

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ABOUT CARS' LOGOS

Abstract: In this paper, we have considered as a challenge to answer to the question: Why is so important a logo for a car? Because, as we know, we can identify a car or, in many cases, a car manufacturer, only by seeing its logo. In this research study we have „questioned” a lot of logos for different cars, identifying the geometric shapes, colours and symbols used to create distinct and expressive logos. During our research, we have understood that a logo for any car is not the result of an easy work, but the designer has to prove creativity, imagination and graphic skills, by taking into consideration the two stages of the design, namely: The Preliminary Research and the Creative Working. This „investigation trip” inside the universe of logos was a privilege for us, highlighting, once again, the great importance of the graphic representation for any product / service etc. Our research has been developed over three months, allowing us to accumulate a huge quantity of information as regards such special logos. We have identified different colours and symbols used in logos, interesting geometric associations and, also, many examples for redesigning in time cars’ logos. For a car, a logo is an adequate and eloquent element of identification. Our paper could be considered as a pleading for creativity, original and initiative in this field.

Key words: Car`s logo, geometric shape, symbol, logo design and redesign.

1. INTRODUCTION

The automotive field is special, because it speaks about the identity of cars or car manufacturer all over the world. Every were there are cars and it is important to know them only by a graphic representation as a logo. The design working for this kind of representation is not easy because the designer has to find the best graphic solution involving studies concerning shape, colours, typeface and symbols used to easy identify the product.

This paper is based on a 3 months’ research study in this special field [1, 2,3 and 6], where we have identified interesting graphic representations designed or redesigned for the identity of cars. Also, we have presented the typology of these logos and what are the icons used to create them.

2. GEOMETRIC SHAPE AND COLOURS

During our working time we have marked different shape used in logo design and a variety of colours to make a “special personalized” object in the universe of cars all over the whole world. These graphic representations mean something as geometric constructions and together with colours convey a message to the public. We have identified a circle shape (Mercedes, BMW, VW, Buick, Opel, Vauxhall, Alfa Romeo, Nissan, Volvo, Holden, Skoda, Tatra etc.), an ellipse for Ford, Toyota, Bugatti, Hyundai, Land Rover, Pagani, Lexus, Subaru, Tata, Lada etc. A shield shape is used in many cases as follows: Lamborghini, Lancia, Porsche, Maybach, Abarth, Spirra, Roewe etc. The octagon shape was identified for MG and rhombus for Renault. As background for colours there is a variety in the automotive logo design. The yellow colour is for Ferrari (is the colour of Modena town); black for Lamborghini, KIA; blue and white for BMW; blue - Ford, Lancia, Subaru; orange - Maybach; green - Land

Rover; red-MG, Fiat, Tatra; yellow - Lotus, Chevrolet; white - Skoda. There are only a few examples to present the place of colours in logo design. As we have already noticed above, these two elements have a role in logo design but, with no doubt is not enough. There is a third element of logo design to accomplish the whole graphic representation. And this is the symbol.

3. SYMBOLS IN LOGO DESIGN CARS

A large and various “box” of symbols are used to “personalized” the car or the manufacturer. These symbols are as real or abstract representation for birds, animals, stars, different objects etc. In tables 1-4 we have presented a few logo cars and the symbol used for it [1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6].

Table 1

Logo cars and the symbol used for it

Car / Manufacturer	Logo	Symbol
Ferrari		The prancing horse (in Italian Language is Cavallino Rampante). It is the symbol of a famous Italian airplane pilot from the WWI, Francesco Baracca. On the shield there are the colours of Italian flag.
BMW		Is about a stylized propeller, the blue colour is the sky. Also, the two colours, white and blue are the colours of Bavarian state. BMW = Bayerische Motoren Werke

Table 2

Table 3

Logo cars and the symbol used for it		
Car / Manufacturer	Logo	Symbol
Mercedes		The three-pointed star. The meaning of this graphic representation may be The Trinity or the Daimler's ambition to create an universal motorization to be powerful on water, in the air and on land.
Audi		Four rings (circles) represent the following companies: DKW, Horch, Wanderer and Audi (in Latin Language Audi means to hear).
Lamborghini		A charging bull hints energy, power, strength, vigour. It is about the performance of the car.
Porsche		The horse talks about the beginning of the factory – a place of a horse's farm, near Stuttgart. It is a combination from the coat of arms of Wurttemberg-Hohenzollern land and of the town of Stuttgart.
Toyota		It is about the letter T which is built from two ellipses. This letter is included in another ellipse which represent the Earth. That means Toyota is all over the world.
Opel		This is an ancient sign for victory used by Opel.
Maserati		This logo is tied to the trident of Neptune. The statue of Neptune, with its trident is the symbol of Bologna. Is a symbol of sea power.
Mazda		We may define this logo as a flying bird, or as a stylized letter M or as a face of an owl.

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Car / Manufacturer	Logo	Symbol
Citroen		The logo defines the special gears of V teeth. In the same time is an old symbol of victory.
Mustang		It is a real representation of a running horse. It is the special logo for a Ford car called Mustang.
Renault		It is a geometric shape - a rhombus.
Peugeot		A stylized lion which is tied from the statue of town of Belfort (a lion) where was developed one of the first models of Peugeot.
Jaguar		It was chosen this wild animal who represents the courage, the power, the ferocity and the performance.
Alfa Romeo		It was built with two symbols: red cross is from coat of arms of the City of Milan and the serpent devouring the enemy is the coat of arms of the Visconti family.
Mitsubishi		The symbol represents a divine power; also is an Ancient Nordic/Anglo-Saxon sign. It is possible to be the propeller of a ship (the beginning of the company) or a three-pointed star or three diamonds.
Volvo		It is the sign for iron, the treasure of Sweden. Also is a sign of masculinity.
Bentley		The letter B with wings.

Table 4

Logo cars and the symbol used for it

Car / Manufacturer	Logo	Symbol
Skoda		The winged arrow is about two symbols, an arrow and an Amerindian ornament which is put on head. All together create an interesting graphic representation.
Mini		A circle and wings. In the circle is written MINI.
Abarth		A stylized scorpion is the symbol of Abarth.
Subaru		The symbol is about six stars from Taurus Constellation, called Pleiades.
Gaz		A brave and powerful stag that represent longevity, fertility and rebirth.
Hyundai		It is an interesting graphic representation, which may be understood as a stylized letter (H) or as two persons (a seller and a buyer) shaking their hands.

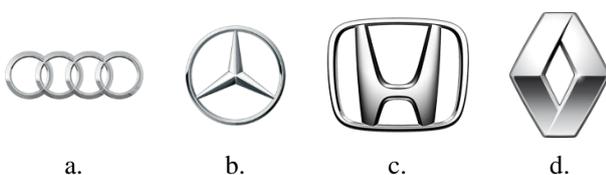
4. THE TYPOLOGY OF CARS' LOGOS

About the typology, we have noticed interesting things concerning the identity of the car/manufacturer. We have seen the three categories of logos: logotype (words), symbol and complex (symbol + words).

There are cars which are identified only by their symbol and cars which are understood by a complex logo.

For example, as logotype we have noticed: JEEP, ISUZU, VW, IVECO, FORD, KIA, FIAT.

As only symbols we have seen: AUDI, MERCEDES, HONDA, RENAULT.



As complex logos it is about SKODA, MAZDA, HYUNDAI, PEUGEOT, LEXUS, CHEVROLET, JAGUAR, MITSUBISHI, SUZUKI, SUBARU, TOYOTA etc.

We have noticed something interesting concerning the use of logos in automotive industry. Some of them are used only like symbols. For example, for MERCEDES it is not necessary to use Mercedes name because is enough to have the symbol (b); AUDI means only (a) and nothing more; for RENAULT the rhombus (d) is very good to represent the manufacturer without any words and for HONDA is enough (c).

The complex logos for cars are special. Some of them were created as an entire graphic representation (words and symbol together).

One complex logo means symbol + words (or a letter), as we have seen on cars, as follows in a few examples:



Fig. 1 Three complex cars logos as a whole graphic representation



Fig. 2 SKODA logo as design/redesign

As we already have specified above, there are special complex logos as a whole graphic representation included words. In figure 1 we have presented a few of them. What was important to specify is the presence of these logos on cars and nothing more about. Only these logos without the names OPEL or BMW or ALFA ROMEO.

In our research study we have identify what is the influence of a logo redesign which has made the manufacturer „to put on” its cars a symbol and the name of it. It is interesting because from one graphic representation, that was in the past, it is necessary today to have two separated elements (a symbol and the name of the manufacturer). It is about SKODA logo presented in figure 2 [5].

5. CONCLUSION

As a result of our study, we have noticed a few interesting aspects about cars` logos, as follows:

a. The design for these kind of logos used different geometric shapes to assure the most visibility for the car/manufacturer. As geometric shape, we have noticed circle, ellipse, rhombus, triangle etc. And, of course, shape of a shield was a special design for a few cars;

b. In many cases the name of the car/manufacturer is written inside the shape;

c. Some of logos are designed using colours and some others don't;

d. The typology of logos is respected concerning cars` logos;

e. There were identified many symbols for these logos, in a real or stylized representation, with their significance explained in the paper;

f. When it is necessary to redesign cars` logos, is interesting what kind of design will be (e.g. SKODA logo).

This paper presents only a few conclusions of our work. In this research study we have identify more directions for a future working, namely logo redesign for cars. We have noticed interesting aspect to redesign these logos which will be a next step of our work. We have realized what is important in the design/redesign activity and what is the meaning of many symbols which were used in this creative work. For us, it was „a wonderful trip” in the universe of cars logos. We believe this is a first step in a long way to discover new and interesting challenges about cars logos.

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Authors:

Associate prof. Ph.D. Eng. Nicoleta Elisabeta PASCU, University Politehnica of Bucharest, Department of Engineering Graphics and Industrial Design, E-mail: nicoletaelisabeta_pascu@yahoo.ro.

Associate prof. Ph.D. Eng. Victor ADIR, University Politehnica of Bucharest, Department of Engineering Graphics and Industrial Design, Email: victoradir@yahoo.com.

Prof. Ph.D. Eng. George ADIR, University Politehnica of Bucharest, Department of Theory of Mechanisms and Robots, E-mail: adirancuta@yahoo.com