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DELVING INTO THE REPRESENTATION OF SIGNS AND SYMBOLS: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS ON CLUB LOGOS

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to understand how club logos conveyed messages by exploring their semiotic features. Using qualitative methods, specifically semiotic analysis, 20 school club logos were examined, with 20 materials presented for analysis. Data were categorized based on two main research questions: identifying semiotic features and elucidating conveyed meanings. The findings emphasized the interconnectedness of features within signs, particularly in club logos, which derived significance from integrating reality (the object) and observer interpretation (the interpretant). Without this fusion, signs lacked purpose. While interpretations varied and influenced by factors like context and individual knowledge, they were anchored in established semiotic theories, such as Peirce's and Saussure's. The findings show that club logos are effective in communicating identity, values, and purpose but are interpreted in different ways depending on the context in which they are viewed and the individual knowledge of the observer. Comparative studies of logos across primary, secondary, and tertiary school levels can be used as potential research direction in understanding how the roles of logos change with design choices. This would be very useful to anyone interested in how school logos reflect the culture, values, and aspirations at every stage of schooling.

KEYWORDS: *club logos, semiotic analysis, semiotic features, symbols, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Club logos are an extremely important visual symbol, embodying the identity, values, and heritage of a sports organization, thus forming an important aspect of their brand. A logo represents not only the unique character of the club but also the bond of unity and pride within its members and supporters. The logos of clubs are differentiated through specific design elements such as color, typography, and imagery to communicate key messages in respect of ethos, history, or aspirations. This thesis explores the role played by club logos in formulating brand identity, exploring whether the logos change over time and how they influence fans, psychologically, and their importance to a connection between the club and its community. By understanding the design principles and cultural significance of the logos, this study highlights them to be more than just mere graphical symbols but as essential tools in the communication and marketing strategies of sports organizations.

In Ethiopia and Malaysia, some researches of sign systems particularly using semiotics as a method of analysis. Universities have been unable to create a strong and distinguishable visual identity. With this, it is challenging for educational institutions to develop, and the Ethiopian culture and psyche may have an impact on the development of visual identity. Investigating the logos of Ethiopian public universities can aid in understanding the signs' mediated messages (Mohammed, 2020).

In the University of San Carlos, Cebu City, a study was investigated in terms of the identity development of the community college that distinguished their services through logos. A problem was found when it was investigated that these logos hardly give representation to the identity of the named community college. Hence, their logos must represent the services in the industry of academic achievement (Barabas, 2018).

This study explores the semiotic features and meanings of club logos in community colleges in the Philippines, focusing on how these logos represent their respective departments. It aims to address an overlooked issue in the educational system, particularly in institutions like KCAST, where the significance of these logos has been largely unexplored. By analyzing how these logos communicate their department's identity, this research offers insights into the visual and digital communication that shapes students' understanding and interpretation of complex ideas. The study also highlights the broader social value of interpreting symbols and signs, fostering intercultural awareness, and promoting social unity. Ultimately, it aims to deepen our understanding of cultural communication and its role in driving social change.

Although numerous semiotic studies have explored visuals and categorical signs across various fields, there has been limited research specifically on club logos, such as that of KCAST

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(Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences, and Technology). Mendoza's (2021) study, "Enhanced Agency and the Visual Thinking of Design," examines logos in commercial contexts, focusing on the relationship between visual elements and consumer perception. Similarly, Douglas (2022) in "Semiotic Protocols for Cultural Trend Analysis in Strategic Communication: Brand Cases from the Telecommunications Sector" analyzes visual identity systems in marketing and branding, stressing the strategic role of visuals in shaping audience recognition and perception. While these studies focus on logos in commercial, marketing, and fashion settings, this research turns its attention to educational institutions, specifically KCAST. The study also seeks to deepen the understanding of how institutional logos operate as carriers of ideological and cultural messages that influence public perception and identity. To share the findings, the research will be disseminated in multiple ways: through academic publications in peer-reviewed journals, conference presentations, and workshops aimed at educators, students, and staff within the Philippine educational system. Additionally, the results will be shared with key stakeholders, including university administrators and graphic designers, to promote the use of semiotic principles in designing future club logos. The research will also be made accessible online via educational platforms and social media, expanding its reach and fostering broader discussions about the cultural and educational significance of logos in higher education.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS/OBJECTIVES

This study seeks to address the following research questions::

1. What are the semiotic features of these club logos?
2. How do these logos represent the identity of each club?

METHODOLOGY

According to Hasko (2020), the qualitative study applied a corpus-based analysis in which this type of analysis is a research methodology that is used for precise examination of a specific linguistic phenomenon based on authentic and communicative situations that are being compiled or collected to be stored digitally and made available for later access, retrieval, and analysis via computer. Furthermore, when used as the methodological foundation for an investigation, this type of analysis takes an exploratory and inductive approach. Qualitative corpus analysis differs from other approaches as it has goals includes handling an actual samples of a specific language phenomena on which it is under investigative process using computer-aided restoration, thoroughly investigating the data collected from the first goal, and applying the information obtained from the second goal to a range of cognitive expeditions in applied linguistics

Qualitative design was selected as the most suitable methodology for this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration and interpretation of visual content, such as logos and symbols. This methodology was suitable because it covers the semiotic analysis described in the previous chapter about the ways signs and symbols carry meaning. Qualitative methods are best suited for the analysis of visual data, allowing for a detailed and systematic interpretation of the logos that form the core data of the study. Other methodologies would not provide the tools necessary to interpret this specific type of data, making qualitative design the ideal framework for achieving the research objectives.

Discourse analysis has focused mainly on the linguistic resources that writers or speakers use to (a) organize discourse and (b) express their stance toward content, as well as toward their readers or listeners. This has led to the development of several classifications of organizational expressions and stance markers in both spoken and written discourse, regardless of whether they appear in Attribution or Averral. These categories allow for more insight into how people actually organize their messages and express their attitudes or beliefs. Further, this field has contributed to the emergence of computational linguistics wherein researchers process huge corpora of text with software tools that quantify certain linguistic instantiations of metadiscourse categories. Using automated methods, it is possible to efficiently identify and measure the frequency of these linguistic features, thereby gaining insight into patterns of communication and how these might inform more sophisticated models of discourse. These analyses can illuminate the underlying structure of communication as well as the role metadiscourse elements play in interpreting messages and speakers' relationships with their audiences (Abdesslem, 2020).

In the case of logos of clubs, qualitative corpus analysis can help in adopting an analytical framework to understand how visual elements, logos in this case, act as signs and symbols to create meaning and meaning-making pervasively. Just like discourse analysis seeks the way in which language structures messages and expresses attitudes through certain linguistic resources, the study scrutinizes how design elements such as colors, forms, typography, and imagery function as elements of a bigger, resonant, and cohesive visual communication addressing an audience. The representation of signs and symbols in club logos could easily be seen as an image form of discourse, in which all elements bring about a brand identity equivalent to how frameworked language markers (e.g. hedges, boosters) would bring about the tone and stance in verbal communication. This research was extended through semiotic analysis with a view to understanding how these visual markers both reflect and influence cultural, social, and emotional responses, thus explaining how logos are integrated into clubs as instruments of persuasion in branding and marketing.

Furthermore, semiotic analysis is being applied in this study as it is the best and more appropriate approach. It is to study signs together with its systems and interpretations that are shaped by the culture. Interpretations of a sign differ across cultures, such as how a particular sign is portrayed differently in one culture than another through the use of media. This is where this approach comes into play, as it can be used to analyze advertisements,

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packages, and other symbolic material (The Association for Qualitative Research [AQR], 2022).

Semiotics was the most appropriate approach in this research because it corresponds with the central argument of studying and interpreting the symbolical meanings in the club logos of Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences, and Technology (KCAST). It aimed at exploring how such logos convey meanings through visual signs and symbols, and semiotic analysis would be the best means to delve deep in investigating the multi-layered representations. Given semiotic inquiry, the researcher should be able to explore deeper meanings, more often embedded within symbols and denotative signs found in the design elements of the logos, including shape, color, typography, and imagery. This opens a path towards extensive leeway within the proximate connaissances concerning the way it portrays not only the disposition of being aesthetic but also its varied communicative functions that influence perceptions and, ultimately, identities. Thus, conducting semiotic analysis becomes not only the safest but also the most effective method to unveil the hidden meaning of KCAST logos on the symbolic grounds so that this research can discern what cultural, social, and ideological messages they convey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Question No. 1: What are the semiotic features of these club logos?

This section will discuss the three features, following Peirce's model, found in the pictures given of club logos. Presented in the Table 1, were the tally of semiotic features in every corpora that is found in club logos. Presented in Table 1.1 are the representamens, objects, and interpretants of each elements of the club logos that the researcher gathered from dissecting the images in order to employ the theory of Peirce and determine the features of every material. The table showed that there are three features in each sign found in the club logos.

In addition, the researcher put together a table of thirteen (13) research materials, all of which have images and words that were well categorized and presented. The signs were then analyzed using Peirce's semiotic model in order to identify and determine the key features. The analysis specifically deals with the examination of the three essential elements of Peirce's theory, namely representamen, object, and interpretant. The following extracts illustrate the data collected through this analysis, demonstrating how these three elements manifest within each sign and contribute to its overall meaning and interpretation.

Table 1
Semiotic Features Found In Club Logos

Semiotic Feature	Frequency	Corpora
Torch	5	CL-01 CL-12 CL-05 CL-09 CL-10
Book	7	CL-01 CL-15 CL-08 CL-12 CL-09 CL-13 CL-14
Bird	6	CL-01 CL-15 CL-14 CL-10 CL-07 CL-03
Sun and stars	8	CL-02 CL-07 CL-08 CL-10 CL-11 CL-14 CL-16 CL-19
Light Bulb	1	CL-01
Laurel Wreath	10	CL-01 CL-02 CL-05 CL-07 CL-08 CL-11 CL-13 CL-14 CL-15 CL-16
Human Figure	9	CL-03 CL-04 CL-06 CL-09 CL-12 CL-13 CL-14 CL-18 CL-19
Old Weighing Scale	2	CL-07 CL-10
KCAST Logo	5	CL-01 CL-03 CL-04 CL-06 CL-15
Science	4	CL-02 CL-07 CL-12 CL-13
Junior	4	CL-03 CL-04 CL-05 CL-06
Name Club	17	CL-01 CL-02 CL-03 CL-04 CL-05

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		CL-05 CL-06 CL-07 CL-08 CL-09 CL-10 CL-11 CL-12 CL-13 CL-14 CL-15 CL-16 CL-18 CL-19
Year	9	CL-01 CL-02 CL-07 CL-08 CL-09 CL-11 CL-12 CL-14 CL-15

Table 1 showcased the representaments, objects, and interpretants identified in the club logos. It illustrates that each logo sign contains three key features. The researcher compiled this table using ten (10) research materials and organized them into five (5) pairs, which were then classified and arranged. As a result, the table is divided into five categories, with each category containing between seven (7) and nine (9) signs. These signs were analyzed through Peirce's semiotic model to identify and determine their features. The classification and organization of the signs allowed for a more systematic comparison, revealing patterns in how each logo conveys meaning and aligns with Peirce's semiotic theory.

This presents the Triadic Model of the Semiotic Feature of Club Logos in Table 1.1, with an example of how club logos function as semiotic signs. This model, according to Charles Peirce's theory of semiotics, is structured into three key components, namely, Representamen, or the physical and mental form of the logo, words, images, or symbols; Object, an identity or entity signified in the logo or, for example, the identity of a football club, and lastly, the Interpretant: meaning assigned by the person viewing through interpretation, hence influenced by the context through which he encounters the logo. This framework helps to analyze how club logos convey identity and meaning to their audience.

Table 1.1
The Triadic Model of the Semiotic Feature of Club Logos

Representamen (The physical or mental forms like words, images, etc.)	**Object (The identity being referred)**	**Interpretant (The meaning generated by the interpreter depending on the context)**
Torch	A piece of wood or cloth soaked in tallow or an oil lamp on a pole, sometimes carried ceremonially.	Symbolizes liberty and serves as an emblem of freedom, inspiration, knowledge, and the imparting of wisdom through teaching.
Book	A collection of printed or written pages that are bound together, usually with a cover. It also contains information, stories, or ideas that people can read to learn, be entertained, or explore new worlds.	Serves as a visual representation of learning, enlightenment, and the sharing of ideas.
Bird	Are a group of warm-blooded vertebrates constituting the class Aves, characterized by feathers, toothless beaked jaws, the laying of hard-shelled eggs, a high metabolic rate, a four-chambered heart, and a strong yet lightweight skeleton.	Common symbolic meanings associated with birds in logos include freedom, flight, vision, communication, and adaptability.

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Sun and Stars	Refer to celestial objects in the sky, but they represent distinct astronomical entities.	The sun is often associated with warmth, light, and positivity. In a logo, a stylized sun can convey a sense of optimism, energy, and friendliness. Stars, especially when arranged in a pattern, can symbolize quality, excellence, and recognition.
Light Bulb	A device used to convert electricity into light, consisting of a source of illumination.	It often conveys concepts related to innovation, creativity, ideas, and illumination. A light bulb is a widely recognized symbol for the moment of inspiration or a brilliant idea.
Laurel Wreath	A circular garland crafted from intertwined branches and foliage of the bay laurel (Laurus nobilis), a fragrant evergreen with broad leaves, or alternatively, fashioned from the spineless butcher's broom (Ruscus hypoglossum) or cherry laurel (Prunus laurocerasus).	Often symbolize unity, continuity, and eternity due to their circular shape, representing an unbroken and everlasting cycle
Human Figure	The artistic study of the human body shape, particularly through figure drawing, is a captivating and nuanced exploration that involves capturing the essence, proportions, and dynamics of the human form.	A human figure in a logo can symbolize a sense of identity, humanity, and connection. This is often used to convey a message of welcoming and embracing people from various backgrounds and demographics.
Old Weighing Scale	A spring scale uses a coiled spring as the measuring element. The scale is calibrated to provide accurate readings based on the extension of the spring.	Scales are often associated with the concept of balance and fairness. In a logo, a weighing scale can represent equity, impartiality, and fair dealings. This symbolism may be suitable for legal services, dispute resolution, or organizations promoting justice.
KCAST Logo	The official School logo of the institution Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology	It gives representation and to introduce the whole Institution.

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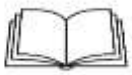
Science	Science encompasses a wide range of disciplines, including physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, and more, each focusing on different aspects of the natural world.	The appearance of 'science' in the logo implies that the club likely emphasizes activities like scientific exploration, education, research, or discussions.
Junior	Refer to someone who has the same name as another person within the same organization	The club's activities, programs, or membership are tailored towards a younger audience or participants
Name Club	Conveys the identity and purpose of the club, providing insight into its focus, interests, or activities.	it typically serves as a visual representation of the club's identity, purpose, or focus
Year	Refers to the time taken for the Earth to complete one orbit around the sun, which is approximately 365 days. In educational contexts, a year refers to the period of time students spend studying at an institution, typically divided into academic terms or semesters.	The year displayed in the logo denotes the year the club was established, signaling its inception and enduring presence.

The provided examples represent instances that demonstrate three key elements of a sign: the representamen, which refers to the physical or sensory aspect; the object, which is the thing being referred to; and the interpretant, which involves the observer's mental process and understanding of the sign's meaning. These chosen examples can act as proof of the existence of the three characteristics in all possible signs, particularly those found in school club logos. Furthermore, as demonstrated by the examples, signs can adopt diverse forms and are part of a network of connections. This indicates the interrelation of the three components and the fact that one component cannot stand alone or simply meaningless in a sense that it is insignificant without the other two.

Research Question No. 2: How do these logos represent the identity of each club?

Table 2

Meanings Communicated through Graphic Contents

Visual- drawing	Signified	Signifier
Torch 	An image depicting an object being used as light and is shown in the logo.	It is a representation of independence and acts as a sign of inspiration, knowledge, and the teaching of wisdom.
Book 	An image depicting an object used for reading, learning, and etc.	It serves as a visual representation of learning, enlightenment, and the sharing of ideas.

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Bird 	An image depicting an animal that can fly shown in the logo	Commonly symbolize freedom, flight, vision, communication, and adaptability.
Sun and Stars 	An image depicting the sun and stars shown in the logo	It can convey a sense of optimism, energy, and friendliness, as well as symbolize quality, excellence, and recognition.
Light Bulb 	An image depicting an object being used as light and is shown in the logo	A widely recognized symbol for the moment of inspiration or a brilliant idea.
Laurel Wreath 	An image depicting a circular garland crafted from intertwined branches	They frequently symbolize unity, continuity, and eternity because their circular shape signifies an unending and perpetual cycle.
Human Figure 	An image depicting a human body shape viewed in the logo	Can represent a sense of identity, humanity, and connection.
Old Weighing Scale 	An image depicting an object being used as a measuring tool shown in the logo	The symbol may linked to the ideas of balance and fairness. Also, weighing scale can symbolize equity, impartiality, and just practices.
KCAST Logo 	**An image depicting the KCAST Logo**	**The logo introduces the name of the school.**

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The analysis of semiotic elements embedded in logos used by clubs brings to light the strategized manner used to depict the individual club's identity and ethos. Analyzing the even, the depicted frequencies, and the attendant logos show how different items are used to fashion certain aspects of the club, as well as the cultural values adhered to by its members. In connection to what Karrow et al., (2022) highlighted, the analysis of semiotic elements in club logos reveals how carefully crafted designs reflect a club's identity and cultural values. By examining the logos and their components, we see how they convey specific aspects of the club's ethos. This interpretative process, however, emphasizes that meanings are dynamic and shaped by constant interaction between the viewer and the visual content. As a result, the interpretation of a logo changes based on context and the observer's perspective, making meanings fluid and context-dependent. The most commonly used semiotic element is related and equally represented by the laurel wreath, which is found in ten logos in reference to achievements and prestige (Amen & Nia, 2021). Basing on the result, this may be related to positive views of academism and honor, which would indicate that clubs utilizing this imagery are probably positioning themselves as entities adhering to the principles of success and high standards. Also, it highlights how these symbols are often used in sports to create a narrative of success, which audiences readily accept based on their prior cultural understanding of these signs.

The human figure is the second most frequently depicted element in nine logos, signifying the club's humanism. This could be interpreted as the author adopting an individual development and community perspective, which highlights the idea of a club's training and working scheme based on the subjects' personal changes and collaboration (Mannay & Pauwels, 2019). In relation to this, the result showed that the sun and stars motif, as used in eight logos, stands for aspiration and high ambition, which might be referring to clubs that wish to instill leadership and visionary thoughts among the members. Of lesser usage but inherent importance is the lamp, an item present only in the one logo that represents the creation of light or ideas in general.

Table 2.2
Meaning Communicated through Textual Contents

Textual	Signified	Signifier
Science	A word shown in the logo	Focuses on activities such as scientific investigation, education, research, or debates.
Junior	A word shown in the logo	It introduces the junior participants of the club.
Name Club	A word shown in the logo	The text introduces the official name of the club.
Year	A word shown in the logo	It shows when was the club established.

Table 2.2 illustrates that club logos contain text features that have certain characteristics to express some meaning or refer to certain aspects. Such textual contents not only speak but also qualify specific essential relations and referents linked with the club's actions, members, past, and goals. The letters "Science" in the logo are not mere taglines but the club's statement of reference. It thus reflects an embracement of science and learning, implying that the activities of the club involve research and learning in science. As with the earlier use of text, Ardhianto and Son (2019) point out that textual components convey particular culturally and contextually rich messages that augment the logo's icon as a cultural signifier, marking a common ground for like-minded aficionados of science.

The "Name Club" text is simple but very essential. It locates the logo and its design firmly in a certain identity so that the club can make it the fulcrum of its branding campaign. As Jégou (2018) notes, such direct textual messages are critical in establishing the link between the semiotic interpretation of symbols and the intended framework of the mission and the club's community. In accordance to the result, it relates to the textual messages that are essential for guiding the audience's understanding of visual symbols, particularly in logos and branding. These textual elements not only clarify the intended meaning of symbols but also ensure that the semiotic codes are aligned with the club's identity, philosophy, and community.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, future studies may be very useful in elaborating on the role that technology plays in both logo design and analysis. Noting the increasing importance that digital platforms play in communication within educational institutions, a study of how logos function over different media, such as website, social media, or mobile applications, may further help educational institutions ensure that logos are versatile and maintain their original meaning within a digital format. This could look into how digital representations of institutional logos impact student engagement and the interpretation of institutional identity in virtual environments.

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Overall, this will be enabled by a more detailed understanding from the standpoints of design principles, interpretive frameworks, questions of inclusivity, and roles of digital media. Analysis will serve as a form of input into the creation of improved logo designs along with their usage and effect in educational contexts, toward which these are representative expressions of values and ethos for the community.

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