

The meaning of the logo from its semiotic construction and its reliance on new formats of digital communication: The case of Apple

La significación del logo a partir de su construcción semiótica y su apoyo en nuevas formas de comunicación digital: El caso de Apple

Carmen Llorente-Barroso. Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Spain.

carmenllorente@ucm.es



Olga Kolotouchkina. Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Spain.

olga.kolotouchkina@ucm.es



Francisco García-García. Universidad Complutense de Madrid and Asociación Científica Icono 14. Spain.

fghenche@gmail.com



This research has been carried out by researchers who are members of the UCM Brand Lab Research Group of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid from August 2020 to March 2021, within the lines of interest established by the aforementioned research group.

Llorente-Barroso, C., Kolotouchkina, O., & García-García, F. (2021). The meaning of the logo from its semiotic construction and its reliance on new formats of digital communication: The case of Apple. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 79, 333-356.

<https://www.doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2021-1529>

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The importance of logos has underpinned the existence of corporate semiotics as a general code to which weakly codified local semiotics respond, due to the high symbolic load of these visual signs. **Methodology:** This research aims to delve deeper into the semiotic construction of logos and to analyze their process of signification supported by new forms of communication. To this end, an interpretative analysis is proposed based on a categorical model linked to recognized previous theories, which is applied to the case of Apple as an example of a benchmark brand at an international level. **Results:** The results suggest that online brand communities (whether they are owned or earned media) provide these signs with meaning and make logos become cultural icons; to a large extent, thanks to the collaboration of the consumers themselves. **Conclusions and discussion:** Corporate logos present a simple structure if we only look at the expression, but relationally they show a high degree of complexity. It is precisely these relationships that give signs a significance that is constantly evolving, and which currently finds the best support in online communities of brand followers. Furthermore, these conclusions allow us to identify new avenues for research into corporate semiotics

and the processes of semiosis involved, either by implementing methodological techniques that enable us to complete this exploratory research or by addressing new challenges in the management of brand communication.

KEYWORDS: Semiotics; logo; brand; corporate visual identity; sign; digital environments; Apple.

RESUMEN

Introducción: La importancia de los logos ha postulado la existencia de una semiótica corporativa en cuanto a código general al que responden semióticas locales débilmente codificadas, por la elevada carga simbólica de estos signos visuales. **Metodología:** Esta investigación pretende profundizar en la construcción semiótica de los logos y analizar su proceso de significación apoyado en nuevas formas de comunicación. Para ello, se propone un análisis interpretativo a partir de un modelo categórico fundamentado en reconocidas teorías previas, que se aplica al caso de Apple como ejemplo de marca de referencia a nivel internacional. **Resultados:** Los resultados sugieren que las comunidades digitales en torno a la marca estudiada (sean medios propios o ganados) contribuyen a dotar de sentido a estos signos y a culturizarlos; en gran medida, gracias a la colaboración de los propios consumidores. **Conclusiones y discusión:** Los logos corporativos presentan una estructura sencilla si solamente se atiende a la expresión, pero relacionalmente demuestran una elevada complejidad. Son precisamente estas relaciones las que dotan a tales signos de una significación que está en constante evolución, y que, actualmente, encuentra en las redes y en sus usuarios-*fans* de las marcas, el mejor apoyo. Además, estas conclusiones permiten identificar nuevas vías para la investigación sobre la semiótica corporativa y los procesos de semiosis que implica, bien implementando técnicas metodológicas que permitan completar esta investigación exploratoria, bien atendiendo a perspectivas conectadas a las nuevas tendencias en la gestión de la comunicación de la marca.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Semiótica; logo; marca; identidad visual corporativa; signo; entornos digitales; Apple.

CONTENT

1. Introduction. 1.1. The logo associated with its significance (corporate prototype). 1.2. The importance of digital spaces in the significance of logos. 2. Objectives. 3. Methodology. 4. Results: Analysis and interpretation. 4.1. Structural elements of the Apple corporate symbol. 4.2. Relationships between the elements of the Apple sign and implications for its significance. 4.3. Significance process of the Apple logo supported by digital forms of communication. 5. Conclusions and discussion. 6. References

Translation by **Paula González** (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela)

1. Introduction

Logos respond to a specific visual code that identifies them as corporate signs, differentiating them from others that respond to the image as a substance (photography, painting, etc.). This autonomous visual code is characterized by marked symbolism (Llorente-Barroso, 2008). The logo-symbolic semiotics would fit with the semiological conception of Saussure (1945, p. 60) connected to “social life”, and with the pragmatic and “formal” perspective of Peirce (1974, p. 21).

Greimas (1994) insists on the existence of figurative and plastic semiotics, due to the difficulty of a single semiotic to be able to cover the extensive range of meanings that would regroup the various forms of visual expression. Also, Grupo μ (1993) refers to iconic (figurative) and plastic (non-

figurative) semiotics. Therefore, within visual semiotics, besides figurative semiotics, it is important to keep in mind the autonomy of plastic semiotics, which rearticulates figurative signs, endowing the discourse with axiological depth (Floch, 1987).

These concretions respond to qualifications about the semiotic substance, which Hjelmslev (1987) identifies with the meaning taken by a form in relation to its significance (Greimas & Courtés, 1982). In contemporary visual culture, very diverse substances interact and coexist that motivate various forms of meaning production, methodologically challenging semiotic instruments (Demaria, 2010). Specifically, concerning the semiotic substance of logos, the challenge is posed by the weak articulation of the code from other languages such as image, color, or writing, which configure it as “a dialect, or an idiolect, of the broad language of the functional image” (González-Solas, 2002, p. 139).

Hjelmslev (1987) considers that ideal semiotic models are based on a one-to-one correspondence between expression and content in their layers of form and substance. Barthes (1987) summarizes that the plane of expression is formed by the signifiers, while the meanings correspond to the plane of content. Expression and content constitute two functive and solidary planes in a sign since there is no expression without content or content without expression (Hjelmslev 1987). The ideal semiotics respond to a strong codification and are characterized, besides the differentiation between the planes of expression and content, by relationships between the solidly stabilized and typified units of each plane (Grupo μ , 1993). In general, visual semiotics, due to the weak formalization of their planes, their fluidity, and their polysemic complexity (Grupo μ , 1993) as cultural systems, are multidirectional and locally regulated, so their significance is not universal, but rather it depends on a context full of contradictions and a variable interpretive praxis according to each person (Lorusso, 2015). Despite this, Grupo μ (1993) believes that the logos most recognized by the public function as iconic stereotypes and respond to more strongly coded semiotics. On the contrary, González-Solas (2002) points out that these visual signs can only be understood by the enunciative contract, which requires knowledge of their context.

In the last half-century, semiotics has confirmed the complexity hidden in the processes of meaning and interpretation of brands, which combine differential values concerning other brands with associative values related to a certain category of the market (Scolari, 2007). Semiotics has allowed us to understand the brand as an active factor in the production of meanings (Semprini, 1995) and as an open cultural construction, supported by sophisticated association networks (Conejo & Wooliscroft, 2015).

Despite the interesting contributions of semiotics applied to the study of brands, there are not many contributions that research the techniques of meaning associated with their logos. Precisely, the analysis proposed in this research focuses on the processes of semiosis or production of meaning that underlie the code of logos, from its social and transformative perspective, that is, reflecting on the social dimension of these signs and their palimpsestic evolution (Lorusso, 2015).

1.1. The logo associated with its significance (corporate prototype)

The logo is an instrument that articulates the meaning of a brand (understood as a corporate type) in relation to other corporate semiotics that gives meaning to this visual sign (Kelly, 2017). In this case, the concept of articulation must be understood “as a heuristic notion with which the unstable relationships between practices and structures, texts, and contexts (or other texts) are called” (Demaria, 2010, p. 16).

For its part, the corporate prototype would correspond to the conceptual brand, that is, to the stereotype

of that brand spread among the public. The brand, in collaboration with the logo that represents it, acts as “a semiotic device capable of producing a discourse, giving it meaning and communicating it to the recipients” (Scolari, 2007, p. 60). As a corporate prototype to which the logo refers, the brand operates as a mental scheme that guides the consumer’s interpretation, helping them to recognize codes that allow them to select determining aspects to give the stimuli meaning (Polidoro, 2015).

Logos have become omnipresent signs in the semiotics of globalization processes (Johannessen, 2018) that, configured by multiple visual elements (Jiang et al., 2016), project the brand they represent and affect attitudes of its consumers (Kaur & Kaur, 2019). The connection of the logo with its meaning is not natural for the consumer, it is created with communication structures surrounding the brand (Kelly, 2017) and thanks to the symbolic potential of its expressive forms, which allow a glimpse of its full corporate meaning (Llorente-Barroso & García-García, 2015). Many times, the meaning of logos, like that of advertising messages, is based on semi-symbolic semiotics, typical of visual plastic languages, and with a strong cultural anchor (Floch, 1987).

The aesthetics of a corporate design can reinforce value stereotypes for consumers (Japutra et al., 2018) and incorporate descriptive elements of the product that can influence the evaluations that consumers make of brands and their purchase intentions (Luffarelli et al. al., 2019). The trend towards a simplification of corporate design has led many brands to bet on proposals framed in flat design, which tend to achieve higher levels of attention (Mañas-Viniegra et al., 2020b) and recall (Bonales- Daimiel et al., 2021). Familiarity and brand personality also mediate the logo-brand image relationship (Kaur & Kaur, 2019). Furthermore, the prestige and value of the brand revert to the attention that its logo is capable of garnering, with the best-positioned brands in rankings being the ones that garner the greatest degree of attention (Mañas-Viniegra et al., 2020a).

On the other hand, the importance of the logo in the identification of the brand implies that each change in it is interpreted as a disturbance in the brand image (Stuart & Muzellec, 2004), which forces to warn consumers, guiding their expectations and reducing the discrepancy between new and old logos (Grobert et al., 2016).

The public lives immersed in a world of signs that cannot encompass the reality to which they refer, but with an expressive force that projects their meaning and with the necessary persistence to create stable semiotic codes. Thus, the rhetorical construction of the logo as a visual discourse allows it to be understood as a symbol and metonymic metaphor (Hsun & Jie, 2020; Llorente-Barroso & García-García, 2015) with a culturally stabilized meaning. In this regard, it is necessary to remember that logos are sensitive to the context, since their meaning, linked to the brand’s identity discourse, is conditioned by conventions and contextual variables (social, political, cultural, economic) (Semprini, 1995), combined with the impressions extracted by the subjects from their real experiences with the brand (Floch, 2001).

In the substantial universe of the image, logos emerge as evocative objects with immense associative potential (Sievers, 2017), which allows them to acquire a meaning linked to affections and feelings (Bollas, 2009; Bresciani & Del-Ponte, 2017). Once in memory, logos act as images of thought, that is, as subjective representations (Daniels-McGhee & Davis, 1994). However, logos are also part of the collective memory that is configured from the memories of the members that make up a social group (Halbwachs, 1992). From a semiotic point of view, it is necessary to highlight the “modeling power of memory”, which acts decisively, both from a prospective and retrospective perspective, modeling the codes to allow the reinterpretation of events and signs over time (Lorusso, 2015, p. 100).

The semiotics of the brand has been approached from numerous studies. From a semiotic point of

view, brands have been defined as multidimensional constructs that harbor very different degrees of scope, autonomy, co-creation, and significance (Conejo & Wooliscroft, 2015). In the construction of the corporate meaning of a brand, from a generative perspective, Semprini (1995) and Scolari (2007) propose three levels or spaces of meaning:

1. Deep (or axiological) level: In which the corporate values that make up the core of the brand's identity are related and opposed and they condense their universe of significance.
2. Narrative level: In which the basic elements of the core are narrative, expressing the roles of the brand from a realistic perspective to outline its fundamental features.
3. Superficial (or discursive) level: In which the narratives are specified, assuming a specific character, through rhetoric, context, and time, to renew the discursive production of the brand, providing originality without affecting the values.

In the semiotic study of the brand, Semprini (1995) proposes a mapping of consuming values that consider the brand as an active element in the production of meaning and contemplates four valuation points distributed in two axes (critical-playful and utopian -practical).

1.2. The importance of digital spaces in the significance of logos

The current media panorama has imposed new strategies of meaning that vindicate the importance of the consumer in the construction of corporate signs. Currently, brands “are not created simply by manipulating iconic or linguistic statements, the interactive experience also becomes a fundamental element of their construction process” (Scolari, 2007, p. 66). Communities and social media offer a communicative possibility to brands involving their followers in their own meaning process (Llorente-Barroso et al., 2020).

A well-managed community can generate very high levels of passion and commitment among consumers (Ind et al., 2020). To improve the relationship with users and their loyalty, marketers must achieve and maintain the commitment of consumers within the online communities of brands, managing corporate reputation (Hanson et al., 2019). Furthermore, brand managers can develop strategies that motivate their value and the commitment of users according to the characteristics of the community, the type of relationships established, and the user's profile (Weiger et al., 2017).

Among its contributions, the eWOM (electronic Word of Mouth) is positioning itself as a key online strategy in the significance and commercialization of brands; in fact, it is much more effective than traditional advertising (Chu & Kim, 2018), as it is linked to the altruistic participation of a consumer about their experience with a brand (Reimer & Benkenstein, 2018). Users trust the opinions disseminated online by other consumers that guide their purchasing decisions (De-Veirman & Hudders, 2020). The great contribution that eWOM can make to the significance of the brand has led some advertisers to consider online platforms as an essential part of their strategy (Kumi & Sabherwal, 2019), devising eWOM incentivizing formulas among their users (Stanton et al., 2019).

A user who does not feel a commitment to the brand will not participate in eWOM processes, so engagement (the user's commitment to the brand) is a mediator in digital environments that conditions consumer participation (Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Kapoor et al., 2018), brand-user interaction, interest in sharing content about that brand (Segarra-Saavedra & Hidalgo-Marí, 2018), and a positive eWOM (Wu & Wang, 2011). Digital engagement depends, in part, on each platform (Voorveld et al., 2018), and can be measured by the likes, comments, and actions of consumers in these spaces (Lee et al., 2018). The brands that excite contribute to generating a more powerful and influential positive eWOM, which is supported by strong and close social ties (Gvili & Levy, 2018; Lou & Koh, 2018).

Many Internet users declare themselves motivated volunteers in the effective and creative generation of brand content (Black & Veloutsou, 2017). According to Kaur et al. (2018), online communities linked to the brand generate emotional and social value for users, which determines their participation in these spaces. Furthermore, reputation signals that communicate a social role for the brand in their online communities are often effective in creating feelings of connection and engagement with such communities (Hanson et al., 2019). Consumer participation in these corporate spaces has also been linked to intrinsic rewards that the brand can offer when it delves into the needs and desires of consumers, building a sense of community and a climate of trust in these environments (Ind et al., 2020). Likewise, the interactivity characteristic of these platforms encourages users to co-create the universe of the significance of a brand (Scolari, 2007), which appears linked to its logo.

2. Objectives

This article aims to deepen the knowledge about the semiotic construction of logos and their meaning processes, supported by the new forms of communication that the digital environment allows. Based on this general purpose, the following specific objectives (SO) are proposed:

- SO1. Identify the semiotic elements that make up the logo as a corporate sign subject to a specific code.
- SO2. To study the relationships between the structural elements of the logo understood as a sign, as well as the implication of such interactions in the meaning process of these visual signs.
- SO3. Analyze the meaning process that underlies the logo and is supported by the engagement of some forms of digital communication.

3. Methodology

The scope of the previously formulated objectives implies an exploratory methodological approach, supported by a semiotic analysis of an interpretive type that is carried out from the study of an exemplary case to which an analysis model based on previous theories is applied. The selected logo is the one that represents the brand with the highest international value according to Interbrand (2020): Apple. The analysis of this case will serve to explain the meaning processes that have given meaning to its logo, linking it to its corporate prototype (brand), based on the communicative contributions connected to the brand.

To understand the meaning process that underlies Apple's popular bitten apple, it is proposed the study of the configuration of the corporate prototype to which this recognized visual symbol refers, understood as a sign with a semiotic structure. In this way, semiotic analysis is proposed based on the model outlined by the Grupo μ (1993), in their work *Tratado del signo visual: Para una retórica de la imagen [Treatise of the visual sign: For a rhetoric of the image]*, according to the contributions of Ogden & Richards (1923) and Palmer (1975; 1977) on the articulation of signs.

Thus, an analysis model is proposed (Figure 1) that allows explaining the process of significance and meaning of logos from a hermeneutical approach to these visual texts, based on two main analytical categories, the structural elements and the relationships and implications between such elements and regarding their evolution.

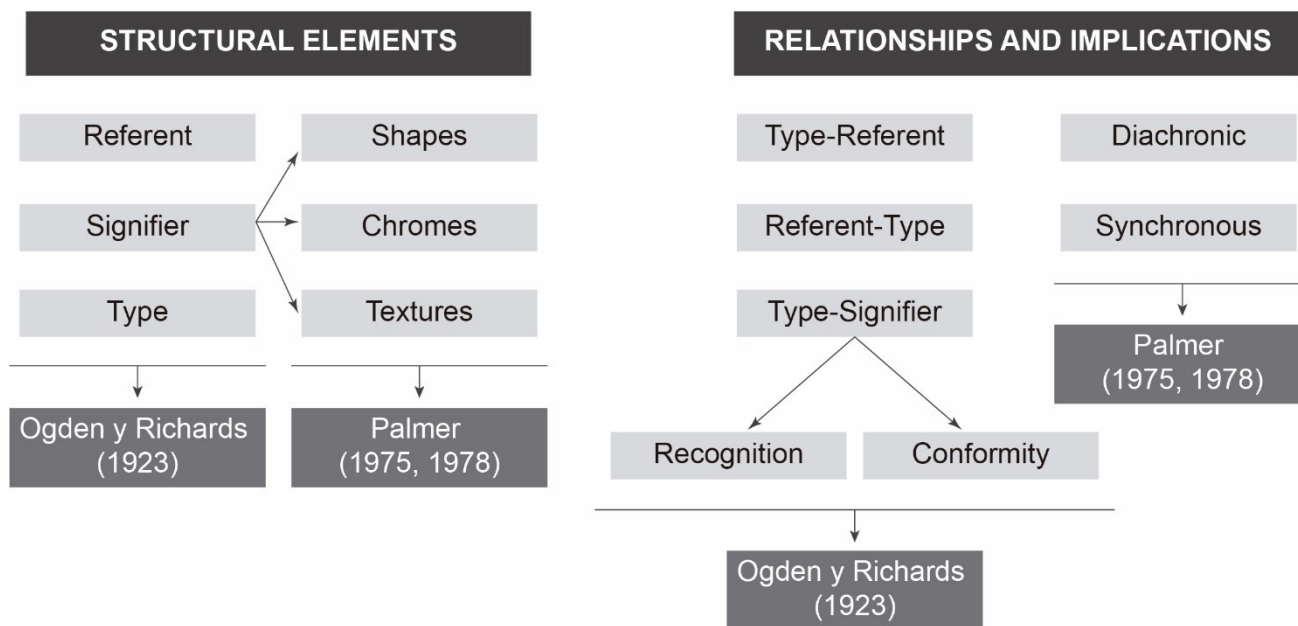


Figure 1: Analysis model of the logo's significance process.

Source: Self-made based on Grupo μ (1993), Palmer (1975; 1977), and Ogden and Richards (1923).

The model advocated by Grupo μ (1993) for the analysis of plastic signs synthesizes the Gestalt approach and the structuralist approach proposed by Palmer (1975; 1977), who considered a hierarchical network of structural units defined as a set of global properties (holistic approach) and organized into atomic parts or properties (structural approach). Within this approach, for the analysis of the structural elements of the sign, three categories of global properties are distinguished that constitute the basic units of meaning in a potential visual semiotic:

1. The shapes, identifiers of the form. In the case of logos, form is always imposed and is defined by the shapes of position (location of the figure concerning the background), dimension (size in relation to the rest of the elements), and orientation (property of the contour of an asymmetric shape in relation to two reference points, focus, and background). The meaning of the shape can come from three sources:
 - a. The exaltation of one of such shapes.
 - b. The integration of form in a cultured system.
 - c. The relationship of these shapes in a unique way.
2. Chromes, color identifiers. In visual signs, color is articulated from the chroma of dominance (hue or tint), luminosity (brightness, measured by the amount of light or white that the color has), and saturation (purity of the color). The meaning of color is very complex and subjective; often it appears mediated by the socio-cultural context, but also by the harmony and contrasts in which the colored form is presented.
3. The textures. In visual communication, textures require the intervention of two textures, that of the repeated elements to create that texture, and that of the law of repetition that sets the rhythm on which the texture rests. It is a dispensable global property, but when it appears it is a significant element because it allows us to feel what is seen through touch.

Palmer's (1975; 1977) approach to the relational study of the sign considers that the relationships and positions between these structural units that make up the logo determine, to a certain extent, its corporate meaning. These relationships are defined from the atomic properties of the sign, which can be of two types:

1. Synchronous relationships, which occur when there is more than one element (coordination, subordination, and superordination).
2. Diachronic relationships, which are linked to the temporal evolution of the sign.

On the other hand, the proposal of Grupo μ (1993) for the analysis of iconic signs is based on the contributions of Ogden and Richards (1923), who consider the definition of the sign according to a tripartite and relational structure. According to this approach, the logo would be made up of three structural elements:

1. A referent or *designatum*, updated and validated by the existence of a particular and unique type with which it corresponds.
2. A signifier or set of stimuli that refer to a stable type and that the public identifies thanks to some traits that it associates with a referent recognized as a hypostasis of the type.
3. An internalized and stable type or model, which is shared by the connoisseurs of a code and is defined as a mental representation, the result of an integration process that seeks the equivalence between referent and signifier. The type is the key element in the sign; in fact, semiotizing consists of the generation of types or general concepts, ignoring the particular characteristics. The interpretation of a sign regarding a type depends on three determining factors (Grupo μ , 1993):
 - a. The presence of particular visual properties, which condition its decoding.
 - b. The visual context in which it is perceived and that can relate it to other visual stimuli
 - c. The pragmatic context, imposed by an ideology and a culture, which influences the interpretation of the signs.

The proposal of Ogden and Richards (1923) for the relational analysis of the sign suggests that the three parts of the sign can be interrelated through double interactions, highlighting two in the meaning processes of the logo and in which the type participates:

1. The referent-type relationship seeks a stabilization and integration of the referent's features in a type; the type-referent relationship relies on the conformity between the characteristics of the type that a referent presents to determine whether or not it is a hypostasis of that type.
2. The type-signifier relationship can be one of conformity when the signifier is subjected to a test that consists of confronting what is perceived with a repertoire of types (paradigms); or recognition when the signifier presents a series of stimuli that allow the recognition of the type to which they correspond. These tests are subject to the intervention of a repertoire of types (type library) that is organized by oppositions and differences, and is a condition *sine qua non* of the semiotic character of any visual event since it allows the necessary discretization to which the perceptual continuum must be subjected to interpret such visual facts.

4. Results: Analysis and interpretation

In this research, of particular interest is the process of the meaning of logos according to the previously explained analysis model (Figure 1). To meet the presented objectives, this analysis involves:

1. Concerning the objective SO1, the identification and interpretation of the semiotic elements that make up the corporate symbol of Apple understood as a sign anchored to a specific semiotic code.
2. Regarding the SO2 objective, the study of the interactions between the structural elements that make up the Apple sign to understand their importance in the meaning process of this corporate symbol.
3. In connection with the SO3 objective, the analysis of the support that this significance process finds in some virtual communities created around the Apple brand.

The results obtained from the analysis and interpretation of these three main topics have been categorized according to each of these lines in the following subsections.

4.1. Structural elements of the Apple corporate symbol

According to the more holistic dimension of Palmer's model (1975; 1977) that Grupo μ (1993) reinterprets, and specifically, regarding the Apple logo, the form is defined according to its shapes, which are the most important properties in the significance of this brand from its visual emblem. The unflappable orientation of the bitten apple in all brand manifestations determines its stability. This invariance is not preserved either in the position or in the size of the logo, which depends on the medium on which it appears and is adapted to the communication needs of each case. The bitten apple (different from original sin or a mere fruit) acts as a semantic source and allows it to be identified as a unique corporate visual sign, strongly cultured and in which the formal simplicity of the symbol is exalted (Figure 2). The appeal of the golden ratio is cross-cultural, with an innate preference for logos that, besides being inspired by this principle, are supported by nature (Pittard et al., 2007). Specifically, the design of the Apple logo is supported by a natural shape that respects the 2:3:5 ratio, extracted from the Fibonacci sequence for the golden ratio, which facilitates its identification and recollection (Rizaldi & Anthonius, 2020). Despite being a form with its own corporate meaning, this meaning has been acquired in relation to the meanings that it symbolically monopolized. Thus, the Apple logo transmits a way of being in a contemporary cybernetic culture that, in connection with the biblical story that it recalls, reminiscences the drama of temptation in the face of technological advances (Rix, 2014).



Figure 2: *Shape and color of the Apple logo.*
Source: Apple (1976-2021)

The color of this visual sign is not decisive in the current significance of the brand, although it was in the logo designed by Janoff in 1977 (Figure 2) (Burns, 2018); that multi-chromaticism has remained in the minds of the fans of the brand who continue to share it in their digital communities. Today, the logo acquires flat and neutral monochromes, which it began to use at the end of the 1990s (Figure 2), often depending on the support on which they appear, so the chromes (dominance, luminosity, and saturation) vary according to this support (Figure 3).

It is precisely the support that determines the existence of certain textures in the bitten apple. The texture of the logo is not an identifying element of the current Apple logo; there is no visual texture that invites a tactile sensation; Such textures depend on the material on which the logo appears (metal

or plastic), usually playing with matte or polished finishes that motivate a subtle and elegant presence of this visual sign, endowing the brand with prestige (Figure 3).



Figure 3: *Logo appearance on current Apple Brand products.*

Source: Apple (2021a).

Regarding the semiotic study proposed by Grupo μ (1993), based on the considerations of Ogden and Richards (1923), it can be determined that, in general, the conceptual type in corporate signs (logos) does not usually correspond with the type established at the cultural level for that signifying form. Apple's corporate symbol emerges as an identity paradigm for its consumers and acts as a sign of tripartite and relational structure. The signifier of the logo projects a concept that the public has internalized and significantly associates with a technological brand. This association that facilitates the significance of the visual symbol to a corporate concept, to a certain extent, has been built thanks to the communicative effort made by the brand, but also to the contributions that the public itself makes in digital environments, whether they are directly (own media) or indirectly (earned media¹) linked to the brand. Apple has managed to associate the entire concept of its brand with a visual sign naturally

¹ Within the POEM (paid, owned, and earned media) classification that differentiates media as paid, owned, or earned, according to their domain and responsibility (Bretón, 2015), the earned media are those that the advertising brand achieves without paying for them, as they have been generated by third parties. Precisely for this reason, they are media to which the consumer tends to give more value and credibility (Gibs & Bruich, 2010).

connected to a totally different real reference and far from the technological field. Its signifier corresponds to the shape of a fruit. However, the brand has managed to give it a corporate meaning that is recognized internationally today. Betting on a visual sign whose signifier refers to a referent with a conceptual type in the consumer has a positive and a negative part for the brand. From a positive point of view, the brand takes advantage of visual stimuli with a real referent to facilitate the memorization of the signifier at the expressive level, since the public already has in their mental repertoire a conceptual type that corresponds to the signifier of “apple bite”. From a negative point of view, for the recipient to associate that signifier, pre-existing at the birth of the brand, with another differentiated meaning of the apple as a category of fruit, and related to a unique and exclusive corporate concept, the brand must carry out a continuous communicative effort supported by the transmission of meaning between generations. In this sense, Conejo and Wooliscroft (2015) point out that only after the signifiers of the brand have been made known and have been processed by their public of interest, signifiers and brand will acquire shared meanings in the form of a brand image.

In this way, Apple bets on a sign that already responds to a conceptual type for the consumer, allowing the brand to take advantage of visual stimuli that facilitate the memorization of the signifier, since, as mentioned, the receiver has in their mental repertoire a type that corresponds to that of “bitten apple”.

4.2. Relationships between the elements of the Apple sign and implications for their significance

In the significance process that the Apple logo acquires, it is also necessary to consider the various relationships that benefit the construction of the corporate sign itself, to which Grupo μ (1993) refers, following the articulation model of the sign proposed by Palmer (1975; 1977).

In the case of the Apple logo, as it is made up of a single visual element, it cannot be considered that synchronous relationships emerge; furthermore, those that existed in the logo that combined the symbol with the naming (brand name) were not of great relevance either, since the two elements reiterated the reference to the same concept, “apple”.

However, there is a diachronic relationship that is related to the simplification of the initial seal of 1976, which represented the brand in regard to the design on which the current logo proposed by Janoff in 1977 is based (Aziz, 2013; Burns, 2018). The 1977 logo dispenses with the complexity of the previous seal that included Newton under the apple tree (*Newton crest logo*) and was designed by Apple co-founder Ronald Wayne (Aziz, 2013) (Figure 4). Despite the important expressive differences that exist between these two logos, the original (1976) is only one year older than Apple’s bitten apple (1977), whose shape remains intact, being its chromatic the one that has been simplified (Figure 4). The diachronic relationship between both designs is based precisely on the apple as a significant visual element for the brand since its inception. This transformation of the brand’s logo reflects the evolution of its own products, in a commitment to simplification to balance innovation and functionality (Rix, 2014).

In the contribution of the significance of this relationship to the Apple logo, memory is decisive, not only as a store of knowledge but, especially, as a working instrument to redefine the past and translate it into the present, allowing a dialogue between the user, past, and logo (text) to recover the meaning, inevitably, filtered by the cultural scheme of each user (Lorusso, 2015). This “persistence of memory in the trajectory of time allows there to be history, in terms of memory and in terms of connection of times” (García-García et al., 2021, p. 1106) also in the recognition of the trademarks associated with its logo.

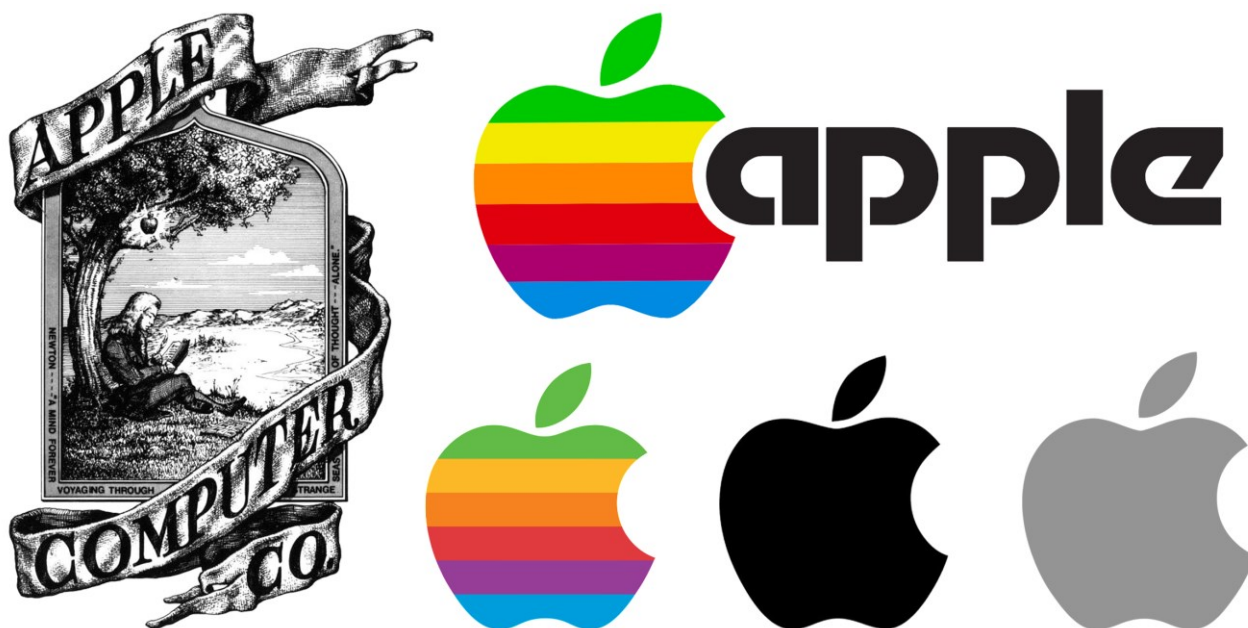


Figure 4: *Apple logos.*
Source: Apple (1976-2021).

On the other hand, the relationships proposed by Grupo μ (1993), according to the considerations of Ogden and Richards (1923), allow us to interpret the existence of two double or bidirectional relationships in the semiotic study of the Apple logo:

1. The referent-type relationship allows the conceptual development of the brand (type) from the logo (significant) and links it to a new referent (company, products, etc.). This relationship allows processing and integrating all the contributions of the brand or linked to it, whether or not they come from it and whether or not they are willing to communicate. Thus, Apple has achieved a visual representation that, although formally figurative (an apple), acquires a different sense of great symbolic potential, but is linked to an already cultured corporate type.
2. The type-referent relationship, in this case, is based on the conformity test between the attributes that characterize the type of the brand, Apple (a technological reference at an international level), and its ability to represent a real referent, so that, particularly for fans of this brand, this real reference is a hypostasis of the brand concept (type), although it can overcome the true reality of the technological brand by idealizing a reference based on the type that this users' profile maintains of the brand.
3. In the significant-type relationship, the type of the Apple brand is recognized from the signifier, subjecting the logo (signifier-stimulus) to a recognition test, according to which the receptor associates the stimuli that make up the logo to a type of its own repertoire (bitten apple) to give it a concrete meaning (technological brand).
4. The type-signifier relationship allows the consumer to determine if the signifier is an Apple-type hypostasis, subjecting it to a conformity test, from which it checks whether or not its characteristics conform to the corresponding type to give it a meaning. In this case, the receiver looks at the visual qualities of the specific type to make it correspond to the perceived signifier which, although close in expressive attributes to others (in this case a fruit), has sufficient differential elements to contain a completely different meaning.

4.3. Significance process of the Apple logo supported by digital forms of communication

All these meaning processes are influenced by the discourses that surround the brand and emerge from the consumers themselves in digital communities. The comments that users share about the brand in these spaces allow the co-creation of various meanings around that brand (Conejo & Wooliscroft, 2015) that are associated with their logo. Many of the brand's fan sites include a reference to the brand in their own name; Among those listed by Price (2019) that meet this characteristic and, also, appear in the *top ten* of the Feedspot ranking (2021) are those indicated in Table 1. The impact parameters collected in this table are decisive to understand the influence of these environments in the significance of the brand associated with its logo, and they measure from user participation to popularity and search engine positioning of these platforms (Feedspot, 2021):

1. Social engagement (user commitment to the brand in social media) measures participation according to the actions, likes, and comments of the public about the brand in digital social media.
2. The domain authority allows the classification of a site from the prediction of its search engine positioning; the score for this metric ranges from 1 to 100, so a higher value indicates a better rank.
3. The Alexa rank measures the popularity of the site by combining the estimated traffic to this website with the participation of its users in the last three months; the first position in the ranking corresponds to the most popular.

Table 1. *Digital communities focused on Apple brand content.*

Name	Description	Impact metrics	
9to5Mac 9to5mac.com	Main contents: News, comments, and guides. Number of publications: 23 daily posts. Launching: 2007.	Social engagement	1.9K
		Domain authority	92
		Alexa rank	4.9K
AppleInsider appleinsider.com	Main contents: News, comments, and forums. Number of publications: 19 daily posts. Launching: 1997.	Social engagement	2.5K
		Domain authority	89
		Alexa rank	9.7K
MacRumors macrumors.com	Main contents: News, comments, and forums. Number of publications: 6 daily posts. Launching: 2000.	Social engagement	3.6K
		Domain authority	91
		Alexa rank	4.4K
iMore imore.com	Main contents: News, comments, and forums. Number of publications: 30 daily posts. Launching: 2008.	Social engagement	22
		Domain authority	88
		Alexa rank	6.0K
Cult of Mac cultofmac.com	Main contents: News, comments, and forums. Number of publications: 17 daily posts. Launching: 2005.	Social engagement	48
		Domain authority	86
		Alexa rank	32.4K
Macworld	Main contents: News, comments, and advice. Number of publications: 4 daily posts. Launching: 1997.	Social engagement	161
		Domain authority	86
		Alexa rank	8.8K

Source: Self-made based on Price (2019), Feedspot (2021), and the websites of these communities.

Many of the platforms listed in Table 1 have the collaboration of experienced users knowledgeable about Apple products who act as technological micro-influencers and potential brand prescribers in these environments. This type of influencer is more economical and effective than celebrities without knowledge about the brand's products; They are defined as actively recognized users in a community and are characterized by targeting an audience of limited size and high engagement (Rakoczy et al., 2018).

The virtual communities that are born around the brand are similar to fan clubs, which offer updated information about the brand's products and/or services or provide reviews that help that brand improve (Scolari, 2007). Emotional value plays a key role in the participation of users in these spaces since they usually have needs related to enjoyment, intimacy, and identification with the community, factors that influence their interaction (Kaur et al., 2018). Among the conversations that contribute to enhancing the brand's logo, generating interaction between users, we can mention the *post* by Michael Potuck (2021), on 9to5Mac, in which he teaches other followers to write this visual sign, using iPad, iPhone, and Mac keyboards. It also stands out the review of Tim Hardwick (2021), in MacRumors, about the strange design of the iPhone 11 Pro with the off-center logo; or the contribution of Luke Dormehl (2021), in Cult of Mac, to the history of the brand about the modernization of its "rainbow" logo. Thus, logos are incorporated into the semiotic system of the brand, supporting the generation of value for users and society, through an exchange of jointly created meanings (Conejo & Wooliscroft, 2015).

Aware of the importance of the consumer for their own image and the configuration of a positive conceptual type associated with their logo, Apple has incorporated two important initiatives on its corporate website (own media):

1. The Apple user groups, which promote the meeting between its consumers from all over the world in proximity groups to solve their doubts and, even, to establish a friendship supported by their affinity for the brand (Apple, 2021c). These groups, which emerged in the late 1970s and reached their peak in the 1990s, would form the backbone of its first faithful followers (Benner, 2015). Although they constitute an anachronism in the present day in which the brand offers online technical support, they continue to be proof of an iron loyalty to the brand (Benner, 2015).
2. Apple support communities, in which the brand proposes its consumers to learn, share experiences and knowledge about its products, and be recognized in the largest official community of fans of the brand (Apple, 2021b). The brand launched this initiative in 2011, as a social support space that focuses on the user and their needs regarding its products (Kessler, 2011). In this way, Apple demonstrates its interest in eWOM by putting itself at the service of its customers.

Through these initiatives of the brand itself, Apple wants to empower consumers of its products around the world to meet to solve their doubts and establish a bond based on their admiration for the brand (Apple, 2021b; 2021c). Despite its advantages, Hanson et al. (2019) perceive that the configuration of the Apple support communities could improve, evolving from its simple tag structure towards a scheme that more clearly communicates the contents and better orients the behaviors required for each user profile. These spaces, created by the brand, must generate a positive community culture, in which users enjoy freedom of expression and develop a community feeling conveyed by an exchange of intrinsic benefits to motivate co-creation from the perspective of pleasure (Ind et al., 2020) and hedonism (Nikolinakou & Phua, 2020).

Both the communities generated by the fans of the brand and those created by Apple are configured as narrative spaces with a "semantic universe of their own" that users incorporate into "their everyday language" and contribute to creating through their interactive experiences, enriching the meaning of the brand (Scolari, 2007, p. 79) associated with its graphic emblem.

5. Conclusions and discussion

The main conclusion drawn from this work is that the semiotic construction of logos based on the analysis of Apple's corporate symbol allows us to speak of a sign associated with a cultured brand image; This sign, therefore, responds to an autonomous code with its own rules of interpretation and

differentiated from other visual codes, but in which a process of signification underlies.

The specific results obtained from the interpretive analysis allow a series of conclusions to be drawn in connection with the objectives formulated in the methodology section. These conclusions synthesize the contribution and originality of this research to a better and deeper understanding of the semiotics of corporate logos and the processes of signification and semiosis that this code implies:

1. The logos have a simple and simplified structure according to their visual expression. In this structure, the shapes that make up the signifier are the most determining structural elements (global properties), due to the importance of the form to contain the corporate meaning of the brand and project it. This signifier does not refer to a referent with which it bears a physical resemblance (there is not, in this case, a descriptive co-type relationship), in fact, the complexity of Apple's corporate type resides in that it does not correspond to that of a bitten fruit, but to a whole corporate ideology that represents the identity of a technological brand of international reference.
2. However, these visual signs show a complexity that attends to the multiple relationships that give them meaning. The relationships of this conceptual type of the Apple brand with the signifier and the referent are those that allow a process of semiosis that gives corporate and cultural meaning to its logo in a continuous evolution of the brand. Hence, the importance of diachronic relations in the semiotics of logos. In the case of Apple, the link between the current logo and those that existed before is essential to perfect the conceptual type to which this visual sign refers.
3. In this process of semiosis or sign action for the creation of an evolutionary meaning, virtual communities and the content that their users pour into them are of capital interest today. In the specific case of Apple, a large number of forums, blogs, or social communities that bring together users loyal to the brand, convert these spaces into digital files for consumers to access to determine their attitude towards the brand, providing their landmark emblem with meaning. Thus, the eWOM emerges as a key instrument for the brand and for the significance acquired by its signifier par excellence, its logo, which deserves specific research that will help brands to encourage positive eWOM and its good management.

Furthermore, a large part of the originality of this proposal resides in the design of a semiotic analysis model, based on classical theoretical contributions that, traditionally, have focused on the study of other types of signs. This model serves as an analytical instrument applicable to other logos or cultured visual discourses, proposing an alternative to Semprini's (1995) mapping of consumer values for the study of the brand, in this case, in connection with its logo. This model allows, from the identification and analysis of the structural elements of the corporate sign (logo) to the meaning processes that underlie, not only in the relationships between its parts and their times but also in the intervention of digital interactions between brands and their users.

These results open a whole field for reflection on the importance of new forms of communication that allow consumers to contribute to the processes of the significance of the brands represented visually by their logo (Llorente-Barroso et al., 2020). The communication of users through virtual communities reproduces shared meanings that are associated with a logo and nurture a social system along the lines indicated by Vidales-González (2020). These online spaces allow brands to involve their users in the production of their corporate meaning. In this sense, eWOM emerges as an essential marketing instrument (Stanton et al., 2019) for brands in the hands of consumers, who, by disseminating reviews, experiences, or evaluations about their products and/or services, generate the meaning of brand and motivate or stop their purchase and consumption. To involve the consumer in the dissemination of positive content about the brand (positive eWOM), the consumer must show engagement towards that brand (Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Kapoor et al., 2018; Wu & Wang, 2011).

In globalized and digitized societies, logos have become omnipresent signs of current semiotics (Johannessen, 2018). Its complexity does not lie so much in a simplified expression with the capacity to capture high levels of attention in the representation of large brands (Mañas-Viniegra et al. 2020a; 2020b), but rather in its potential significance, supported by its symbolic capacity (Llorente-Barroso & García-García, 2015). User-logo interaction is necessary to understand these signs and requires semiosis processes anchored to the socio-cultural system itself (Vidales-González, 2020). The semiotics of each logo is incorporated into the semiotic system of its respective brand, which is configured as a repository and vehicle of collective meanings related to those brands (Conejo & Wooliscroft, 2015, p. 6). In this sense, corporate semiotics are incorporated into culture according to a palimpsestic procedure that allows recollections to accumulate in layers of memory, giving them meaning at all times (García-García et al., 2021; Lorusso, 2015).

The limitations of this article respond to those of exploratory analyzes through case studies. Instead, the results open up new fields of exploration. For example, given the importance that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is acquiring, the impact that the sustainability currents that complete and enhance the brand's own values could be deepened (Castillo & Villagra, 2019; Mayorga-Gordillo & Añaños-Carrasco, 2020) on the process of the meaning of their logos and depending on the perception of the public about these actions of responsibility in digital environments. On the other hand, this exploratory research could be replicated in the interpretive analysis of other corporate symbols to complete the results obtained in this case research. Likewise, it would be interesting to propose other types of methodologies to complete this semiotic study, using quantitative or qualitative techniques that include a first-hand perception by the public about the processes of the meaning of logos.

6. References

- Apple (2021a). *Apple* [corporate website]. <https://apple.co/30Qg8x6>
- Apple (2021b). Apple support communities [corporate website]. *Apple*. <https://apple.co/3vMa8RE>
- Apple (2021c). Apple user groups [corporate website]. *Apple*. <https://apple.co/3Bd5m0u>
- Apple (1976-2021). *Identidad visual corporativa de Apple*.
- Aziz, J. T. (2013, 28 de noviembre). The evolution of the Apple logo. *Tribune*. <https://bit.ly/3np9NjX>
- Barthes, R. (1987). *El susurro del lenguaje: Más allá de la palabra y la escritura*. Paidós Ibérica.
- Black, I., & Veloutsou, C. (2017). Working consumers: Co-creation of brand identity, consumer identity and brand community identity. *Journal of Business Research*, 70, 416-429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.07.012>
- Benner, K. (2015, 8 de septiembre). Mac user groups fade in number and influence, but devotees press on [online news]. *The New York Times*. <https://nyti.ms/3vIdYuU>
- Bollas, C. (2009). *The infinite question*. Routledge.
- Bonales-Daimiel, G., Mañas-Viniegra, L., & Jiménez-Gómez, I. (2021). El impacto del flat design en el reconocimiento de marcas automovilísticas. *Grafica*, 9(18), 105-113. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/grafica.205>

- Bresciani, S., & Del-Ponte, P. (2017). New brand logo design: Customers' preference for brand name and icon. *Journal of Brand Management*, 24(5), 375-390. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-017-0046-4>
- Bretón, M. (2015). ¿Qué son los medios pagados, propios y ganados? *Marketing digital. Mariabretongallego*. <https://bit.ly/3CkROBC>
- Burns, W. (2018, 26 de marzo). Rob Janoff and the fascinating true story behind his original Apple logo design [online news]. *Forbes*. <https://bit.ly/3vMaAzk>
- Castillo, I., & Villagra, N. (2019). La comunicación de la RSE. Análisis del sector hotelero. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, (74), 1580-1609. <https://www.doi.org/4185/RLCS-2019-1400>
- Chu, S. C., & Kim, J. (2018). The current state of knowledge on electronic word-of-mouth in advertising research. *International Journal of Advertising*, 37(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1407061>
- Conejo, F., & Wooliscroft, B. (2015). Brands defined as semiotic marketing systems. *Journal of Macromarketing*, 35(3), 287-301. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0276146714531147>
- Daniels-McGhee, S., & Davis, G. R. (1994). The imagery-creativity connection. *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 28(3), 151-176. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2162-6057.1994.tb01189.x>
- Demaria, C. (2010). Entre textos y practicas: Hacia una semiótica culturalógica. En G. Abril (Ed.). *El cuarto bios. Estudios sobre comunicación e información* (pp. 13-33). Editorial Complutense.
- De-Veirman, M., & Hudders, L. (2020). Disclosing sponsored Instagram posts: The role of material connection with the brand and message-sidedness when disclosing covert advertising, *International Journal of Advertising*, 39(1), 94-130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1575108>
- Dormehl, L. (2021, 27 de agosto). Today in Apple history: Rainbow Apple logo gets a modern overhaul. *Cult of Mac*. <https://bit.ly/3b82ZkO>
- Feedspot (2021, 19 de abril). Top 100 Apple blogs on Mac, iPhone, iPad, Apple TV, Watch & Music in 2020 [blog]. *Feedspot*. <https://bit.ly/3EenQzI>
- Floch, J. M. (1987). Semiótica plástica e linguagem publicitária. Análise de um anúncio da campanha de lançamento do cigarro "News". *Significação*, 6, 29-50. <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2316-7114.sig.1985.90495>
- Floch, J. M. (2001). *Semiotics, marketing and communication: Beneath the signs, the strategies*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- García-García, F., Llorente-Barroso, C., & García-Guardia, M. L. (2021). Interrelaciones de la memoria con la creatividad y la imagen en la conformación de la cultura. *Arte, Individuo y Sociedad*, 33(4), 1095-1116. <https://doi.org/10.5209/aris.70216>
- Gibs, J., & Bruich, S. (2010, 20 de abril). Nielsen/Facebook report: The value of social media ad impressions. *Nielsenwire*. <https://bit.ly/314rbDf>

- González-Solas, J. (2002). *Identidad visual corporativa: La imagen de nuestro tiempo*. Síntesis.
- Greimas, A. J. (1994). Semiótica figurativa y semiótica plástica. En G. Hernández-Aguilar (1994). *Figuras y estrategias: En torno a una semiótica de lo visual* (pp. 17-42). Siglo XXI Editores y Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla.
- Greimas, A. J., & Courtés, J. (1982). *Semiótica: Diccionario razonado de la teoría del lenguaje*. Gredos.
- Grobert, J., Cuny, C., & Fornerino, M. (2016). Surprise! We changed the logo. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 25(3), 239-246. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-06-2015-0895>
- Grupo μ (1993). *Tratado del signo visual: Para una retórica de la imagen*. Cátedra.
- Gvili, Y., & Levy, S. (2018). Consumer engagement with eWOM on social media: The role of social capital. *Online Information Review*, 42(4), 482-505. <https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-05-2017-0158>
- Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On collective memory*. University of Chicago Press.
- Hanson, S., Jiang, L., & Dahl, D. (2019). Enhancing consumer engagement in an online brand community via user reputation signals: A multi-method analysis. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 47, 349-367. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-018-0617-2>
- Hardwick, T. (2021, 12 de abril). Images depict 'extremely rare' iPhone 11 Pro with misaligned Apple logo. *MacRumors*. <https://bit.ly/311CITF>
- Hjelmslev, L. (1987). *Ensayos lingüísticos, Tomo II*. Gredos.
- Hsun, W. P., & Jie, G. (2020). Systematic creation of a city's visual communication: Logo design based on the phoenix flower in Tainan city. *Visual Communication*, Pre-print June 2020, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357220917438>
- Ind, N., Coates, N., & Lerman, K. (2020). The gift of co-creation: What motivates customers to participate. *Journal of Brand Management*, 27, 181-194. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-019-00173-7>
- Interbrand (2020). *Best global brands 2019 rankings*. <https://bit.ly/3CdpPnd>
- Japutra, A., Molinillo, S., & Wang, S. (2018). Aesthetic or self-expressiveness? Linking brand logo benefits, brand stereotypes and relationship quality. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 44, 191-200. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2018.06.015>
- Jiang, Y., Gorn, G. J., Galli, M., & Chattopadhyay, A. (2016). Does your company have the right logo? How and why circular- and angular-logo shapes influence brand attribute judgments. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 42, 709-726. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucv049>
- Johannessen, C. M. (2018). The challenge of simple graphics for multimodal studies: Articulation and time scales in fuel retail logos. *Visual Communication*, 17(2), 163-185. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357217746811>

- Kapoor, K. K., Tamilmani, K., Rana, N. P., Patil, P., Dwivedi, Y. K., & Nerur, S. (2018). Advances in social media research: Past, present and future. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 20(3), 531-558. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-017-9810-y>
- Kaur, P., Dhir, A., Rajala, R., & Dwivedi, Y. (2018). Why people use online social media brand communities: A consumption value theory perspective. *Online Information Review*, 42(2), 205-221. <https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-12-2015-0383>
- Kaur, H., & Kaur, K. (2019). Connecting the dots between brand logo and brand image". *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, 11(1), 68-87. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJBA-06-2018-0101>
- Kelly, M. (2017). Analysing the complex relationship between logo and brand. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 13(1), 18-33. <https://doi.org/10.1057/pb.2016.3>
- Kessler, T. (2011, 17 de abril). Apple launches Apple support communities [online news]. *C|Net*. <https://cnet.co/2ZtnTZt>
- Kumi, R., & Sabherwal, R. (2019). Knowledge sharing behaviour in online discussion communities: Examining behaviour motivation from social and individual perspectives. *Knowledge and Process Management*, 26(2), 110-122. <https://doi.org/10.1002/kpm.1574>
- Lee, D. Hosanagar, K., & Nair, H. S. (2018). Advertising content and consumer engagement on social media: Evidence from Facebook. *Management Science*, 64(11), 5105-5131. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2017.2902>
- Llorente-Barroso, C. (2008). Análisis semiótico del logo de Mozilla. *Revista de la Sociedad Española de Estudios de la Comunicación Iberoamericana (SEECI)*, XI(17), 17-56. <https://doi.org/10.15198/seeci.2008.17.17-56>
- Llorente-Barroso, C., & García-García, F. (2015). The rhetorical construction of corporate logos. *Arte, Individuo y Sociedad*, 27(2), 289-309. https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_ARIS.2015.v27.n2.44667
- Llorente-Barroso, C., García-Guardia, M. L., & Kolotouchkina, O. (2020). El impacto de las redes sociales en la estrategia de las marcas: Creatividad, engagement y eWOM. En S. Liberal-Ormaechea & L. Mañas-Viniegra (Coords.). *Las redes sociales como herramienta de comunicación persuasiva* (pp. 35-53). McGraw-Hill.
- Lorusso, A. M. (2015). *Cultural semiotics: For a cultural perspective in semiotics*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137546999>
- Lou, L., & Koh, J. (2018). Social media advertising effectiveness: A conceptual framework and empirical validation. *Asia Pacific Journal of Information Systems*, 28(3), 183-203. <https://doi.org/10.14329/apjis.2018.28.3.183>
- Luffarelli, J., Mukesh, M., & Mahmood, A. (2019). Let the logo do the talking: The influence of logo descriptiveness on brand equity. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 56(5), 862-878. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022243719845000>

- Mañas-Viniegra, L., González-Villa, I. A., & Llorente-Barroso, C. (2020a). The corporate purpose of Spanish listed companies: Neurocommunication research applied to organisational intangibles. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 2108. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01705>
- Mañas-Viniegra, L., Santos-Silva, D., & Liberal-Ormaechea, S. (2020b). The visual-digital identity of corporate brands: A study of neuromarketing in young people from Spain and Portugal. *Tripodos, (48)*, 135-151. <https://doi.org/10.51698/tripodos.2020.48p135-151>
- Mayorga-Gordillo, J., & Añaños-Carrasco, E. (2020). Atributos de la personalidad de marca socialmente responsable. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social, (75)*, 97-120. <https://www.doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2020-1418>
- Nikolinakou, A., & Phua, J. (2020). Do human values matter for promoting brands on social media? How social media users' values influence valuable brand-related activities such as sharing, content creation, and reviews. *Consumer Behaviour, 19*(1), 13-23. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.1790>
- Ogden, C. K., & Richards, I. A. (1923). *The meaning of meaning: A study of the influence of language upon thought and of the science of symbolism*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Palmer, S. E. (1977). Hierarchical structure in perceptual representation. *Cognitive Psychology, 9*(4), 441-474. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0285\(77\)90016-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0285(77)90016-0)
- Palmer, S. E. (1975). Visual perception and world knowledge: Notes on a model of sensory-cognitive interaction. En D. A. Norman & D. E. Rumelhart (Eds.). *Explorations in cognition* (pp. 279-307). Freeman.
- Peirce, C. S. (1974). *La ciencia de la Semiótica*. Nueva Visión SAIC.
- Pittard, N., Ewing, M., & Jevons, C. (2007). Aesthetic theory and logo design: Examining consumer response to proportion across cultures. *International Marketing Review, 24*(4), 457-473. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02651330710761026>
- Polidoro, P. (2015). Umberto Eco and the problem of iconism. *Semiotica, 206*, 129-160. <https://doi.org/10.1515/sem-2015-0020>
- Potuck, M. (2021, 20 de agosto). How to type the Apple logo on Mac, iPhone, and iPad. *9to5Mac*. <https://bit.ly/3mdUxqG>
- Price, D. (2019, 17 de diciembre). 28 Websites every Apple fan must bookmark. MUO. <https://bit.ly/3Csw5I1>
- Rakoczy, M. E., Bouzeghoub A., Lopes Gancarski A., & Wegrzyn-Wolska K. (2018). In the search of quality influence on a small scale - micro-influencers discovery. En H. Panetto, C. Debruyne, H. Proper, C. Ardagna, D. Roman & R. Meersman (Eds.), *On the move to meaningful Internet systems. OTM 2018 Conferences. OTM 2018. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, 11230*. Springer.
- Reimer, T., & Benkenstein, M. (2018). Not just for the recommender: How eWOM incentives influence the recommendation audience. *Journal of Business Research, 86*, 11-21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.01.041>

- Rix, C. (2014). Bitten. Branded. Bought. The Apple logo in popular culture and the bible. *Society of Biblical Literature (SLB) Annual Meeting*. Oklahoma Christian University. <https://bit.ly/3b9UExc>
- Rizaldi, M., & Anthonius, R. (2020). Development phase of 2:3:5 ratio as a visual composition technique on logo design. *Proceedings of the International Conference of Innovation in Media and Visual Design (IMDES 2020). Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 502, 21-26. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201202.048>
- Saussure, F. (1945). *Curso de lingüística general*. Losada.
- Scolari, C. (2007). Googlemanía. Las marcas on-line y el caso Google. En P. Capriotti (Ed.). *Gestión de la marca corporativa* (pp. 59-83). La Crujía.
- Segarra-Saavedra, J., & Hidalgo-Marí, T. (2018). Viralidad e interacción. Análisis del engagement de los diez anuncios más vistos en YouTube en España en 2016. *Icono14*, 16(1), 47-71. <https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v16i1.1069>
- Semprini, A. (1995). *El marketing de la marca. Una aproximación semiótica*. Paidós.
- Sievers, B. (2017). A photograph of a little boy seen through the lens of the associative unconscious and collective memory. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, 22(1), 69-86. <https://doi.org/10.1057/pcs.2016.3>
- Stanton, S. J., Kim, J., Thor, J. C., & Deng, X. (2019). Incentivized methods to generate electronic word-of-mouth: Implications for the resort industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 78, 142-149. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.11.004>
- Stuart, H., & Muzellec, L. (2004). Corporate makeovers: Can a hyena be rebranded? *Journal of Brand Management*, 11(6), 472-482. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.bm.2540193>
- Vidales-González, C. E. (2020). Semiótica, cultura y comunicación. las bases teóricas de algunas confusiones conceptuales entre la semiótica y los estudios de la comunicación. *Razón y Palabra*, 66. <https://bit.ly/3EkNEu5>
- Voorveld, H. A. M., Van-Noort, G., Muntinga, D. G., & Bronner, F. (2018). Engagement with social media and social media advertising: The differentiating role of platform type. *Journal of Advertising*, 47(1), 38-54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2017.1405754>
- Weiger, W. H., Wetzel, H. A., & Hammerschmidt, M. (2017). Leveraging marketer-generated appeals in online brand communities: An individual user-level analysis. *Journal of Service Management*, 28(1), 133-156. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-11-2015-0378>
- Wu, P. C. S., & Wang, Y. C. (2011). The influences of electronic word-of-mouth message appeal and message source credibility on brand attitude. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 23(4), 448-472. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13555851111165020>

AUTHORS

Carmen Llorente-Barroso

Department of Applied Communication Sciences. Universidad Complutense de Madrid.
Ph.D. in Advertising and Audiovisual Communication from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM) and Extraordinary Doctorate Award 2009-2010. Her lines of research are focused on the study of the visual keys of brands, and communication aimed at active aging and the inclusion of people with disabilities. Currently, she participates in the PROVULDIG2-CM (H2019 / HUM-5775) and COMPENSA (PID2019-105398RB-C21) projects. Her research has been disseminated in international conferences and publications in SPI, WoS, and Scopus. In 2014, she carried out a research stay at Haas School of Business (UC, Berkeley), financed with a “José Castillejo” Grant (CAS14/00052). Her research career has been recognized with a six-year research period by the CNEAI. Currently, she is a PDI at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM).

carmenllorente@ucm.es

Índice H: 13

Orcid ID: 0000-0001-7710-0956

Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=jdsAFJYAAAAJ&hl=es>

ResearchGate: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Carmen-Barroso>

Scopus ID: 55652402000

Academia.edu: <https://ucm.academia.edu/CARMENLLORENTEBARROSO>

Olga Kolotouchkina

Department of Applied Communication Sciences. Universidad Complutense de Madrid.
Ph.D. in Communication Sciences and professor of Communication and Branding at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. She is a member of the American Academy of Advertising, ECREA, and the International Place Branding Association. Her research interests include the field of place branding, disability visibility, citizen participation, and public diplomacy. She participates in the projects “The Public Diplomacy of Ibero-American Mega-Cities: Communication Strategies and Soft Power to influence global environmental legislation” (RTI2018-096733-B-I00), and “Rise Women with disabilities in social engagement” (H2020-MSCA-RISE-2015-690874). Her research has been disseminated in international congresses and publications in SPI, WoS, and Scopus. She has been a visiting professor at the University of Toronto and Waseda University in Tokyo.

olga.kolotouchkina@ucm.es

Índice H: 5

Orcid ID: 0000-0002-8348-8544

Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.es/citations?hl=es&user=GcObyH4AAAAJ>

ResearchGate: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Olga-Kolotouchkina>

Scopus ID: 57160276600

Academia.edu: <https://ucm.academia.edu/OlgaKolotouchkina>

Francisco García-García

Department of Theories and Analysis of Communication. Universidad Complutense de Madrid.
Emeritus Professor at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM). His lines of research are linked to Audiovisual Narrative, Advertising, Creativity, Rhetoric, ICT applied to Communication and Education. Director of more than 180 Theses, he has been a professor of all educational stages. He directed the National Center for Educational Information and Communication of the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports (23/10/2000-31/12/2004). National Award for Educational Research (1978). President of the Icono14 Scientific Association and co-editor of the scientific journals Icono14 and Prisma Social. He has been the CR of several projects and the SOCMEDIA Group (UCM).

Furthermore, he has coordinated numerous books in SPI publishers and has written several books, chapters, and articles in SPI, JCR, and SJR publications.

fgarciag@ucm.es

Índice H: 61

Orcid ID: 0000-0001-5394-4804

Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.es/citations?hl=es&user=as2gqFUAAAAJ>

ResearchGate: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Francisco-Garcia-20>

Scopus ID: 55439107500

Academia.edu: <https://ucm.academia.edu/FranciscoGarc%C3%ADaGarc%C3%ADa>