central America	20 %
The Caribbean	3 %
South America	43 %
No idea	24 %
Spain	3 %

Analysis of data gathered in survey for symbol C (Corporate symbol for values and icon combined)



The data collected in this survey revealed that a slight majority of the respondents perceived at least one of the values attempted to be communicated in this corporate symbol (Figure 25). It has to be clear that unlike the previous corporate symbols, this corporate symbol attempts to express only two values (tradition and expertise). The reason lies in the attempt to globally communicate only the values that currently characterize Aguila Roja. As in the current logo of this company (see Figure 18), symbol C also has a graphic representation of an eagle. The purpose is to test the connection or influence that the use of a symbolic reference can have in the global perception of values in a cross-cultural corporate symbol.

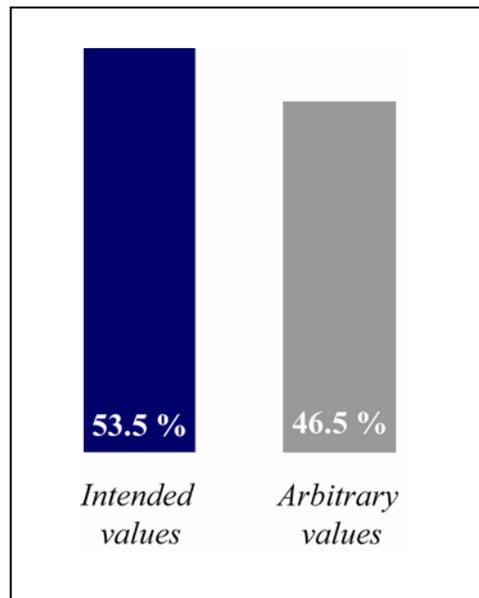


Figure 26. Percentage of values perception in audience for symbol C

The results of this survey reveal that among the intended values (tradition and expertise), the value of tradition has a higher perception; among the arbitrary values, confidence had the higher perception (Table 12). As revealed in the analysis of the previous corporate symbols, line quality might have been a reason why this corporate symbol can convey the values of tradition. Some of the participants who perceived symbol C as natural affirm that the image of a bird (in this case the image of an eagle) guided their decision to perceive this value. It can be suggested that the image of an eagle is not related to the values of tradition and expertise among the participants of this study.

Table 14. Percentage of values and attributes perceived in symbol C

Intended values	Arbitrary values
Tradition (22%)	Confidence (40%)
Expertise (11%)	Natural (27%)

In this survey the arbitrary value of confidence gained the highest percentage of perception from the respondents. It has to be clear that, as an arbitrary value, *confidence* was not intended to be communicated through symbol C. This option was placed in the survey because universally the eagle makes reference to the value of confidence, so the participants might perceive this value when seeing symbol C.

The results of this survey also reflect a connection between the values of confidence and the symbol of the eagle. Eighty-nine percent of the participants recognized the eagle in symbol C (Appendix C, Table 5). In the open-ended question (question number 6) most of

the participants agreed that the eagle is a sign of confidence, strength, and aggressiveness. This also explains the high scores of the graphic elements that contributed to the perception of confidence (Table 14). Another result shows that for this survey there is a relative equal participation of ethnic groups, which may suggest a good level of participation of the different cultures surveyed (Table 15). This can reduce high levels of influence of a specific ethnic group in the data collection, producing a better balance in the variety of data collected from participants of different ethnic groups. It can also be suggested that the figure of the eagle and its universal meaning (aggressiveness, abilities, strength) guided the participants to perceive confidence in this corporate symbol.

These results contribute to the suggestion that values can be effectively communicated in a cross-cultural corporate symbol through the use of a universal recognized icon (such as the eagle). In this case, however, the recognized icon carried the wrong message. It can be concluded from these results that the original logo of *Aguila Roja* would carry the wrong values to a global audience. The values of tradition and expertise won't be perceived in a cross-cultural audience since the symbol of the eagle carries a different set of values (as seen in Table 14).

Even though confidence is the value most perceived, very few participants agreed that symbol C advertises a financial business, the most likely choice for a company communicating confidence. Rather most of the participants relate the symbol with air travel (Table 16), which can be caused by their association of eagles with flight. Some of the participants relate symbol C with a coffee company; however, the participants relied on the colors and the shape of steam and smoke, and not the eagle, to explain why they related symbol C with a coffee company.

Table 15. The influence of graphic elements in the perception of symbol C

Graphic element	Percentage	Average score of influence
Color	16 %	1.6
Shapes	36 %	4.1
Figures, objects or images	48 %	4.2

Table 16. Participation of ethnic groups in survey for symbol C

Ethnic group	Percentage of participation
Asians	29 %
Americans	17 %
Latinos	36 %
Europeans	14 %
Africans	4 %

Section III. Comparison of Results

The results of the surveys reveal that among the three symbol redesigns, the corporate symbol for product and values combined (symbol B) has the highest perception of intended values for the participants (Table 17). It also is the symbol that has the highest rating on coffee product recognition by all the participants. Therefore, it can be suggested that the communication of values through a cross-cultural corporate symbol is more effective by having a globally recognized image. Such an image should have an association

to the specific values that are attempted to be communicated. In the case of this study, the image of the coffee cup was shown to communicate the values of tradition, while the symbol of the eagle seems to communicate the values of confidence cross-culturally.

Table 17. What participants think symbol C advertises

Type of Business	Percentage
Financial business	18 %
Internet service	4 %
Coffee company	25 %
Air Travel	39 %
Other	14 %

Table 18. Percentage of intended and arbitrary values perceived per symbol

	Symbol A	Symbol B	Symbol C
Intended values	37 %	55 %	33 %
Arbitrary values	63%	45%	67%

It is also seen in this table that symbols A and C received the highest percentage of arbitrary values recognition. Since these two symbols don't have a direct reference to coffee product as symbol B does (coffee cup), it can be suggested that the symbol of coffee cup not only depicts clearly the product of coffee, but also communicates values of tradition and community among different cultures of the world.

The following table (Table 19) compares the percentage of intended values and arbitrary values recognition per symbol. Shown in the table is the percentage of individuals surveyed per symbol that perceived each value. The indication of “not tested” means that the value was not tested in that particular symbol.

Another aspect revealed by the surveys has to do with the influence of globalization in the visual perception of values. According to the literature review, the current progress in communications, allowed by technological advances and socioeconomical changes, has contributed to the spread of information across cultural borders. In one of the open-ended questions of the surveys (question number 4), the respondents commonly agreed that their cultural background (beliefs) guided their decision towards the values perceived (Table 19). Yet at the same time, there is also a tendency for the participants to affirm that the values are graphically depicted the same way in many regions of the world. These results and the fact that the age range of most of the respondents is between 20 and 30 years old (Figure 20) may suggest that the globalization of communication and media have influenced the visual perception of values in a symbol in individuals from around the world. This fact may contribute to the equal perception of at least one of the values communicated in the surveys.

Even though symbol B has the highest percentage of recognition of the values of tradition, most of the participants surveyed for that symbol rarely drink coffee (Appendix C, Table 2). There is, however, a high percentage of these participants that consider coffee as a traditional drink (Appendix C, Table 3), which may explain the high perception of the values of tradition in symbol B.

Table 19. Percentage of individual values recognition per symbol

<i>Intended values</i>	<i>Symbol A</i>	<i>Symbol B</i>	<i>Symbol C</i>
Tradition	16 %	34 %	22 %
Expertise	9 %	11 %	11 %
Belonging	12 %	10 %	Not tested
<i>Arbitrary values</i>	<i>Symbol A</i>	<i>Symbol B</i>	<i>Symbol C</i>
Exotic	7 %	Not tested	Not tested
Harmony	37 %	Not tested	Not tested
Speed	19 %	Not tested	Not tested
Heat	Not tested	18 %	Not tested
Community	Not tested	19 %	Not tested
Exotic	Not tested	8 %	Not tested
Confidence	Not tested	Not tested	40 %
Natural	Not tested	Not tested	27 %
No Attribute	Not tested	Not tested	0%
Total	100 %	100 %	100 %

Table 20. Aspects that guided the values perceptions of participants (per symbol)

Aspect (<u>Symbol A</u>)	Percentage
Cultural background (beliefs, religion, etc)	46 %
Values graphically depicted the same way in many places	38 %
Interacting in a different culture	12 %
Other	4 %
Aspect (<u>Symbol B</u>)	Percentage
Cultural background (beliefs, religion, etc)	43 %
Values graphically depicted the same way in many places	45 %
Interacting in a different culture	6 %
Other	6 %
Aspect (<u>Symbol C</u>)	Percentage
Cultural background (beliefs, religion, etc)	44 %
Values graphically depicted the same way in many places	33 %
Interacting in a different culture	15 %
Other	8 %

LIMITATIONS

Among the limitations for this study is the low number of participants for the surveys. The small size of the population that voluntarily agreed to participate in the study might also have contributed to having limited data for this study. Since the number of participants obtained for this study is the minimum sample size appropriate for the total population size, more accurate results would be gained by a higher number of participants. Another limitation was the proportion of participants per country. In other words, the regions of the world were not equally tested in terms of quantity of respondents. This might influence the results of the study towards the cultures that had greater participation in the surveys. For example, in symbol B most of the participants represented the regions of Latin America and Asia; this means that most of the data received in this survey is applicable for these particular regions.

Other limitations for this study include:

1. The study was conducted within the United States and didn't study the influence of globalization in other parts of the world, which might provide a better understanding of the effectiveness of values in corporate symbol design in other countries of the world.
2. The surveys only allowed the participants to choose from a list of values. Therefore, the natural perception of values of the respondents could not be fully tested since they were limited to choose only from the list provided in the surveys.

3. Most of the respondents in this study were not from the United States of America; the value of freedom was, therefore, not totally tested in the symbol of the eagle.
4. In the corporate symbol for values and icon combined (symbol C), the representation of the eagle's head is facing to the left. This could influence the perception of the participants, as they could perceive different messages or even values if the eagle's head was facing to the right in the corporate symbol.
5. The surveys don't have a question related to the gender of the participants. This can contribute valuable information for the perception of values between genders.
6. No standard method exists to measure the perception of values through symbol design. Therefore, there wasn't a previous standardized method on which to base the methodology for this study.
7. The current logo of Aguila Roja was not tested on the participants of different cultures. Consequently, this study doesn't provide any data concerning how the current logo of the coffee company is perceived cross-culturally.
8. The symbols designed for this study don't show the company's name. Therefore, any association between the eagle and the name of the company was not considered.
9. This study is limited to just a few of the many values that corporations might attempt to communicate. The results may vary depending on the particular values tested, since some values might be more difficult to communicate cross-culturally than others.

10. Another limitation regarding the values tested is the fact that not all the symbols were tested with the same set of arbitrary values. Each symbol had slightly different arbitrary values that don't allow the study to provide a constant measure of the cross-cultural perception of the arbitrary values.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of the surveys and conclusions of this study can lead to deeper studies on the connection between global branding and corporate symbol design. Further studies in this area might continue to explore the role of corporate identity, especially logo design, in the branding of a multinational corporation. One of the conclusions of this study discusses the influences on having a reference to universal images to improve the effectiveness of values communication across cultures. Therefore, research on the aspects that make an icon universally recognized might be complementary to this study.

Additional recommendations regarding the redesign of the corporate symbol for Aguila Roja are necessary. This paper supports the effectiveness of combining product and values in a cross-cultural corporate symbol. Therefore, it can be recommended to test a native Colombian audience on the current corporate symbol of Aguila Roja and compare it to the proposed corporate symbol for product and values combined (symbol B). The results may reveal which of these corporate symbols expresses more effectively the brand of Café Aguila Roja to its native audience.

Additional recommendations for further studies might be:

1. A deeper study on the equal perception of values in different regions of the world may provide the graphic designer information about the audiences of the world where it is more effective to communicate values cross-culturally.
2. A repetition of this study focusing more in the demographic aspect of the respondents (age, gender, etc.) may provide a clearer idea of the influence of globalization in different generations and social groups.

3. Various corporate values might be tested to determine which ones have greater likelihood to be perceived across cultures.
4. A further study might provide a direct comparison between the original symbol and the redesigned symbols.
5. It would be useful to test the symbols accompanied with the name of the company to study how values and product perception is affected cross-culturally if the company name is known.
6. A similar study might be directed by redesigning and testing a corporate symbol for a local company that offers services. There are such multinational companies that also need to communicate values in their brands and corporate symbol. As in this study, the results of an additional study focused on a service company would not be limited only to global communication.

CONCLUSION

Cross-cultural communication occurs between people whose culture, language, and visual perceptions are distinct enough to alter the communication event between them. An example of this is a national company expanding its products or services to a different country. Today the socioeconomic phenomena of globalization and advances in technology have allowed a closer interaction between cultures around the world. This interaction creates an assimilation of cultural practices among the audiences of the world. In this sense, the cross-cultural graphic designer plays the role of a visual ambassador who creates vehicles of communication intended to carry messages within or across cultural barriers. As modern corporations are crossing international boundaries, the task of efficient communication across cultures is becoming more necessary; designers are being challenged because of this contemporary tendency toward globalization.

As technology advances, the equalization of high quality standards for products and/or services among companies is becoming obvious. In order to compete and be differentiated in today's global market, modern corporations rely on *branding*—the values, promises, or ideas that differentiate the corporation and how these connect them to the customer. The existing literature suggests that globalization has contributed to a tendency for modern corporations to communicate themselves as a brand by communicating values or emotions through branding which includes their corporate symbol.

This study attempted to test the effectiveness of communicating values instead of products in a cross-cultural corporate symbol. In order to test this, an audience group of individuals from different countries was shown three different corporate symbols that attempt to communicate values. Each symbol was tested in the context of a survey. The

symbols are redesigns of the current symbol of a Colombian coffee corporation (Café Aguila Roja). These redesigns are based on the fictional assumption that this national company is expanding to international markets and needs to communicate globally its values across cultures through its corporate symbol. In this sense, the study suggests that using the Aguila Roja corporate symbol for a global audience might lead to misinterpretation of what the corporation is and the values that represent its brand. By using the symbol of the eagle, the global audience could perceive Aguila Roja as a brand of confidence and as an air travel corporation.

The results of this study suggest that the corporate symbol for product and values combined would be a successful redesign of the current corporate symbol of Aguila Roja. If the Colombian coffee company decides to go global, the corporate symbol for product and values designed in this study would effectively communicate cross-culturally the values of the brand and what the company is. As seen in the results of the surveys, this symbol had the highest percentage of intended values recognition among the participants. It is also seen that the corporate symbol for product and values combined communicates the product of coffee better than the other two redesigned symbols used in this study.

It can also be seen that the perception of tradition and community was not limited to individuals that consume coffee. The majority of the participants surveyed for this symbol (57%) rarely drink coffee. However, most of the participants for this symbol (73%) consider coffee as a traditional beverage. This suggests that the perception of coffee by individuals is not completely linked to a direct experience with the product itself; such perception might be affected by external factors (i.e., how the product is depicted or used in the culture where the individual interacts).

The percentage of the audience that perceived the values in the three corporate symbols might suggest the possibility of using corporate symbol design as a visual communicator of values across cultures. In one of the questions of the surveys (question 4), the second highest answer by the respondents affirmed that the values that they perceived are graphically depicted in the same way in many places (Appendix C, Table 5). Comparing this to the fact that most of the participants of this study (73%) were between 20 and 30 years of age, it can be suggested that global media is contributing to the possibility of an equal communication of values among individuals from different cultures. It is necessary to point out, however, that cross-cultural designers that culture (the system of beliefs, traditions, and habits that identify a society) is still an obstacle for a complete global and equal perception of values among individuals (Appendix C, Table 5). As seen in the results of this table, most of the participants of the three surveys guided their values perception from their cultural background (beliefs, religion, etc.). Therefore, it can be suggested that the visual perception of values on individuals from different cultures is still affected by the knowledge learned from their individual culture, and that equal graphical communication of values is for now not fully successful.

The survey findings strongly suggest that it is still necessary to have a reference to product in a cross-cultural corporate symbol. They show that the most successful symbol redesign for the coffee company has a combination of product and values. This advice is applicable to those corporations that manufacture a single type of product (Aguila Roja produces coffee only) and not a variety of products like Nike or Virgin.

The results of the surveys for this study suggest that the effectiveness of values communication in a cross-cultural corporate symbol is more effective when having a

reference to universally recognized images. In this particular study, the values of *tradition* and the sense of *community* were more effectively communicated by having reference to a coffee cup. Another main finding was the common recognition of the eagle as the icon that guided the respondents to perceive the attribute of *confidence*. It can be suggested that the image used to communicate particular values should be universally recognized and associated with those values that are attempted to be communicated across cultures. For example, if confidence was not an intended message, the designer might not use a reference to an eagle because of its universal perceptions.

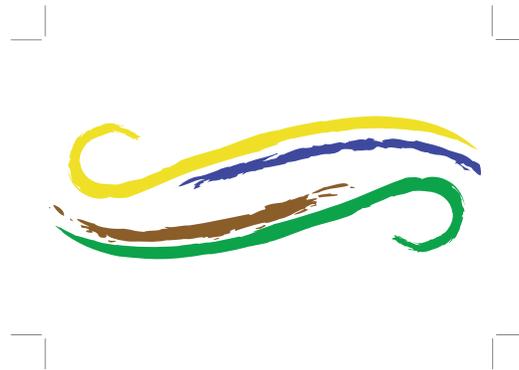
For the graphic designer this study provides a connection between branding and cross-cultural corporate symbol design. Today, due to the massive growth and creation of global brands, corporate symbols are being designed to emotionally connect people and corporations. They are the visual identifiers of brands. The corporate graphic designer must understand how to communicate brand values in a corporate symbol in order to facilitate and improve brand communication in a multicultural perspective.

APPENDIX A. SURVEYS

Corporate symbol for values (symbol A)

Please use this logo to answer the following questions, thank you

Logo A



1. Can you guess/sense the region of origin of this company? Please check your answer.

- Africa Central America The Caribbean South America
 Spain No idea

2. Please choose two or three attributes that you feel the logo is attempting to communicate?

- Exotic Expertise Harmony Belonging Speed Tradition

3. Please write which element in the logo (color, shapes, or figures) influenced your decision for question #2. Then, please qualify the influence in a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest influence and 5 being the highest influence).

• Did **Color** influence your decision on which attribute(s)? and how important was the influence?

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

• The **Shapes** influenced your decision on which attribute(s)? and how important was the influence?

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

• The **Figures, objects or images** influenced your decision on which attribute(s)? and how important was the influence?

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

• Other, please specify: _____

4. Please check which aspect you believe guided your decision for question #2.

- Your cultural background (beliefs, religion, etc)
- This attribute(s) is (are) graphically depicted the same way in many places.
- You gained this perception by interacting in a culture different than yours.
- Other, please specify: _____

5. What do you think this logo advertises? and briefly, please explain your response.
(please check only one option)

- Internet service Financial business Coffee company Air travel
- Other, please specify: _____
- Explanation: _____

General question:

The following question involves the logo shown to you. In a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest) how clearly you sense the coffee product in the logo? (please check the box).

Not clear ← 1 2 3 4 5 → Very clear

Personal questions:

5. What is your country of origin?: _____
6. What is your age?: 20-30 31-40 41-50 51+
7. How often do you drink coffee? (please circle your answer)
 - a. Daily
 - b. 2 – 4 times at day
 - c. Rarely
8. How do you perceive coffee? (please circle your answer)
 - a. As an extra energy drink.
 - b. As a status indicator.
 - c. As a traditional drink.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COLLABORATION!

Corporate symbol for product and values combined (symbol B)

Please use this logo to answer the following questions, thank you

Logo B



1. Can you guess/sense the region of origin of this company? Please check your answer.

- Africa Central America The Caribbean South America
 Spain No idea

2. Please choose two or three attributes that you feel the logo is attempting to communicate?

- Heat Belonging Exotic Tradition Community Expertise

3. Please write which element in the logo (color, shapes, or figures) influenced your decision for question #2. Then, please qualify the influence in a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest influence and 5 being the highest influence).

• Did **Color** influence your decision on which attribute(s)? and how important was the influence?

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

• The **Shapes** influenced your decision on which attribute(s)? and how important was the influence?

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

• The **Figures, objects or images** influenced your decision on which attribute(s)? and how important was the influence?

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

_____ low 1 2 3 4 5 high

• Other, please specify: _____

4. Please check which aspect you believe guided your decision for question #2.

- Your cultural background (beliefs, religion, etc)
- This attribute(s) is (are) graphically depicted the same way in many places.
- You gained this perception by interacting in a culture different than yours.
- Other, please specify: _____

5. What do you think this logo advertises? and briefly, please explain your response.
(please check only one option)

- Internet service Financial business Coffee company Air travel
- Other, please specify: _____

Explanation: _____

6. Please choose two or three elements that you see in the logo:

- Keys A duck A hammer A coffee bean
- A screen A mug A jar An iron

7. What kind of beverage do you think this logo is representing? (please check one or two options).

- Hamburger Fruit Coffee Bread Wine
- No idea

Other, please specify: _____

General question:

The following question involves the logo shown to you. In a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest) how clearly you sense the coffee product in the logo? (please check the box).

Not clear ← 1 2 3 4 5 → Very clear

Personal questions:

5. What is your country of origin?: _____
6. What is your age?: 20-30 31-40 41-50 51+
7. How often do you drink coffee? (please circle your answer)
 - a. Daily
 - b. 2 – 4 times at day
 - c. Rarely
8. How do you perceive coffee? (please circle your answer)
 - a. As an extra energy drink.
 - b. As a status indicator.
 - c. As a traditional drink.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COLLABORATION!

Corporate symbol for values and icon combined (Symbol C)

Please use this logo to answer the following questions, thank you
Logo C



1. Please identify and write the main objects (max. 3) that you see in the logo (i.e. telephone, pen, car).

Objects: a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

2. Please choose two or three attributes that you feel the logo is attempting to communicate?

Confidence Natural Experience Tradition No attribute

3. Please write which element in the logo (color, shapes, or figures) influenced your decision for question #2. Then, please qualify the influence in a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest influence and 5 being the highest influence).

• Did **Color** influence your decision on which attribute(s)? and how important was the influence?

_____ *low* 1 2 3 4 5 *high*

_____ *low* 1 2 3 4 5 *high*

_____ *low* 1 2 3 4 5 *high*

• The **Shapes** influenced your decision on which attribute(s)? and how important was the influence?

_____ *low* 1 2 3 4 5 *high*

_____ *low* 1 2 3 4 5 *high*

_____ *low* 1 2 3 4 5 *high*

• The **Figures, objects or images** influenced your decision on which attribute(s)? and how important was the influence?

_____ *low* 1 2 3 4 5 *high*

_____ *low* 1 2 3 4 5 *high*

_____ *low* 1 2 3 4 5 *high*

• Other, please specify: _____

4. Please check which aspect you believe guided your decision for question #2.

- Your cultural background (beliefs, religion, etc)
- This attribute(s) is (are) graphically depicted the same way in many places.
- You gained this perception by interacting in a culture different than yours.
- Other, please specify: _____

5. Please identify the kind of bird in the logo (please check only one option).

- Duck Swan Eagle Condor Chicken There is no bird
- Other, please specify: _____

Explanation: _____

6. What do you think this logo advertises? And briefly, please explain your response. (please check only one option).

- Internet services Financial business Coffee company Air travel
- Other, please specify: _____

Explanation: _____

General question:

The following question involves the logo shown to you. In a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest) how clearly you sense the coffee product in the logo? (please check the box).

Not clear ← 1 2 3 4 5 → Very clear

Personal questions:

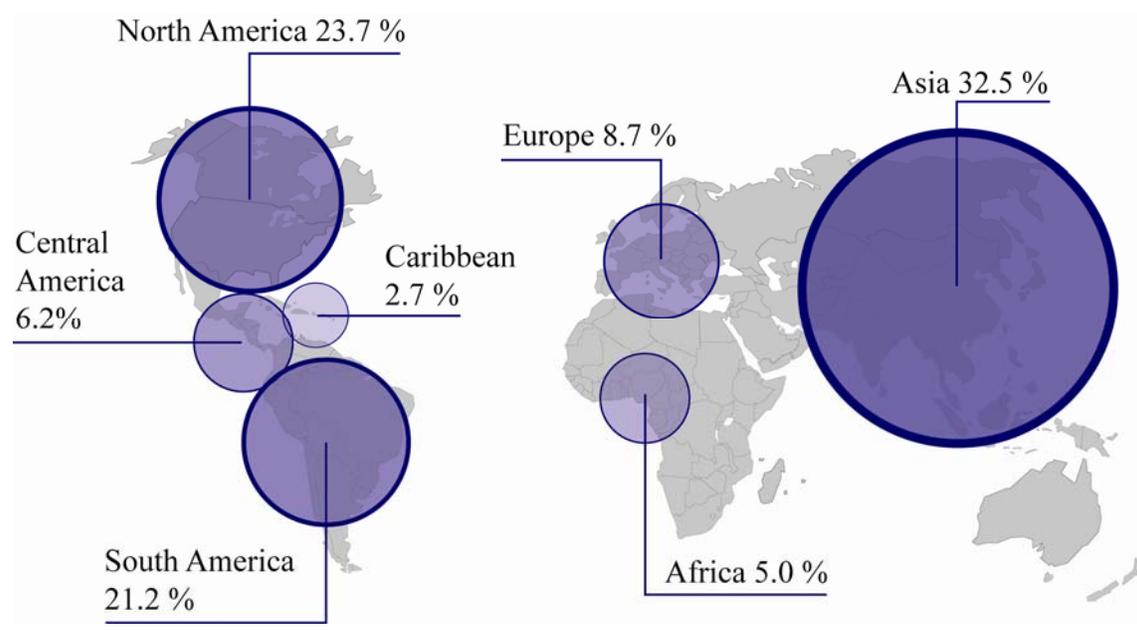
5. What is your country of origin?: _____
6. What is your age?: 20-30 31-40 41-50 51+
7. How often do you drink coffee? (please circle your answer)
 - a. Daily
 - b. 2 – 4 times at day
 - c. Rarely
8. How do you perceive coffee? (please circle your answer)
 - a. As an extra energy drink.
 - b. As a status indicator.
 - c. As a traditional drink.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COLLABORATION!

APPENDIX B. PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS SURVEYED

GROUPED BY CONTINENTS

(the total population for this study is 84 individuals)



APPENDIX C. COMPARATIVE DATA

Table 1. Participant's coffee drinking frequency (in percentage per symbol)

Frequency	Symbol A	Symbol B	Symbol C
Daily	45 %	37 %	56 %
2 - 4 times a day	0 %	7 %	4 %
Rarely	55 %	56 %	40 %

Table 2. Coffee perception percentage per symbol

Coffee perception	Symbol A	Symbol B	Symbol C
Extra energy drink	43 %	20 %	44 %
Status indicator	19 %	7 %	0 %
Traditional drink	38 %	73 %	56 %

Table 3. Objects perceived by the participants in symbol C

Object	Percentage
Eagle	33 %
Movement	1 %
Wave	5 %
Bird	7 %
Smoke	10 %
Fire	16 %
Road	1 %
Wing	7 %
Eye	1 %
Steam	5 %
Flame	9 %
Coffee	1 %
Hair	3 %
Wind	1 %

Table 4. Kind of bird identified in symbol C

Kind of bird	Percentage
Duck	0 %
Swan	0 %
Eagle	89 %
Condor	7 %
Chicken	0 %
There's no bird	0 %
Other	4 %

Table 5. Aspects that guided participants' decision on the perception of values

Aspect	Percentage
Your cultural background (beliefs, religion, etc)	44%
Attributes graphically depicted in the same way in many places.	39%
Perception gained by cultural interacting in a different culture.	12%
Other	5%

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To the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.