

The Power of Dynamic Visual Identities in Graphic Design and Branding

Visual representation is one of the most powerful modes of communication. As opposed to text and words, which take dedicated time on the part of the observer to assimilate and form a reaction to, visuals elicit immediate responses and interpretations which instantly influence the observer's overall impression.

When it comes to branding and display design, it's not surprising that visual identity is a central component of every company's marketing campaign, and is responsible for both creating and maintaining brand loyalty. In 2018, graphic and product designers have been pushing the boundaries when it comes to innovation in the field of visual identity, due to increased competition and the dynamic nature of visual branding, which now involves more than just a company logo.

Not only are we experiencing exciting changes in the field of brand design, but we are also witnessing the evolution of visual graphic identities, which give us insight into consumer trends and habits, as well as a fresh perspective on how to create dynamic identities. Digital media plays a vital role in creating these identities, and has already transformed how companies present products and services in order to succeed in their market.

The Psychological Impact of Visual Marketing

The main role of graphic design in branding and marketing is to create a visual story and tangible identity around the company and their products. Whether for a clothing line, a sport supplement range, a restaurant chain, the hospitality industry, or for services and businesses such as real estate, consultancies, and leisure facilities - each company does not exist in the mind of their target consumer unless they are brought to life by the illustrative effects of a full branding package.

This includes all marketing collateral, both digital and print; brochures and company overviews; color and palette guidelines; website design guidelines; logos; the company's signature font; and perhaps an accompanying well known mascot figure (most likely in the symbolic [form of an animal](#)).

Every company needs a particular "look and feel," so that they can appeal to their target audience by portraying an appropriate aesthetic. #visualstory and #displayconcepts are now trending hashtags on Instagram, and reflect the importance of visual representation in ensuring the success of marketing campaigns, and in creating brand identities. Visual identity is a central part of every company's growth strategy.

It's no longer as simple as making an ad or building a website, either. Out-of-the-box digital solutions and templates aren't going to be enough to create that all important consumer connection. The personal touch approach which has allowed brands to thrive in the past must

now be transferable to the digital realm, especially with the current rise in [conscious consumerism](#), which means that brands must incorporate and communicate transparency and ethical practices in their marketing messages.

The aim of a brand's visual identity is to make the consumer feel a certain emotion, so they will react in a certain way, which will in turn allow a company to gain recognition and reputation in their niche area. The graphics and designs which create visual identities need to be inspired by a mixture of consumer research, creativity, innovation, and [knowledge of buyer psychology](#).

Dynamic Identities

How can a brand remain relevant in 2018 and onwards? The reports about such-and-such a company having just gone through a "rebranding," or requests being made for a brand "refresh" of a company's visual identity, definitely ranks among the "most heard of terms" at any design agency and marketing consultancy.

For example, the extremely popular sports supplement company, MyProtein, recently went through a [major rebranding](#) which involved a complete change in their visual identity - all the packaging has been changed to meet their new guidelines which now form the company's personality in a graphic, visual way.

The same can also be said of the company Uber - their style and branding guidelines represent the [dynamic, versatile, yet timeless identity](#) of a contemporary, innovative company. The decision to rebrand, and the ability for companies to be versatile in their marketing and visual identity, is simply a response to today's consumer behaviour and demands - which include a short attention span, and the requirement for efficient, fast, user-friendly and high quality service.

Compare this to the eras when companies such as McDonalds, Michelin and Kelloggs were established - over the years their branding has been through little to no change, and in turn this is characteristic of a different generation when consumers favored consistency, reliability, and a certain level of conservatism when it came to their relationship with their favorite goods and services.

Another fascinating and recent example of designers embracing the concept of dynamic identity is OCAD University - while their logo is based on the university's building design by British architect Will Alsop, the content within the structure itself is redesigned every year by selected graduating students. This incorporates student identity into the foundation of the university's visual representation.

Flexible Visual Identities vs Logo-Centric Design

The latest buzz term in the graphic design community is FVI - flexible visual identities. [According to Martin Lorenz](#) at TwoPoints studio, "A static, logo-centered visual identity is like someone who shouts the same message over and over again. A flexible visual identity on the

other hand is a bit more eloquent.” The static logo which was so successful in the MacDonaldis day is now “inefficient” for younger companies who are faced with the changes and challenges posed by modern visual communications.

Design and branding should focus instead on evolution, and on dynamic visual identity solutions which have the potential to “formulate different messages, adapt to different situations, and maybe even to different people, too.” Again, it all goes back to appealing to the target masses and responding appropriately yet innovatively to the trends of the time.

However, the concept of breaking the rules of the restrictive permanency of logo-centric design isn’t as radical as it seems. It harks back to the emergence of modernism as an art form, in the inter-war years especially, when art schools such as the Bauhaus sought to completely revolutionize the way contemporary society interacted with architecture and the visual arts. They sought to achieve this by creating new designs and models which were reflective of society’s condition at that time, and replace previous expressionist and classical values.

In their publication [Pretty Ugly](#), Twopoints studios display a similar attitude, when they suggest that flexible and dynamic graphic design and visual branding should be considered “a new kind of beauty that isn’t based on pure visual pleasure,” but “a beauty based on context-driven design, being transparent about working methods, tools, and materials.”

Digital Guidelines: The Future of Visual Branding

At the end of the day, the flexibility and fluidity which TwoPoints relies upon is all dependent on the availability of those exact methods, tools, and materials. Digital design has transformed the graphic and branding landscape. Now, design agencies, whether in the web or advertising world, provide design guidelines in a digital format as one of their main deliverables before handing over a finished project to the client.

However, before technology, this convenient way of storing and recording the main components of a brand’s visual identity wasn’t available, and the flexibility offered by digital guidelines has opened up new horizons in terms of what is possible to incorporate into a brand’s visual identity. This includes new ranges of color palettes and tone, interactive design features, a much wider and diverse choice of fonts, and stylistic features which only digital design techniques can provide.

The rebranding of large companies such as Uber and My Protein would not have happened without these digital advancements. Digital guidelines allow companies to portray their identity through their services in an interactive, engaging manner, which can be brought to life through applications and smartphones.

In the case of Uber, they don’t limit themselves to a fixed look for certain components of their app such as maps, but incorporate their visual identity into all aspects, from the lines connecting two locations, to the map’s color and patterns, depending on your country. Uber is a great example of dynamic branding because they recognise that a successful visual identity relies not

just on quality graphics, but on staying in tune with the equally dynamic capabilities of technology.

Other than Uber's methods, there are [numerous ways](#) in which to approach dynamic identity design. Taking a different perspective on the logo container itself, experimenting with the wallpaper background, incorporating grid or pattern formulae, continuous customization and iteration which embraces cyclical change - embracing visual identity design encourages agencies, artists, and brands to stay on their toes and let their imaginations explore.

Of course, this creative process all requires the work of a highly skilled team of graphic and UX designers, developers, and project managers. Let's face it, branding projects are definitely not the worst way to springboard or rejuvenate your graphic design career, because in the words of [Pentagram's Paula Scher](#), "If you know how to design identity, you know how to design everything."