Method of Creative Graphic Design Focusing on Multiple Meanings

A systematic approach to meanings of symbols

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Abstract: Meanings of graphic design symbols and logos are described in morphological levels and visual references categories. Structure in morphology of symbol in three main levels and their connection with visual references classification are shown from a viewpoint of information design process activities. Describing the Multiple meanings implementation for shown example in symbol design process is classified them in levels and categories. There is given example classification with existing logotype. Analyzing the stages of designing symbols and extracting the example strategy for implementing Multiple meanings, a method for supporting multiple meanings in graphic design symbols is proposed for aiding a graphic design practices.

Keywords: graphic design, symbol, multiple meanings

1. Introduction
Since one of the main purposes of graphic design is communicating message, this is the very important part in making visual communication symbols and corporate identity. Recommendations for symbols or logos strategies are based on expertise of professionals rather than on empirical research [1]. Beginning symbol forming a designer is trying creatively to implement the desired meanings in it so that the resulting symbol has to be meaningful and distinctive.

2. Problems
Recent changes of many symbols are directed to clearer and faster perception thus creating the challenge not to lose their meaning. This often makes them insufficiently distinctive and can bring out problems with similarity, also can make it unsuccessful in its usage.

Meanings can be implemented only by representative characteristics or can be supported by the Gestalt meanings and other elaborative characteristics. Structure of the symbol can be classified by different aspects [2,3,4,5], but for the designer it are important the structure in the viewpoint of design process and also implementing the aimed semiotic meanings – semiotic based taxonomy of symbols [6] and their visual and linguistic references. So here are intersected the Semiotic theory and the Gestalt theory, which describe the way of perception of meanings, in this matter implementing meanings in design process.

3. Multiple meanings in this study
Meanings of symbol do exist on different levels and categories. Structure of multiple meanings (Fig. 1) is described in aspect of the designing process, on 3 main morphological levels and categories of meanings. This structure is based in morphology in design process and on each of the levels different or elaborative meanings can be implemented. Categories are divided on 2 main groups – main meaning, which every symbol has at least one and additional meanings, like implicit and undesired (Fig. 2).

4. Aim
In this study is shown the viewpoint of morphological levels of symbols, from microscopic view to macroscopic levels.

Supporting the meanings implementing stage of graphic design process is the general aim of this research, in this way avoiding indistinctiveness problems.

5. Method
Here is proposed a method for supporting Multiple meanings in designing symbols, using database of systematized Multiple meanings and computer tool for implementing them in practice. They are not so far systematized and implementation of the meanings is difficult stage in design process. Analyzing strategies and techniques for combining meanings, using a database with structured meanings will make a base for computer tool for aiding designing symbols.

6. Analysis of strategy
Analyzing design strategies in e.g. (Fig. 3) JAIST logo is described in its main and additional meanings of shape, classified in levels 1, 2 and 3. Except direct main meanings there are very interesting additional meanings like metaphors macroscopic level 3, and in other cases for example catch-eye and ambiguous meanings.

Figure 1. Structure in Levels of Multiple meanings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morphological Levels of Symbols</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub shape</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part of shape</td>
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</table>

Figure 2. Classification categories of visual references

These figures illustrate the structure and classification of meanings, which are used in the study to analyze and support the design process.
Strategy for designing always includes some level of abstraction, but is based on general principles as problem solving process. Analyzing strategies (Fig. 4) for making Multiple meaning symbol is being showed in basic steps in this e.g. of brand design process.

The given task is designing a brand for a “Kin Ji Sou” tea, made from traditional plant in Kaga area. Beginning from evaluating characteristics and identifying the needs are decided in dynamic shape stylization of plants’ leaves with their typical colors. On next stage it is applied more dynamics meaning in moving of elements. 3rd stage is applied connection and repeating of 4 leaves, and on the last comes applying the meaning of continuousness and time – kanji of time in the middle. Final design (Fig. 5) has on microscopic level a symbol of leaf of the plant and its colors, waiving and showing both sides and on macroscopic level 4 leaves in circle, in which every one is starting from previous – symbol of continuity and endlessness. The traditional approach in searching a layout for combining and applying meanings is difficult stage in design process. Decision technique for finding successful combination of meanings is based on initial making a lot of sketches in tries of implementing meanings, corresponding with design goals. Often results are not enough successful though and aiding this step is important.

Next is example (Fig. 6) of searching of concurrent matching of meanings of elements, analyzing symbol design. This is process of integration of Multiple meanings 2 shapes on level 2 and 2 shapes on level 3. Resulting on integrated Multiple meanings on concurrent shapes on this levels.

In conclusion a multiple meaning symbol has better elaborated structure and will avoid indistinctiveness and confusion in perception of symbols and logotypes. Using a method for supporting Multiple meanings will expand designer’s concept space in design process, stimulating new design ideas and improve results in designing symbols.

For future research case studies are planned, additional protocol analysis for different symbols and also extracting of the information for designer’s methods and techniques in creating of symbols. On next by using vector descriptions of symbols will be used in database for computer tool supporting implementing meanings in graphic designs.

References: