



VISUAL DESIGN IN BRAND COMMUNICATION ON INSTAGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The visual design of social media content serves an aesthetic function, as well as aiding the communication process. This study analyses the elements of graphic design in the content published by the brands Nike, Victoria's Secret, Zara and Chanel, which have the largest followings on Instagram. The methodology is qualitative, and the presence of elements such as typographies and colours are determined. The research questions are: 1. Are elements of graphic language used in the publications made by the brands on Instagram? 2. Does the brand's corporate identity manifest in a coherent visual manner in the content published on Instagram?

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1. Introduction

The benefits of graphic design or visual communication design have been employed in a variety of media and formats, initially in cinema, television, and advertising, and subsequently in information and communication technologies on the Internet, where social networks represent powerful platforms. In these social media, specifically those with the most visual content, brands and individuals offering products or services publish content in which graphic language is used.

Although it is evident how the aesthetic and functional characteristics of design have been applied to content on social networks, from an academic perspective there are few studies. This research will therefore be a brief contribution to the discipline of graphic design or visual design, which in many cases goes unnoticed, even in the current era, characterised by a proliferation of visual content, San Cornelio (2019) notes that "the visual remains undervalued in comparison to the verbal and textual, despite the latter being perceived as more sophisticated and formal. This phenomenon is evident even within social networks". (p. 3). Kaur & Kaur (2021) highlight that, "despite the significance of visual identity as a tangible asset in organisations' external communication strategies, its role in the social media environment remains under-researched" (p. 237).

The extant corpus of literature on social media is predominantly concerned with the consumption, management and interaction of these platforms. Conversely, texts on graphic design tend to concentrate on techniques, elements, software handling and printing equipment. Among the few studies related to design and social networks is that of Zhang (2017), which takes an approach to the impact that technologies have had on society and how design has also found a space in these. The work of Gancho, et al. (2013) is more closely aligned with our study, which analyses the significance of design in branding for social networks.

Since the advent of graphic design in the 20th century, inspired by printing and photography techniques (AbuShawali, et al., 2013), design has been characterised by the use of images and texts in two-dimensional planes. However, the scope of design has expanded to encompass not only static images, but also a wider range of media. Since the advent of information technology, graphic concepts have been applied to a range of audiovisual products, including animations, videos, the internet and social networks. It is therefore possible to speak of audiovisual graphic design, or simply audiovisual design.

There are authors who differentiate between graphic design and visual communication design. However, we concur with López (2012) who posits that "the graphic designer is a visual communicator, he solves visual communication problems [...]. Furthermore, the term graphic design has evolved to a plural state with multiple denominations: graphic communication, visual communication, visual design, communication design" (p.25). In this context, visual communication may be defined as follows:

It is a method of effective and efficient graphical representation of information. There are numerous types of visual communication content, including motion graphics, infographics, and interactive content, among others. These elements include iconography, graphics, illustrations, data visualisation, animation and interactivity. The utilisation of visual aids, such as graphs, maps, posters, and screen-based media, is a valuable tool for facilitating effective communication. (Tilak, 2020, p. 963)

The most prominent media are social networks, which have the advantage of transmitting information quickly. For this reason, having a presence on them has become an obligation for companies, brands, individuals offering products or services, or simply for those who want to exchange or share information of interest.

Among the content published on social networks, graphic design elements are observed, including colours, typographies, and signs that generate identity and transmit messages. In these digital spaces, graphic designers create bespoke graphic pieces for the online environment, which necessitates consideration of the characteristics of the user of these platforms.

2. Graphic Design for the Internet

The history of graphic design can be traced back to the development of communication, with the invention of paper, the printing press, and printing techniques representing pivotal moments.

Additionally, the advancement of photography has played a significant role in the evolution of graphic design. Graphic design has been a fundamental element in various media, including television and cinema.

In the context of television, graphic design fulfils a number of functions, including the identification of both the channel and the programmes that are broadcast. It is also applied to logos, bumpers, signs and infographics for news programmes and other programmes. Furthermore, it is present in the introduction of television series.

In the field of cinema, design contributes to the medium through posters and film credits. The individual who can be considered the pioneer of audiovisual design was the graphic designer Saul Bass. Bass worked on films by renowned film directors in the 1950s, adding graphic elements to film credits, which marked a significant turning point in design (Palacios, 2005).

Since the advent of computer science and the subsequent emergence of Web 2.0 in the early years of the 21st century, "design is no longer perceived as an 'added value' of objects. Instead, it could be argued that design encompasses the planning and shaping of digital interfaces for computer games or the creation of a country's public image" (Julier, 2008, as cited in Gancho, et al., 2013, p. 3). Regarding graphic design:

It has undergone a transformation from a handmade process to a digital machine process, from paper to different forms and shapes of digital media. This transformation presents a novel challenge for traditional graphic designers to engage in the design of new digital media. (AbuShawali et al., 2013, p. 269)

The designer's contribution in these new spaces is inextricably linked with Information and Communication Technologies. In the contemporary era, it is challenging to envision a world without the Internet and the websites that users rely on to access a vast array of information. As of January 2024, a total of 5.35 billion individuals worldwide were utilizing the Internet, representing 66.2% of the global population (DATAREPORTAL, 2024). Furthermore, this percentage is set to continue to grow.

These users navigate a multitude of websites on the Internet, encountering a vast array of information, text, and images distributed across a digital space. Web design "shares characteristics with the developmental trends in design and art of the 20th century and with traditional design areas such as industrial design and graphic communication" (Engholm, 2002, p. 193).

Web design encompasses not only the architectural and internal structural elements of a website, but also the visual elements, graphic composition, colours, typography, and other design considerations. In this context, the visual design of a website is of great importance in achieving a balance between aesthetic appeal and functionality.

The advent of portable technology has compelled graphic designers to present information to their audience in a novel, non-linear manner and to assume a collaborative role within the field of information architecture. In the current digital age, traditional graphic designers are required to design online campaigns, animated logos and digital artwork that are adapted to the new digital media. (AbuShawali, et. al., 2013, p. 270)

2.1. Visual Design in Social Media

The evolution of graphic design has led to the emergence of digital platforms. The various forms of design, including print, multimedia, and web design, have converged to achieve the objective of transmitting information and messages with the aesthetic qualities that have historically characterised design.

The advent of digital technology and media platforms has ushered in a new era of information transmission, offering a novel exhibition space and design method for the field of visual communication design. (Zhang, 2017, p. 257)

Recent statistics indicate that the number of active users in social networks until January 2024 was 5.04 billion, which represents 62.3% of the world population (DATAREPORTAL, 2024). The advent of information and communication technologies has led to the creation of numerous social media

platforms, which serve as a conduit for users to search for and consume a plethora of content, including but not limited to informative, educational, and entertainment-related material.

In social networks, conversations, opinions and information exchange take place. Organisations and brands have adapted to a digital ecosystem, and their presence in these social media is practically obligatory. "They are considered the main key to have a greater impact on digital marketing strategies, as they allow companies to interact with their consumers and vice versa" (Barboza-Alonso, et. al, 2023, p. 21).

The popularity and reach of social media forces companies to implement creative strategies that allow them to reach different audiences, given that competition is greater. One of the initial strategies to be considered is the visual identity of the company.

As the number of social media users continues to grow, it is becoming increasingly important for communication managers to present their visual identity in an attractive and consistent manner across all social media platforms. This is because it enables them to capture the attention of customers. (Kaur & Kaur, 2020, p.236)

The visual identity of a brand is a crucial aspect that influences the user's perception of the brand. "It refers to the set of graphic elements (shapes, colours and typographies) that represent and identify a given organisation and allow it to differentiate itself from others" (Subiela, 2017, p.116).

Proper management of visual identity will allow users to recognise the brand and to associate different values with it. "To create a robust image of the company in the minds of consumers, a company must establish a distinctive identity and cultivate a relationship with consumers by consistently employing a unified 'look and feel' while communicating with them" (Kaur & Kaur, 2020, p.238). In the construction of the visual identity that is reflected in social networks, graphic design plays a role.

In the field of new media graphic design, the integrated means of expression of dynamic graphics, sound, etc., have a greater capacity for expression and a greater appeal to audiences, which serves to enhance the reading and acceptance of visual information. It encompasses a multitude of elements, including text, graphics, images, sound, and animation. This multi-angle visual communication with full scope represents a novel characteristic of graphic design in the modern information society and a new design language with full functions and effects. (Yan, 2012, p. 4365)

One of the primary functions of graphic design for social networks is the development of the logo or graphic brand, which serves as a minimal element intended to represent the company, organisation or similar entity. "Logos, brands or icons [...] utilise a combination of shapes, colours, symbols and, on occasion, letters or words in a simple design that symbolises the values, quality and promise offered by the manufacturers of a product or service" (Slade-Brooking 2016, p. 24, as cited in Suárez-Carballo, et. al, 2018, p. 277).

The visual identity of a brand is not solely evidenced by the logo; it is also evidenced by typography, colour, and graphic forms, which are organised to create different graphic pieces, whether printed or digital.

Currently, in social networks, digital content is published with these visual elements, which transmit a more effective message, provide brand identity, and attract the user's attention. "Digital media has changed the whole pattern of communication, making it much more interesting, interactive and visually appealing, and in this direction, graphic design has played an important role in making online media content look more attractive and compelling" (Mukherjee & Sharma 2018, p. 1017).

It is accurate to assert that social networks have facilitated communication and have become spaces of significant opportunity for the transmission of messages and the reaching of wider audiences. However, it must be acknowledged that, with the advent of these media, there is a greater number of brands and companies offering products and services, which may result in heightened competition. The content that was previously disseminated through traditional media outlets, such as television, radio, and print, is now being published on social networks. Those responsible for the communication and marketing of a company must be aware of this and take it into account.

When we refer to marketing, we are typically referring to digital marketing. In this context, as Satria, et al. (2022) point out, it can be said that:

Visual marketing in social media is a form of interactive communication that is closely related to the process of graphic design. This process involves the creation of visual elements, such as writing, shapes and images, which convey a message to the viewer. (p. 2)

However, the implementation of digital or visual marketing would not be possible without the establishment of communication objectives. Torres and Cevallos (2021) posit that

marketing processes, regardless of their specific nature, become more robust when communication is implicit and even more so when a favourable experience is generated in the audiences. This interaction, they argue, renders the audiences effective and even recommendable, where feelings are added to a story that will be passed from receiver to receiver. (p. 85)

As previously stated, the prevalence of information on social networks has led to an increase in competition among brands. To capture the attention of the public, brands must transmit messages that are both appealing and affect the emotions of their audience.

Well-crafted content can engage the audience at each stage of the consumer journey. The creation of dominant visual content necessitates the possession of proficient graphic design skills. Graphic designers employ a variety of techniques to elucidate or elucidate concepts through the use of graphic language, which may be verbal, pictorial, or schematic. These techniques are presented on paper or on screen. (Satria, et. al., 2022, p.2)

A graphic designer must consider the use of elements, colours and typographies, as well as the context of social networks. It is important to note that users do not read information in its entirety; rather, they scan it. Graphic compositions must be simple, contain little information, and also communicate through images and illustrations. As humans are naturally visual, these contents will be decisive when it comes to persuading social network users about a brand, product or service.

The field of graphic design has established a presence in the realm of social media, where the need for visual communication has become a crucial aspect for companies and brands seeking to attract consumers.

3. Methodology

The objective of this study is to analyse the elements of graphic design in the content of the brands with the largest followings on the Instagram social network. In order to achieve this objective, a descriptive qualitative analysis methodology will be employed.

Qualitative research is predicated on the notion that the methodologies and theoretical frameworks employed must be congruent with the subject matter under investigation. If existing methods are deemed unsuitable for addressing a particular problem or field, they are adapted or new methods or approaches are developed. (Gibbs, 2013, p.4)

Descriptive analysis, as the term implies, pertains to the delineation of the elements, attributes, or qualities of an object under investigation.

In a descriptive study, a number of questions, concepts or variables are selected, and each is measured independently of the others, precisely in order to describe them. The objective of these studies is to identify the key characteristics of individuals, groups, communities, or any other phenomenon (Cazau, 2006, p. 27).

Consequently, the qualitative descriptive methodology is employed.

This methodology is the optimal choice when the objective is to provide a detailed account of a phenomenon. This type of study is particularly suited to researchers seeking to ascertain the occurrence of events, including the identity of the participants, the nature of the events, and the location of the events. Although central to all qualitative research approaches, qualitative descriptive studies are a valuable methodological approach in their own right (Sandelowski, 2000, p.339).

The study sample was selected at the discretion of the researcher. To obtain it, the 100 accounts with the most followers on Instagram were identified from the *InsTrack* analysis platform up to January 2024. Those belonging to brands that offer products were then selected. The brands included in this study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Most followed brands on Instagram

Brand	Account	Number of followers
Nike	@nike	306,612,726
Victoria's Secret	@victoriassecret	76,356,720
ZARA	@zara	61,392,110
CHANEL	@chanelofficial	59,734,507

Source: *InsTrack* (2024, January 22).

The period of analysis corresponds to the publication dates of November, December 2023 and January 2024. The research questions are as follows: The first research question is as follows: This study examines the extent to which elements of graphic language are employed in the Instagram publications of brands. 2. Does the brand's corporate identity manifest in a coherent manner in the content it publishes on Instagram?

In order to answer the aforementioned questions, the principal elements of graphic design and visual identity are considered for analysis. These include typography, colour, and the logo or graphic brand.

3. Results

One of the key benefits of social media is the ability to disseminate a substantial volume of content in a relatively short period of time, with the assurance that it will reach the intended audience. The characteristic posts and reels on Instagram have become an important resource for sharing content. A post is defined as a photograph or video published in a direct or scheduled manner (Saavedra, 2024). Reels are brief videos that can be swiftly created and viewed on the app and represent an engaging method of connecting with the community through entertaining videos that inspire participation (About Instagram, 2024).

The following data was obtained from Table 2, which displays the number of posts and reels on the Instagram accounts of each brand during the analysis period. The account with the greatest quantity of content on Instagram is that of Victoria's Secret, with 103 posts and 76 reels. This is followed by Chanel, with 93 posts and 77 reels, Zara with 76 posts and 26 reels, and finally Nike, with the least amount of content, at 28 posts and 21 reels. It is also pertinent to note that the number of images analysed is greater than the number of posts, given that each post contains multiple images.

Table 2. Elements of analysis

Brand	Nike	Victoria's Secret	Zara	Chanel
No. Publications	28	103	76	93
No. Images: includes all images within a publication.	94	148	107	167
Images: Type of resource or content illustrations, photographs, animated gifs, infographics, videos.	67 photographs, 6 iustrations, 10 infographics, 10 videos, 1 animated gif.	129 photographs, 2 illustrations, 2 infographics, 10 videos, 5 animated gifs.	105 photographs, 1 video, 1 illustration.	163 photographs, 2 illustrations, 2 videos.
No. Reels	21	76	26	77
Reels: type of resource or content	5 animations, 16 videos.	37 animations, 39 videos.	6 animations, 20 videos.	3 animations, 74 videos.

Brand	Nike	Victoria's Secret	Zara	Chanel
Presence of text/typography	38 images, 18 reels.	16 images, 49 reels.	1 image, 17 reels.	23 images, 51 reels.
Predominant colours	blue, white, red, orange, green, green, grey, purple, red, black.	black, red, green, pink, gold.	black, grey, white, blue, gold, silver, green, orange.	black, gold, white, violet, red, orange, green, pink.
Presence of logo/graphic branding	68 images, 19 reels.	30 images, 35 reels.	2 images, 11 reels.	67 images, 63 reels.

Source: own elaboration based on the observation of Instagram accounts.

3.3. Graphic Elements Used in Brands.

Images are fundamental elements within the graphic composition, as they provide realism and attract attention. As Ramirez (2017, p. 4) notes, “images communicate a message in a quick and simple manner, whether through photographs, illustrations, infographics, or the image in question”. The utilisation of images by brands serves to provide a visual representation of their products that is deemed desirable by the consumer (Guerrero, 2020).

The content analysed in the posts included a variety of visual elements, including photographs, illustrations, infographics, videos, and animated GIFs. The most prevalent graphic element is photography, which reflects reality in an objective manner. The Chanel brand, for instance, includes 163 photographs, while Victoria's Secret, Zara, and Nike include 129, 105, and 67 photographs, respectively. In most cases, these figures represent the majority of the brand's photographic content. This element enables them to present their products in a realistic and appealing manner. Furthermore, when models utilise products in carefully crafted environments, the product features are reflected in a realistic manner, thereby attracting the attention of the consumer. The consumer observes the product and the style, and simultaneously perceives the brand values, which establishes an emotional bond with the audience.

Video is the second most prevalent element in social media posts. A video is a moving image accompanied by sound. Instagram was initially conceived as a platform for sharing static images, but over time, it expanded to incorporate the capability of sharing both short and long videos. These videos, which are both visually appealing and easy to consume, have proven to be an effective means of capturing and holding the attention of users (Álvarez, 2024). A total of 23 videos were published across all accounts. Nike and Victoria's Secret were the brands that utilised this resource the most, although it should be noted that this element is still relatively under-utilised in comparison to photographs. Although there are only a few videos, this allows them to communicate, tell stories and show their products in a very realistic, dynamic and attractive way.

Illustrations are a fundamental element of visual communication. “They are defined as a visual representation of a text or concept through the use of formal design elements, artistic techniques, symbolism, abstractions and varied graphic styles, which favour the transmission of information between sender and receiver” (Menza and Sánchez, 2016, p. 278).

A total of 12 illustrations were identified across all the accounts analysed. Nike is the brand that employs this resource to a greater extent than the others. Illustrations were identified in only one publication, Figure 1, which features simple elements based primarily on typography and a figure that seeks to attract the user's attention.

Figure 1. Illustration on Nike branding

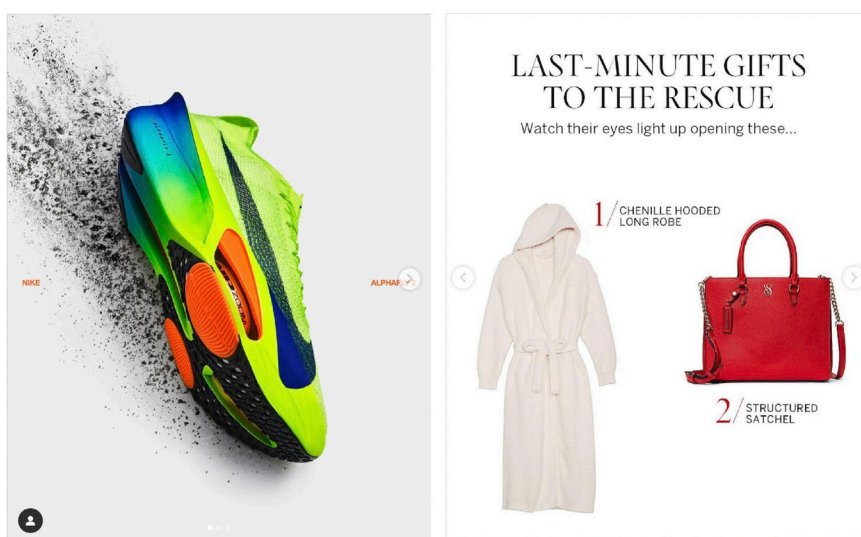


Source: Nike Instagram, 2023.

Infographics are a type of visual representation that employs a combination of text, images, and other elements to transform and communicate complex information in a simple, attractive, and easily comprehensible manner. “An infographic is a combination of visual elements that provides a graphic display of information. The primary function of infographics is to present complex information in a graphical format that facilitates comprehension, enhances visual appeal, and/or provides a more engaging reading experience” (Clarín, 1997, cited in Sivila, 2023, p. 7407).

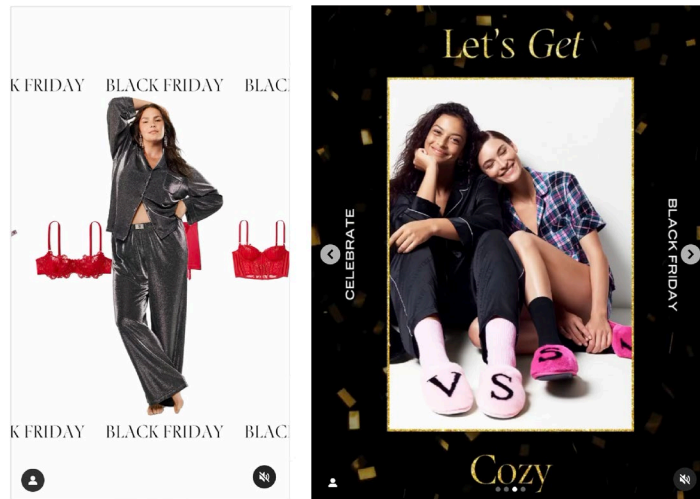
A total of 12 infographics were identified across all brands in the publications analysed. The only brands to include infographics in their posts were Nike and Victoria's Secret. Furthermore, Nike has the greatest number of infographics (ten). However, these infographics are relatively simple in nature, comprising an image and a limited number of text or graphic elements. Their purpose is to highlight specific details and features of the products in question, as illustrated in Figure 2. It could be argued that these images do not fall into the category of infographics, but rather represent a form of visual representation that is closer to the definition of infographics.

Figure 2. Infographics of Nike and Victoria's Secret brands



Source: Nike Instagram post, 2024 and Victoria's Secret, 2023.

Animated GIFs are a simple, yet effective resource frequently employed in the context of online advertisements. They are characterised by their ability to convey precise and concise information in a visually appealing manner. Furthermore, an animated GIF is a file type comprising a sequence of images repeated in an infinite loop (Flórez, 2020). A total of six resources of this type were identified, with five of them appearing in posts for the Victoria's Secret brand (Figure 3). These were primarily used to communicate discounts or promotions.

Figure 3. Victoria's Secret brand animated gifs

Source: Victoria's Secret Instagram post, 2023

Another type of content on Instagram is the reel, which is a short video. A reel comprises a range of functions, including recording and editing, as well as effects, stickers, audio, and music. The duration of this type of content may range from 15 to 60 seconds (Lenis, 2023). Currently, the platform permits the upload of videos with a maximum duration of 90 seconds.

The analysis indicates that the Chanel and Victoria's Secret brands have a greater prevalence of reel content than the Nike and Zara brands. The majority of reels are videos (149 across all brands), with a smaller number being animations (51 across all brands). Victoria's Secret is the brand that has a balance between videos (39) and animations (37), while Chanel has a greater proportion of videos (74).

Typography is a crucial element in graphic composition, functioning as a complement to the image and, in other instances, as a standalone means of conveying information. Typography serves to communicate and inform through the written word. As Haslam and Baines (2005) observe, "it is concerned with structuring and organising visual language".

The use of lettering, whether as a primary element or as an accent, is a crucial aspect of graphic design [...]. Errors in typography can impede the effectiveness of a design in conveying its intended message to the audience, despite the visual appeal of the design itself. Well-designed typography can greatly enhance the impact of a design, attracting the audience and increasing its perceived value. (Hayyu, et. al, 2013, p.1)

The brands under examination make use of this resource in their posts and reels, as illustrated in Figure 4. However, it is not a dominant element in the graphic compositions. The Nike brand employs typography in 38 images and 18 reels, which are texts or short phrases that accompany the image. In all the compositions published with texts, the typography changes between dry stick, Roman and calligraphic.

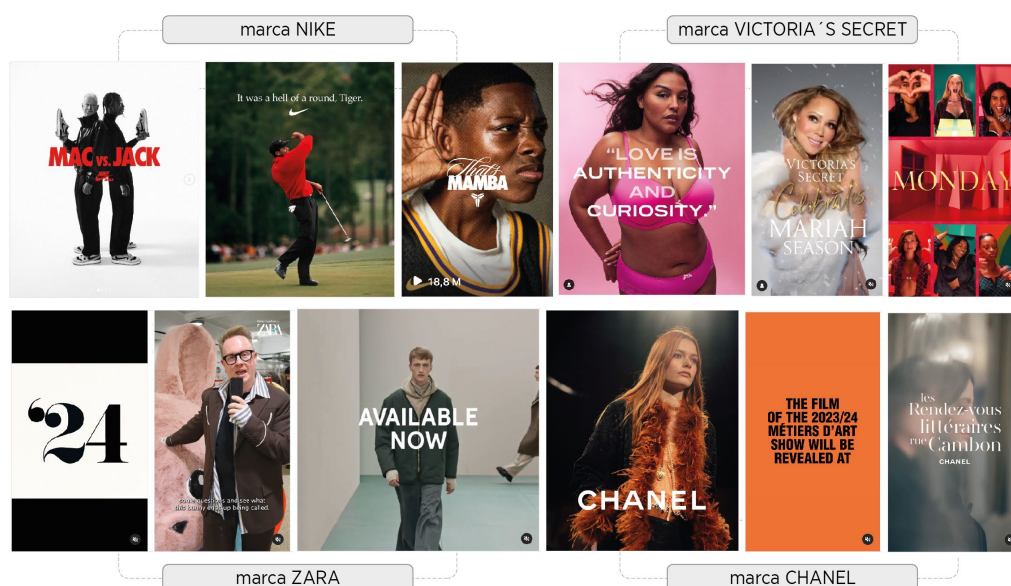
A total of 16 images and 49 reels with accompanying texts were identified on the Instagram account of the Victoria's Secret brand. The typography employed also encompasses a variety of styles, including dry stick, roman and calligraphic. However, it should be noted that several publications utilise the roman typography, which aligns with that of the graphic brand. This generates unity across the different publications and reinforces the visual identity. Additionally, it is evident that the typographic compositions, although simple, are meticulously crafted to be both attractive and dynamic. They also highlight important words, which serves to attract the user's attention.

The Zara brand is the one that uses the fewest texts for its posts and reels. Texts were identified in only one image and in 17 reels. The only image with text corresponds to a post where information about images that caused some discomfort to some customers is clarified. As for the texts in the reels, these have dry stick, Roman and calligraphic typefaces, but they are minor elements within the visual hierarchy of the graphic composition.

The Chanel brand employs text in 23 images and 51 reels. The text is presented in a Roman and dry stick typography. In several instances, the text is the brand name, while in others it refers to an upcoming event. The use of text is similarly minimal in this brand.

A general observation of the publications of the four brands analysed reveals that in several of the videos, the texts displayed accompany the dialogue of the characters appearing in the reels, thus functioning as subtitles.

Figure 4. Typography on *posts* and *reels*



Source: Nike, Victoria's Secret, Zara and Chanel Instagram, 2023 -2024

Colour is a fundamental aspect of visual language, with the capacity to influence the user's perception through its sensitive qualities. An understanding of the meaning of colour is of great importance in determining its use in a graphic composition, which contributes to the creation of attractive and memorable messages.

The impact of colour is evident in all aspects of our daily lives and is regarded as an important factor in consumer behaviour. [...]. Colours elicit specific feelings and emotions towards a product and are an essential indicator for a company to effectively represent its products. The selection of different colours is known to motivate specific types of buyers. (Rehman 2021, pp. 183-185)

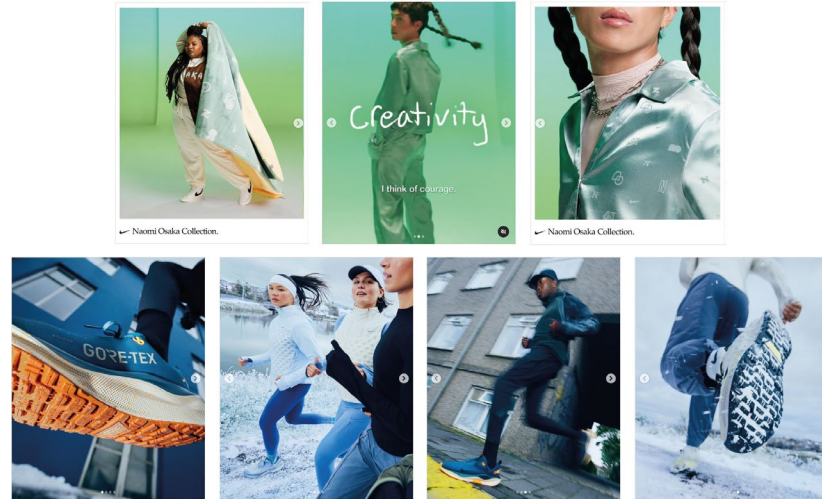
Similarly, colour is an integral component of a company's corporate identity. By incorporating colour into their branding, companies can enhance their positioning and visibility. However, not all companies prioritize the significance of colour in their branding strategies.

Colour can be employed as a means of establishing institutional identification; indeed, it represents one of the most potent visual signals. Nevertheless, this does not imply that every entity must utilise it. The utilisation of colour as a means of identification will be of paramount importance for some entities, while for others it will be decidedly counterproductive, and for a third it will be of no consequence. There are three main types of organisations: those that use a specific colour, those that use only black and white, and those that use a random colour scheme. (Chavez, 2024)

The use of colour in the different posts and reels of the four brands is dependent on the type of campaign, the message to be transmitted and the product. For instance, Victoria's Secret employs the colours red and green in several of its publications, particularly in the December publications, which are characteristic of the Christmas season. Its products and garments also revolve around these colours. Black, gold and pink also stand out in this brand, the latter of which is associated with its corporate identity.

With regard to Nike, a wide variety of colours is employed, including blue, red, green, grey, purple, orange, black and white. The latter three colours are associated with the brand's corporate identity. A noteworthy aspect of this brand is the consistency in chromatic identity observed across all images associated with a publication. This is exemplified in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Nike colour identity



Source: Nike Instagram, 2023

The Zara brand is characterised by a monochromatic palette of black, white, gold, silver and grey, with occasional deviations into blue, green and orange. In the Chanel brand, similar to the previous brand, black, white and gold are the dominant colours, but there are also green, orange, pink, violet and red. In both the Zara and Chanel brands, the most prevalent colours are directly related to black and white, which are characteristic of their corporate identity.

Finally, the defining feature of a company's visual identity is its logo, which is a graphic symbol that represents or communicates the company.

A logo represents a company and serves as a conduit between the public and the company. The logo serves to convey information in a condensed visual format, aiming to "capture" and become embedded in the public consciousness. The functions of the logo are those that ensure graphic, visual and sentimental communication and allow the message to be translated to the public. The efficacy of a logo serves as a guarantee of the quality and value of products. The functions of the logo are rational and sentimental. (Adîr, et al. 2012, pp. 650-651)

In the four brands analysed, the graphic brand is present, although it is not used in all the images that form part of the analysis. In the case of Nike, the graphic brand is present in 68 images and 19 reels. In the case of Victoria's Secret, the graphic brand is employed in 30 images and 35 reels. In the case of Chanel, the graphic brand is employed in 67 images and 63 reels. Zara is the brand where the graphic brand is used the least, with only two images and 11 reels. If it were not a social network, which has the graphic brand in its profile, the images of the posts could easily be associated with any other brand in the same business sector.

The graphic brand is not present in the different posts in a manner that could be considered a signature or watermark. In the majority of posts and reels, the graphic brand is present on the products being promoted.

The elements of visual language and corporate identity, such as typography, colour and graphic branding, are of great importance in the generation of a solid and recognisable identity for the public. These elements transmit personality, evoke sensations and allow the brand to differentiate itself from its competitors. However, in the four Instagram accounts analysed, these elements are not given priority. This is particularly evident in the Zara brand, whose use of typography and graphic branding is limited in the different posts and reels.

4. Conclusions

This study analysed the elements of graphic design in the content published on the Instagram accounts of the Nike, Victoria's Secret, Zara and Chanel brands. The study aimed to ascertain the role of typography, colour, and the graphic brand or logo in the recognition and positioning of a brand among its target audience, in this case, social media users.

Over the course of the three-month analysis period, a number of posts and reels were observed. It should be noted that a single post may contain multiple images, thus increasing the number of images analysed and enhancing the possibility of identifying design elements. The number of static and moving images found in posts and reels, respectively, is as follows: The number of images identified in the posts and videos of the following brands was as follows: Chanel (244), Victoria's Secret (224), Zara (133) and Nike (115).

The typography, colours and graphic brand were identified, thus answering the first research question. This study sought to determine whether graphic language elements were employed in the publications created by the brands on Instagram. In all the Instagram accounts and, in particular, the Zara brand, these graphic elements are minimal. The typography does not stand out, there is no significant typographic composition, and the colour is varied. This does not obey the corporate colour of each brand, even the colour is in accordance with the product and the season. With regard to the graphic brand, it is not employed in a significant number of publications. This element, primarily as a means of identification, may result in a loss of identity if it is absent from the publications. Nevertheless, the presence of the brand on the Instagram social network account profile serves to mitigate the issue to a certain extent.

With regard to the second research question, Does the brand's corporate identity exhibit visual coherence with the content it publishes on Instagram? In order to establish visual coherence, it is necessary to maintain a unity in the corporate elements, including colour, typography and logo. However, as previously stated, the colour palette is diverse, varying according to the products and the season, yet not aligning with the corporate identity. A similar observation can be made regarding the typography, with the exception of the Instagram account of Victoria's Secret, which features a typography related to the corporate identity. The logo or graphic brand present in the profile of each account serves to unify and identify all publications.

The content published is based on the products offered by the brands, which are primarily related to clothing. In a few cases, the content is also related to events organised by the brands.

It is of significant importance to elucidate the nature of the content disseminated on the Instagram accounts under analysis. In graphic design, compositions can be created with a variety of elements, including graphic forms, illustrations, photographs, and even moving images, animations, and videos. The content employed by the four accounts under analysis comprises photographs and videos, which can be identified as a virtual catalogue of the products in question. In other words, Instagram is used as a visual window on the brands' products.

Finally, it can be assumed that, as the brands analysed have become recognised and established in the market, they have allowed the elements of graphic language and corporate visual identity to become less prominent. It is likely that the users who follow these accounts identify qualities and values different from the visual language, and this should be a new subject of research that allows us to gain insight into the user's perception.

This research aims to elucidate the advantages of graphic design or visual design in social networks. Future research will continue to examine the utilisation of each element of visual language by brands and content creators.

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