

PACKAGING DESIGN AS A VEHICLE OF IDENTITY ELEMENTS OF BRAZILIAN CULTURE: A CASE STUDY IN THE GOURMET CHOCOLATES SEGMENTS

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Abstract: In this research, it is proposed to investigate the way of attributing meanings to consumer goods by inserting signs of cultural bias in the Design of their packaging, in addition to exemplifying sign relations and interpretations that can be conceived by their observers. It is expected, therefore, that it will contribute to the demand for techniques for inserting immaterial values into products, so that brands of all niches can be maintained in the current market scenario by maintaining their competitiveness. Thus, based on data and anthropological and historiographical studies, an attempt was made to define the concept of Brazilian culture and our ways of living, and then, from the point of view of semiotics and with the help of focal analyzes of packaging of the brand's chocolates. Dengo, to understand how identity elements, translated into visual data and conveyed in wrappers, can be communicated to the customer and motivate connections between the product and its buyers. Finally, it was understood that this is an effective strategy if designers, placed as communicators, precede it by an imperative inquiry into the history and traditions of the brand and its audience's repertoire, as this is the only way they will be able to create efficient compositions and more assertive messages, with greater chances of being understood and achieving the intended result.

Keywords: Packaging Design. Brazilian culture. Semiotics.

INTRODUCTION

The current economic freedom allows many companies to be born in different market sectors and, in this context, countless goods and services are synchronously offered to the consumer, who has the power to choose between the options. Under the same scenario, there is the perspective of brands, which seek to remain attractive to their audiences and survive competitively at the physical or virtual

point of sale.

However, succeeding in this objective requires means of attributing values and meanings to goods to make them recognizable and desired by the customer. Such meanings are plausible to be communicated through the packaging, since each product is complex and unique and it is up to its wrapper to express this personality (MESTRINER, 2002). With this, it appears that, far beyond the functional aspects, each object carries a unique history inherited from the brand that labels it and is designed for a specific public, which must request it through the supply of their physical needs., social and emotional.

Therefore, objects with the same use value are different in their ability to contemplate the immaterial reasons that prompt the purchase, so that the identity and origin of each product represent an important competitive potential in the marketing sphere and make studies like this one, which reveal ways of visual expressions alluding to culture on the wrappers, valuable to brands that intend effective communication and that celebrate the diversity of Brazilian ways of living.

GOALS

In view of this, this research has the main objective of investigating packaging design as an effective tool for communicating the intrinsic attributes of a product through visual signs that refer to the cultural roots, which can be perceived and interpreted as special or familiar to the observer. To this end, the following specific objectives were established: to select packages of gourmet chocolates from Dengo brand and highlight signs of a possible cultural character in them, in order to, at a later stage, infer which interpretations related to customs, knowledge and geographical characteristics of some Brazilian regions can be elaborated from them, in order to intensify the affinity between the object

and the observer with such repertoire and, presumably, the perspective of purchase.

METHODOLOGY

In this qualitative research, it is proposed to carry out a semiotic analysis of the object of study, in which the concepts suggested by Peirce will be applied in the demonstration of elements familiar to the Brazilian people that, translated into signs, enable interpreters of a cultural nature, able to captivate the consumer through sign relations. Primarily, however, a theoretical foundation was created so that the investigation is devoid of superficial deductions. In addition, the choice of a national brand integrated in a segment with an impact on the economic, social and cultural development of the country was imperative. After selecting the packaging, surveys that deal with the national culture and other records that provided imagery and theoretical subsidies regarding flora, fauna, climates and traditional Brazilian practices were used and, in part, substantiate the study.

DEVELOPMENT

In history, the principle of packaging coincides with the human need to accumulate and transport materials, a task for which they used organic and inorganic materials transformed into resistant containers. Despite this, the development of packaging communication functions only intensified with the Great Navigations, since long-distance trade required the identification of product origins (OGASAWARA, 2009).

In the 20th century, the first hypermarket in the world was created and with it the way of exposing products on gondolas was popularized, in which the potential of packaging to differentiate and encourage purchase was accentuated (MESTRINER, 2002). Currently, despite the great diversity of models for displaying consumer goods,

this faculty of wrappers remains present on the internet, where countless objects are exchanged from all over the world.

Therefore, it is clear that the functions of the package followed the needs of each historical period and of the purchasing individuals who, with different knowledge, experiences and desires, contacted a product, preliminarily, by its container. Thus, understanding the culture in which the packaging is contained and, in particular, elucidating the Brazilian culture is essential for this investigation.

Therefore, the word culture is defined, which comes from the Latin verb *colere* and originally means to care for or cultivate. However, a broader semantics was restored to the term by twentieth-century anthropologists, who attributed it to the intellectual, culinary, craft, housing, artistic, religious, entertainment and fashion specificities of each group, in addition to their structures and rules. social (CHAUI, 2008).

It is also important to understand the concept of popular culture, which is linked to the traditional habits of a group. In Brazil, many popular cultures, both native and immigrant, intervened and established new ways of living that, despite never having constituted a full unit, do not prevent “Brazilian popular culture” from being, in the words of historian Alfredo Bosi (1992), “group, supra-individual”. Such ways of living refer to popular dishes, housing styles, festivities and agriculture, as well as to the fauna and flora of our territory (BOSI, 1992). Such information is identified and shared among people through the creation and projection of signs and symbols. About this, the writer Marilena Chaui (2008) makes the following statement: “Culture comes to be understood as the field in which human subjects elaborate symbols and signs, institute practices and values [...]”.

The definition and understanding of how these signs communicate is as relevant as

the term culture itself, since any cultural notion is unfeasible in a context in which habits and knowledge are not transmuted and recognized by the community. For this reason, the communication of individuals is studied by many areas of knowledge, of which this research concerns to highlight semiotics which, according to one of the founders of contemporary semiotics, Charles Sanders Peirce (1975 apud MACHADO, 2001), is the general science of the signs. As for signs, Peirce considers everything that, in specific circumstances, represents something to an individual (2005, p.46-228 apud OGASAWARA, 2009, p.94).

Therefore, it is plausible to say that sign is the designation for all the things with which we relate in the perceptible physical space through sensory receptors and from which we are able to extract some meaning. It can, therefore, be visual, sound, tactile, gustatory, olfactory or mixed and materialize, among other means, in objects, sounds, images, textures, spoken, written and gestured texts, flavors, thermal sensations and odors.

As for semiotics, it deduces communication as the creation and meaning of the message through systems of signs that, when inserted in a physical or immaterial medium, remain liable to be decoded and re-signified by the receiver (MACHADO, 2001). This way, the path of a message begins with the sender, which uses its own informational load to encode systems of signs that encompass an idea or experience, called "objects". These systems are conveyed and exposed to the receptor, which captures them through sensory organs, recodes them and interprets them based on their knowledge, a process called semiosis and which produces the "interpretant". Thus, the same system can be decoded in different ways by different people or by the same individual at different stages of life, depending on his repertoire in each circumstance.

It is inferred, therefore, that by knowing data inherent to the receiver and his culture, it is feasible for the sender to create these systems intentionally and, thus, enhance a precise assimilation of the message by the recipient, avoid noise in communication and prevent unwanted responses to the signs. Furthermore, this investigative tendency of semiotics makes it convenient in marketing and design projects that propose the creation of statements and compositions that reinforce the culture and identity of a company or brand, since success in this objective is always preceded by a deep knowledge of the potential consumer, so that he, upon receiving the message, understands it, sympathizes with and desires what he sees or hears.

An example of this application in Design is the packaging, because in addition to its technical and legal functions, it must dialogue with its observer, in order to allocate the product in its category and, at the same time, highlight it from its competitors (MESTRINER, 2002). The last task can be done in many ways, but the creation of systems of signs that refer to the origin of the product or the culture of its producer and consumer by articulating formal representations such as points, lines, colors, shapes and textures is the investigated method. for this research.

In this context, the designer is the communicator and who determines the techniques for manipulating graphic elements on a surface, actions that must be done with awareness and intentionality, so that the packaging expresses the intended message. However, the observer's seeing is the culmination of this process, since, according to Dondis (1997), what is represented in a composition will only be perceived if the spectator is able to recognize what he sees and what it means, a task for the which will consult their knowledge and experiences, in short, their culture.

RESULTS

Therefore, given that culture is inherent to all members of a social environment, it is understood that brands from all niches have the basic input to connect with their buyer through packaging, if they use it. However, to enable a more didactic demonstration, a semiotic analysis of a Dengo brand packaging was proposed, chosen because it integrates the Brazilian cocoa sector, an important commodity for the national economy, and to work to improve it, since it instructs good practices after harvest to small producers in southern Bahia – who practice the planting system called Cabruca – and pay them for the fruit an amount 85% above the price offered on the New York Stock Exchange (SARTORELLI, 2020).

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF 50% COCOA MILK CHOCOLATE BAR PACKAGING

The print on the packaging of the Dengo 50% Milk Chocolate bar (Figure 1) was designed by designer and illustrator Thais Katsumi in 2020, who makes the following assertions regarding the composition: “[...] of cocoa, Cabruca (and) my objective was to show, with simple strokes, the simplicity of the people who work there, to bring us closer to the process ‘behind’ cocoa” (2021).

It can be seen that the object created by the communicator is an icon that makes an obvious analogy to the cocoa cultivation system practiced in southern Bahia called Cabruca (Figure 2), which has existed for over 200 years and is characterized by being the planting of cocoa in the shade of native trees without clear cutting of the original species, in such a way that the local Atlantic Forest is preserved (LOBÃO, 2007).

Thus, everyone who observes the composition and has such information will be susceptible to the conclusion that this

is a sustainable, traditional food – and with favorable precedents for the balance of the Brazilian flora. In addition, there is the cultural contribution of preserving a popular planting technique, brought to Brazil centuries ago, rooted in the knowledge of social groups and transmitted to many generations.

In cases where the observer is unfamiliar with Cabruca, the cooperative’s small buildings surrounded by vegetation, with reddish roofs and walls whitewashed or painted white – analogous to the buildings cited by other artists, such as painter Tarsila do Amaral and composer Gilson Vieira da Silva, in the song “Casinha Branca” from 1970 – may allude to the modest houses of farmers or residences in other interior regions of Brazil, parts of our popular culture (Figure 3). In this situation, both the humanization of chocolate occurs through the indirect presence of the peasant, in which the emotional frigidity that lives in solely automated production is extinguished, and the incitement of good memories, if any, referring to the rural areas of the Brazilian interior, as well as sensations of peace, calm, well-being and a quick escape from reality when enjoying chocolate.

It must be noted the impact of the style used in favoring these interpretants, since it has some peculiarities of Naïve Art (Figure 4), such as being free from academic rules, representing a real environment, using defined and uncomplicated shapes, applying expressive colors and narrate, preferably, the daily life of a simple life and the popular culture of a people (TONETO, 2019). This culminates in the end sign being as genuine as it is comprehensible and, effectively, transferring the cultural identities of its origin to the product. It is also possible that the associations between packaging and styles or works by important national artists, such as Tarsila do Amaral (Figure 4), revive in chocolate the cultural heritage and history



Figure 1 – Packaging of the company’s 50% Cocoa Milk Chocolate: Dengo Chocolates. 2020.

Source: Dengo, <https://rb.gy/luncdt>.



Figure 2 – Composition and farm in Buerarema – BA as a reference example. 2022.

Source: Author’s compilation. 1: Dengo, <https://rb.gy/luncdt>. 2: Cabruca, <https://rb.gy/znlv4>.

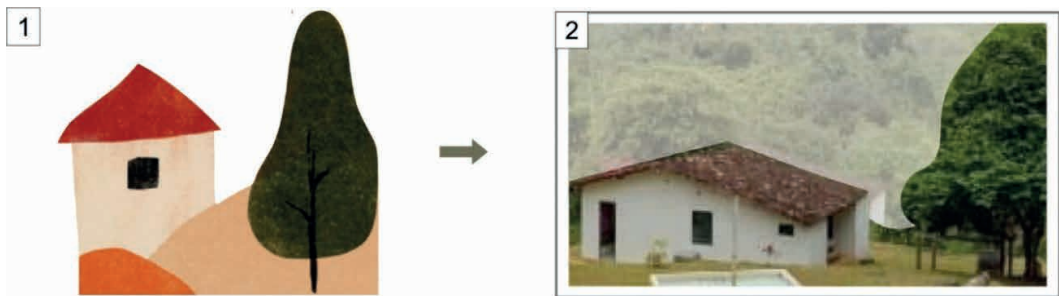


Figure 3 – Extract of composition and copy of its reference. 2022.

Source: Author’s compilation. 1: Dengo, <https://rb.gy/luncdt>. 2: Imovelweb, <https://rb.gy/0eibxv>.



Figure 4 – *Landscape with Taurus*. Tarsila do Amaral, 1925.

Source: Photographic reproduction: Romulo Fialdino. Óleo sobre tela, c.i.d. 65,00 cm x 52,00 cm. <https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra2328/paisagem-com-touro>.

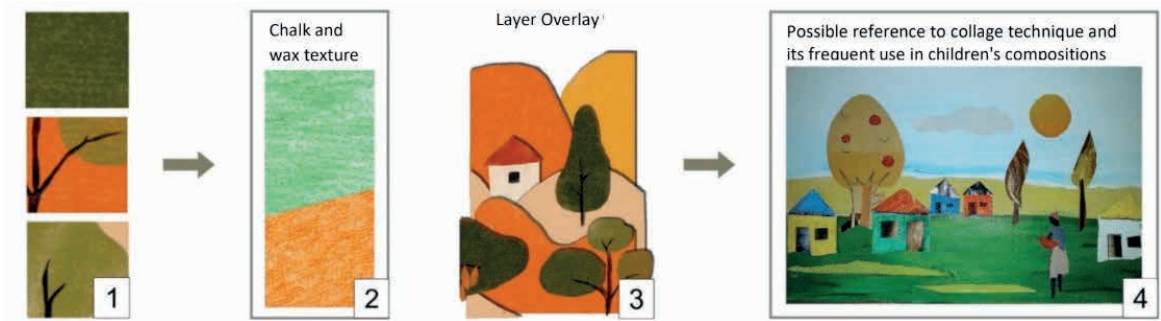


Figure 5 – Composition details that evoke childhood, 2022.

Source: Author's compilation. 1 and 3: Denço, <https://rb.gy/luncdt>. 2: Own author. 4: Dom Marcolino, <https://br.pinterest.com/pin/118923246399003708/>.



Figure 6 – Association between warm shades and the typical heat of the Brazilian summer. 2022.

Source: Author's compilation. 1: Denço, <https://rb.gy/luncdt>. 2: Cacio Murilo, <https://rb.gy/rx47yj>. 3: Mariana Bueno, <https://rb.gy/quca6h>.

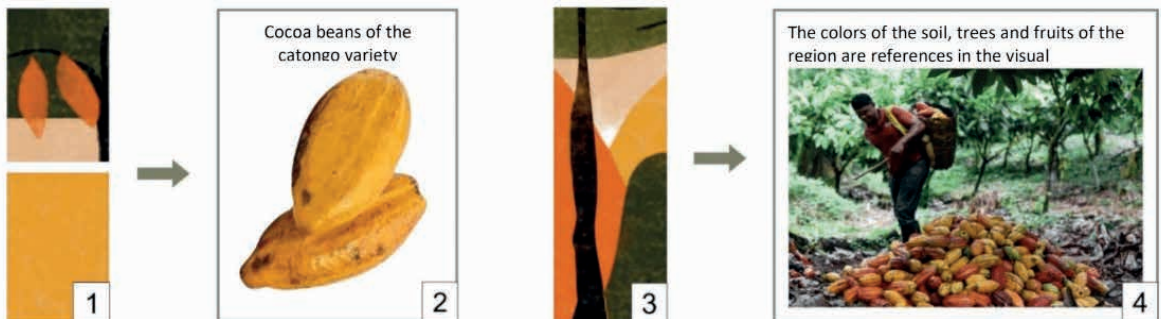


Figure 7 – Association between warm shades and the typical heat of the Brazilian summer. 2022.

Source: Author's compilation. 1 and 3: Denço, <https://rb.gy/luncdt>. 2: Lajedo do Ouro, <https://rb.gy/9rhxwe>. 3: Raul Spinassé, <https://rb.gy/kzq3yn>.

of Brazil and reinforce its belonging to the country.

The simplicity of the forms that make up the landscape by overlapping layers, the simulation of an imperfect texture and the plot of communication – life in a small village -, are inciting childhood memories, in which more rudimentary artistic techniques, such as collage and coloring with crayons or colored pencils are introduced to the children, who apply them in the representation of the stories they hear (Figure 5). Thus, reminiscent of childhood, the welcome and security of the family, as well as the indifference to sophistication, culminate in the expectation of a more traditional chocolate, without exotic mixtures and with a mild flavor, like milk.

As for the colors, the majority presence of warm hues, such as yellow, orange and red, even in mild saturations, make possible the allusion to summer, the northeastern heat and the tropicity of the country in general (Figure 6), ideas that inflame the expectation for a chocolate with an equally intense flavor. This is because, according to Dondis (1997), we see colors in substances and surfaces and associate them with a meaning based on previous knowledge or experiences, possibly cultural ones. Therefore, if from Earth we see the Sun in orange tones and the big bonfires are reddish, it is possible that we associate these colors with high temperatures, hot places and the experiences and sensations of summer, for example.

Finally, the yellow tones and the cocoa icon also refer to the bark of the fruit used in the production of this chocolate, which is of the Catongo variety, derived from a mutation of Forasteiro cocoa, discovered in Bahia and mostly cultivated in this region (VERÍSSIMO, 2012). The earthy and greenish tones do not allow the soil with the fruits and all the local vegetation to be neglected, so that the packaging efficiently communicates the forms

of housing and agricultural production, the territorial characteristics, the history and the ways of life of an entirely Brazilian population and culture (Figure 7).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Thus, it is true that the competitive emphasis between brands requires that strategies be drawn together by different areas, however, it is equally feasible that few attributes of a good can be transformed so quickly and cause impacts of similar intensity in the way it is perceived by the consumer. customer like the Design of its packaging, which is due to the potential of the wrappers to, simultaneously and directly, communicate news, legal information, promotions and, above all, the origin and cultural singularities of the object to the observer.

With this research, therefore, an attempt was made to investigate the transmission of identity elements of Brazilian culture in national packaging, the sign relations that could derive from visual systems attached to the wrappers and whether these were likely to link the product to the customer by their repertoire or roots. consonants. After the analysis, then, it was confirmed that the intentional choice of the objects to be represented, the colors, shapes, textures and disposition of the data in the composition can go back to experiences and memories related to national landscapes and climates, to flavors common to the Brazilian palate, artistic expressions, important factors in our history and the traditional ways of living and producing found here. Such sign relations abound the breadth of meanings of an object before the observer and make it more than a supply of physical needs, but something that cherishes through belonging or cultural recognition and familiarity.

Finally, it appears that the packaging designer is equipped with an effective method

of communicating the values of a good, which, in all cases, must be done based on a deep study of the stories of the brand, object and public. target. This is necessary so that any stereotype, untrue narration or choice of signs whose planned message will not be equivalent

to the observer's interpretation are avoided, so that the observer does not distance himself or create unrealistic expectations that will lead him to disappointment after the purchase and, certainly, non-customer loyalty.

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