Visual Brand Language

The improvement of a tool that helps in communication between client and designer during the design process.
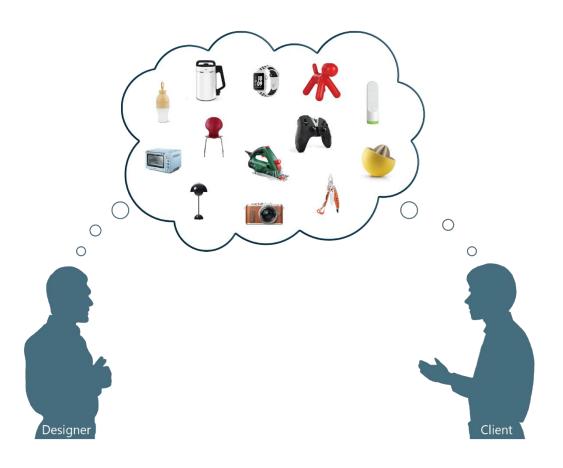
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Topic: Analyzing and improving a tool for visual brand language

This research is done, within the context of product design. Central in this research is the communication between client and designer. Ten years ago, it is investigated how the communication between client and designer can be made more effective. This research is done as a master thesis by Thierry Cheval, in collaboration with design studio Scope Design & Strategy. To this end, a tool is developed, which helps by visualizing the identity of a brand. The tool links the visual design characteristics to the identity of a brand. The tool differentiates the verbal communicated identity of the brand and the identity that belongs to the design characteristics. These results are generated by the tool, by asking to rate 203 images on how much the visual product design on the image fit to the brand. The tool is based on scientific frameworks, that help categorizing brands based on their identity. The images that need to be assessed are linked to the frameworks. Based on the images that are assessed highest, a link is made to the brand identity that fit to these images. The outcome of the tool helps to start the conversation between client and designer. It is directly visible what design preferences fit to the brand, what identity fit to these design preferences and how the brand verbal communicates its brand identity. The existing tool has a lot of advantages: it makes the contact between client and designer more effective and it gives insight in the design preference of the brand. In this way, the design process is made more effective, resulting in saved time and money. Though, there are also disadvantages. The images that are used in the tool are already ten years old. The past ten years, a lot of new technologies are developed that are influencing the design of new products. To give an example: currently, society without smartphones is not conceivable anymore, while ten years ago the first Google smartphone is introduced into the Dutch market. For this main reason, Scope wanted to update the tool.

In this research, the so called Visual Brand Language tool is analyzed, updated and improved. Based on the experiences of seven employees of a brand that used the tool, the experience of Scope designers and the previous report, the problems regarding the tool are discovered. These problems became the cause for the improvements. The starting points for these improvements were improving the dataset, the set with images that are used in the tool and adjust general improvements.

First, a new dataset is composed, which aimed at a dataset that has contemporary character. A selection of about 700 images are collected. These images are categorized from a contemporary perspective by four experts of Scope, with help of four frameworks. All frameworks are concerning the identification of the brand identity. Based on this categorization, a dataset of 205 images is composed, in which is tried to have an as equal as possible spread among the categories of the frameworks. Accordingly, the images and spread among the categories is analyzed. It is investigated if there are relations among the images that can affect the result of the tool negatively. Besides, a possible new tool is developed. This one is tested by one of the participants of the tool, during a workshop. The results are discussed by him and two other participants. The results of the tool are used for a design in a test-case. This design is categorized by two of the four Scope experts that categorized also the other images for the dataset. The input for the design or result of the tool and the categorization of the design are compared to each other. This is done to get insight in how the new dataset is useful for the design process and the communication between designer and client.

The result of this research is a new dataset, with a contemporary character. Besides, a new way of assessing images is developed. In the new VBL-tool, the images must be placed in clusters on a bulls-eye. If they fit the brand well, they can be placed closer to the middle. Added explanations help understand why the clusters fit the brand. The set of images determines the identity and the corresponding visual language of a brand. This way of working should contribute to a better identification of the visual brand identity and a better experience during participation. For now, this can be used in addition of the current tool. In the future, the new workflow may be used on its own, but further investigation is recommended. A larger sample size can help in further investigation.

Visual Brand Language

Does the product fit to your brand?

Too robust

Add text block

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