

Mega events' graphic design and its role in enhancing the national image

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Abstract:

This research objective is to demonstrate what are mega events and the different kinds of them. It demonstrates the importance of hosting mega events and the reasons behind competition between countries for hosting these events. The research illustrates the characteristics of mega events and the terms of them that distinguish them from any other events. It also describes the hard and soft benefits of hosting events. Through studying mega events this research intends on demonstrating the importance of using graphic design in presenting the country while hosting the mega event for enhancing the national image. The importance of the research comes from the globalization and the increasing competition between nations in hosting such these events although the high costs of hosting and the complex bidding process itself. The research will use the qualitative method, as it is the study that is used to explore a phenomenon by collecting data and images and analyzing them using the grounded research to reach the fundamentals of using graphic design in mega events. The research will analyze visual elements of two mega events in their different kinds. The research will analyze FIFA World Cup in Russia 2018 and Milano Exposition in 2015 in Italy and how the two countries used graphic design to express their national identity. How this visualization affects the national image around the world? The research will reach the fundamentals and rules of using graphic design in hosting mega events. While analysis it will demonstrate the precautions that should be put in mind in case of hosting.

Keywords: Branding – National image – Mega events - Graphic design.

Research problem:

Graphic design that is used by countries in mega events may be an important factor in enhancing the national image, so research problem is illustrated in answering these questions:

- 1- How do nations present themselves visually in mega events?
- 2- How is graphic design used to enhance the national image?
- 3- How can the nations connect between the national image and the hosted mega event?

Reasons for choosing the research problem:

- 1- Illustrating the importance of graphic design and its role in mega events.
- 2- Demonstrating the influence of graphic design on the national image.
- 3- National image is a crucial element of any country that need to be re-established and

enhanced to present the country's true culture, social and historical identity and position a positive and helpful place for itself worldwide.

Research aims:

- 1- Demonstrating mega events, their characteristics, kinds and importance.
- 2- Identifying the rules and the basics of using graphic design in mega events to enhance the national image.

Research hypotheses:

The research hypothesis that mega events' graphic design may increase the positive perception towards the national image that in turn affect the nation's place around the world.

Research methodology:

The research will use the qualitative method, as it is the study that is used to explore a phenomenon by collecting data and images and analyzing them using the grounded research to reach the fundamentals of using graphic design in mega events.

1- Introduction:

Countries are being encouraged to think of themselves as corporations for the processes around enhancing their national image and to actively pursue opportunities to improve their reputations as corporations do. The traditional concept of branding asserts that brands are created when there is a balance in perception and reality about a product, resulting in a favorable, or a balanced image. Consumer-behavior studies find that such an image can have an impact on everything from purchasing habits to perceptions of nationals from a specific country. Following the same logic, the concept of enhancing national image has recently come into play.¹

The countries have to adopt conscious strategies if they are to compete effectively on the global stage because the country that have not enhanced image, has a difficult time attracting economic and political attention, The image and reputation are becoming essential parts of the nation's strategic equity. A powerful and positive national image can provide crucial competitive advantage in today's globalized economy.²

There is growing number of countries showing interest in hosting mega events despite the high costs and complexity of the bidding process and actual event hosting. Several studies have identified economic growth, infrastructure upgrading, and enhancing the national image as the chief benefits to hosting countries.³ Hosting these events as an act of communication with the world can be a powerful agent in the imaging, re-imaging and enhancing the national image.⁴ Using graphic design in presenting the mega event can be a good opportunity for the country to express its national identity and enhance the national image.

¹ Ni Chen – Branding national images: The 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, 2010 Shanghai World Expo, and 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games - *Public Relations Review* 38 – 2012 – P.731

² Keith Dinnie – Nation Branding, concepts, issues, practice – Elsevier – USA – 2008 – P.17

³ Ni Chen - *ibid* - P.732

⁴ Brendon Knott, Alan Fyall and Ian Jones - Leveraging nation branding opportunities through sport mega-events – *emeraldinsight* – 2016 – P.106

2- Mega events:

I will proceed to describe briefly the definitions already given by the experts. Mega-event could be described as an event with a large number of participants or visitors and worldwide publicity”,⁵ John Horne⁶ said that Mega-events are best understood as ‘large-scale cultural, commercial and sporting events, which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance’.⁷ Christopher M. Law⁸ characterizes them as large events of world importance and high profile, which have a major impact on the hosting country or place.⁹ Donald Getz¹⁰ presented it from another perspective. He believed that there is no single definition because this depends on the point of view of the actors involved: organizers and guests. To the event organizer “A special event is a one-time or infrequently occurring event outside normal programs or activities of the sponsoring or organizing body. To the customer or guest, a special event is an opportunity for a leisure, social or cultural experience outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experience.”¹¹

There are main features that distinguish mega events and define it as “Mega”. They are:

- A. International.
- B. Out of the ordinary.
- C. Big in composition.
- D. Having the ability to transmit promotional messages to billions of people via television and other developments in telecommunications.¹²

The choice of destinations and visits to attractions or attending such events is affected by previous experiences and the degree of enjoyment with these experiences, thus, Mega events as short duration attractions should be:

- A. appealing in theme and context.
- B. well organized.
- C. promoted effectively.¹³

in order to satisfy a social or cultural needs.

3- Characteristics of mega events:

Mega-events are characterized as:

- A. Having very large numbers of participants from many countries.

⁵Based on <file:///Users/apple/Downloads/PietroAntonioValentino2011ADefinitionMegaEventVCongressodellAssociazioneItalianadiStoriaUrbana.pdf> 28/1/2019

⁶ John Horne: Professor at college of the environment University of Washington.

⁷ John Horne - The Four ‘Knowns’ of Sports Mega-Events - Leisure Studies - Vol. 26, No. 1, 81–96, January 2007 – P 81

⁸ Christopher M. Law is a reader in Geography at the University of Salford UK. He is the author of British Regional Policy since World War 1 1980 and The Uncertain Future of The Urban Core 1988 as well as numerous articles on economic and social geography.

⁹ Ni Chen – ibid – P.732

¹⁰ Donald Getz retired in July 2009 from his full-time academic position at the University of Calgary, Canada, where he remains Professor Emeritus and Adjunct Professor in the Haskayne School of Business.

¹¹ Donald Getz - Event tourism: Definition, evolution, and research – Elsevier – 2008 – P.404

¹² JOHN HORNE - The Four ‘Knowns’ of Sports Mega-Events - Leisure Studies - Vol. 26, No. 1, 81–96, January 2007 – P 82

¹³ Gökçe Özdemir and Duygu Türkmenoğlu – “IMC Strategies of Festivals in Destination Branding “ - Springer International Publishing - Switzerland – 2017 – P 132

- B. A focus on one or more types of activity (eg, sports as FIFA World Cup or Olympic Games) but also possibly including supporting events and activities (eg, cultural events held within and because of the sports mega-event).
- C. Extending over a period of time.
- D. Having lasting impacts, often termed the events ‘legacy’ (eg, extended tourism impacts, infrastructure).
- E. Being very costly to execute and hence require multiple funding sources, including governments and the private sector; and, as being complex to stage organizationally and requiring many years of planning.
- F. They are so large that they affect whole economies and reverberate in the global media.
- G. They involve both large numbers of paid staff and large numbers of volunteers, and they engage the spirit and pride of hosting communities.¹⁴

4- Benefits of hosting mega events:

Benefits of hosting mega events are classified into hard benefits and soft ones.

4.1 The hard benefits:

As for the hard benefits, Megaprojects that accompanying these events such as:

- 4.1.1 Bridges
- 4.1.2 Tunnels
- 4.1.3 Canals
- 4.1.4 Public transport schemes.
- 4.1.5 Prestige buildings such as stadia, arenas and gyms¹⁵
- 4.1.6 Transport infrastructure
- 4.1.7 Telecommunications improvements
- 4.1.8 Hospitality to accommodate the delegations, journalists and tourists
- 4.1.9 Producing new job opportunities
- 4.1.10 Any other related services that have resulted in a series of projects and investments in urban development, which have often led to huge urban transformations¹⁶ that already may increase tourism and boost local economy.

4.2 The soft benefits:

4.2.1 Experience exchange is one of the soft benefits of hosting mega events because events are a good opportunity for creating knowledge transfer from one country to another, and be used as tools for experimenting new prototypes and urban templates.¹⁷ Hosting countries usually attract elite planning companies and construction firms that in normal condition would not be available, and knowledge transfer can be achieved directly from them.

4.2.2 Another important soft benefit of hosting mega event is image transference. Several

¹⁴ Louise A. Heslop, John Nadeau, Norm O'Reilly & Anahit Armenakyan - Mega-event and Country Co-branding: Image Shifts, Transfers and Reputational Impacts - Corporate Reputation Review - Macmillan Publishers Ltd. - London - 2013 - Vol. 16, No. 1 - P.11

¹⁵ John Horne - ibid - P 86

¹⁶ Eduardo Alberto Cusce Nobre - The 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil Hosting a Sport Mega-Event in a BRIC Context - Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil - 2017 - P.2

¹⁷ Simona Azzali - Mega-events and urban planning: Doha as a case study - URBAN DESIGN International - Macmillan Publishers - London - Vol. 22, 1 - a 2016 - P.3

studies explain that mega-event images are transferrable to a host country and/or government, as people tend to associate a mega-event image with that of the host country and government¹⁸ that may help brand national and government images of the host country. There is a widespread belief among the decision-makers of the states, which are willing to host mega-events that such undertakings will significantly contribute to enhancing the state's international image. They count on the idea that hosting such events will confirm or improve their country's status and image on the international arena, or see it as an opportunity to signal their political and economic potential. Organizing or hosting a mega-event has always been considered a prestigious activity¹⁹

5- National image:

Many researchers have presented a lot of definitions of the national image, the simplest one is presented by Dennis F. Kinsey²⁰ & Myojung Chung²¹ who defined it as is the images formed in one's head about a foreign country whereas Kunczik²² posits that national image is "the cognitive representation that a person holds of a given country, what a person believes to be true about a nation and its people." National image deals with the opinion formed by the international public's perceptions and judgments.²³ Chris Surtees described it as the most striking impression when outsiders look at a nation.²⁴ Stern defined it as A pattern of beliefs and feelings in a consumer's mind stimulated by associations with the real-world entity.²⁵

6- Classification of mega events:

Mega events are classified according to their goals to:

- A. Sports events.
- B. Expositions.

A. Sports events:

Sport mega-events have become increasingly important in the contemporary era, with their hosting becoming an object of policy for an increasing number of nation states in the world,

¹⁸ Ni Chen – ibid – P.733

¹⁹ AGATA DEMBEK AND RENATA WŁOCH - The Impact of a Sports Mega-Event on the International Image of a Country: the Case of Poland Hosting UEFA Euro 2012 – Perspectives – London - Vol. 22, No. 1 – 2014 – P.34

²⁰ Dennis Kinsey is a member of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the International Communication Association, the International Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity and the International Society of Political Psychology.

²¹ Professor Myojung Chung teaches courses in Strategic Communication and is helping to develop the Health Communication concentration in the MAPC at USF. Prior to academia, she worked as a journalist and a strategic communication practitioner.

²² Kunczik studied economics and social sciences in Cologne and obtained his diploma in economics in 1971. He received his doctorate in 1974 in Cologne. He was a research assistant at the Research Institute of Sociology at the University of Cologne.

²³ Dennis F. Kinsey & Myojung Chung - NATIONAL IMAGE OF SOUTH KOREA: IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY – Syracuse University – New York – 2013 – P.6

²⁴ Chris Surtees – Beijing Review – A Masterpiece on CHINA'S NATIONAL IMAGE – October 20, 2016 – P.18

²⁵ Louise A. Heslop, John Nadeau, Norm O'Reilly & Anahit Armenakyan - Mega-event and Country Co-branding: Image Shifts, Transfers and Reputational Impacts - Corporate Reputation Review - Macmillan Publishers Ltd. – 2013 - Vol. 16, No. 1 - P.9

most notably as a means to gain international visibility in some ways. Sports mega-events represent a means of achieving international prominence and national prestige put it, a great branding opportunity for nations.²⁶

One of largest and most important sports mega events is FIFA World Cup in terms of interest and media coverage.²⁷ Countries do their best to win the honor of hosting this event. Researches clearly show that the FIFA World Cup had a strong influence on the well being of the country's people. Hosting the World Cup may not make you rich, but it does have the potential to make you happy.²⁸ The last tournament of FIFA World Cup took place at Russia in 2018.

Figure (1) represents the official poster. It is inspired from the posters from the Constructivism-era of the Soviet Union. The renowned Russian artist Igor Gurovich has chosen the legendary Soviet goalkeeper Lev Yashin as a central figure of his work, making it more noticeable.²⁹ The design is a reflection of Russia's artistic and football heritage. It portrays such an important icon and celebrates the coming tournament on Russian soil. They chose a symbol of Russian football as the main figure to portray the importance of Russia as the host country. This style made the poster unique and memorable. He confirmed the concept of the Russians is the origin of the football by using many graphical factors. These factors are the pale colors, the used typeface and the styling of the lines. The direction of the player made the viewer's eye moving to the ball, which are all the lines extracted from. The color styling is inspired from the Constructivism, which was an artistic and architectural philosophy that originated in Russia beginning in 1913 as indication that they are the origin of the football game. This poster was the first one in the campaign and a series of another posters that were designed in another style were produced later on.

²⁶ See Cornelissen in Brendon Knott, Alan Fyall and Ian Jones - Leveraging nation branding opportunities through sport mega-events – Emerald Group Publishing Limited INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CULTURE, TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY RESEARCH - VOL. 10 NO. 1 2016 – P.106

²⁷ Based on Eduardo Alberto Cusce Nobre - The 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil Hosting a Sport Mega-Event in a BRIC Context - Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, University of São Paulo - São Paulo, Brazil – 2017 – P.2 & <https://www.bbc.com/sport/30326825> 1/2/2019

²⁸ See Allmers & Maening in Victor A Matheson – Introduction to the Symposium on Mega Events - *Eastern Economic Journal* - October 2009, Volume 35, Issue 4 – P.479

²⁹ <https://in.bookmyshow.com/entertainment-news/sports/fifa-unveils-official-poster-football-world-cup-2018-russia> 4/2/2019



Figure 1: Russia FIFA World Cup Official Poster

Figure 2 represents the official logo of Russia 2018 FIFA World Cup. In this design they the red and blue colors inspired from Russia flag colors in coloring the cup to frame their identity. The golden lines formed two men raising their hands as indication to victory. They confirmed the concept by using glimmering spots and stars.



FIFA WORLD CUP
RUSSIA 2018

Figure 2: Russia FIFA World Cup Official logo

In all of their designs they were punctual on using the identity colors that are inspired of the flag colors. Most of their designs they used the red color more such as the official book cover that presented in figure (3). They used graphic illustrations to famous landmarks in Russia to make the audience connect between football and the national image. They also wrote the word (Russia) in the first one third of the advertising to be more obvious.

³⁰ <https://www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/2018-fifa-world-cup-russia1m-official-poster-unveiled-at-moscow-metro-2921534> 4/2/2019



Figure 3: Russia FIFA World Cup official book cover ³¹

In another designs the blue color of the identity was mostly used. As presented in figure (4) the tickets' were designed using the blue color of the logo to convey the connection between the national identity and the event. The design also contained graphic treatments to the Russian milestones in colorful forms to convey a feeling of enjoyment. The direction of the ball that was used in the design direct the eye's movement to the event logo.



Figure 4: Russia FIFA World Cup ticket ³²

They made many environmental designs that used in most of them the name “Russia 2018” in its unique red color to enhance the identity and the national image as presented in figure (5).

³¹ <https://www.amazon.co.uk/2018-FIFA-World-Russia-Official/dp/1787390306> 4/2/2019

³² <https://www.forbes.com.mx/estos-son-los-precios-de-los-boletos-del-mundial-rusia-2018/> 4/2/2019



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Figure 5: Russia FIFA World Cup environmental design

B. Expositions:

A world fair, world expo, universal exposition, or international exposition (sometimes expo or Expo for short) is a large international exhibition designed to showcase achievements of nations. These exhibitions vary in character and are held in different parts of the world.³⁴ World Expos welcome tens of millions of visitors, allow countries to build extraordinary pavilions and can transform the landscape of a city for years to come. However, the main difference with the Expos of those times is that World Expos are no longer solely dedicated to showcasing industrial progress and showing off national prestige. They have become discussion platforms aimed at finding solutions to universal challenges of our time, such as urbanism (Expo 2010 Shanghai) or nutrition (Expo 2015 Milan). They take place every 5 years and last up to 6 months.³⁵

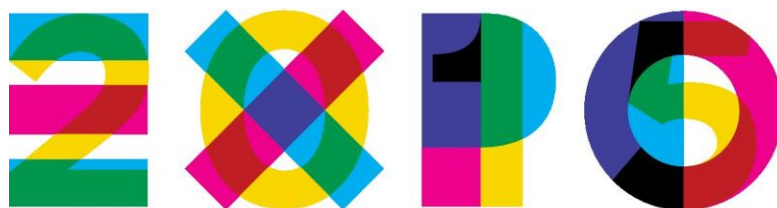
The most recent international exhibition, Expo 2015 was held in Milano, Italy with the theme “Feeding the planet, Energy for life”. After Member States elected Italy as Expo 2015 host country on 31 March 2008, the 148th General Assembly of the BIE approved the registration of the Expo on 23 November 2010. The Expo tackled one of the major challenges of the modern era, raising questions over food production, healthy eating, population growth, avoiding waste, and the efficient use of natural resources under the theme, “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life”.

Figure (6) represents the logo of Milano Expo. It is designed mainly using typography. It is the word “Expo” overlapping with the term “2015” in different colors and opacities. The green color that is used in the logo is the same tone that existed already in the Italy flag colors. The different colors and tones conveyed a message of diversity of the different colors of food, which is the main object of the event and the diversity of the participated countries to confirm the message of the campaign’s slogan which was feeding the planet.

³³ <https://www.lainformacion.com/deporte/futbol/como-comprar-entradas-para-la-copa-mundial-de-rusia-2018/6340404> 4/2/2019

³⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World%27s_fair 21/12/2018

³⁵ <https://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/expo-categories> 7/2/2019



MILANO 2015

Figure 6: Milano Expo logo³⁶

They used to print the flag in different places as presented in figure 7 and the flags of the guest's nations as shown in figure 8 that in turn may indicate that they are a welcoming country and it will reflect positively on its national image.



Figure 7: Italy's flag³⁷



Figure 8: Guests' countries flags³⁸

In most of their designs they used illustration abstracted from the logo and made of its colors expresses the main tourist attractions and landmarks that distinguish Italy from another country that will make the event memorable in the minds of target audience in addition to be linked to the country that will in turn have positive impacts on the national image. These illustrations are presented in figure (9).



Figure 9: Banner³⁹

³⁶ <http://www.expo2015.org/en/> 24/12/2018

³⁷ <http://www.expo2015.org/en/> 24/12/2018

³⁸ <http://www.expo2015.org/en/> 24/12/2018

³⁹ <http://www.lamilanocheconviene.it/en/expo-milano-2015/> 8/2/2019

7- Research results:

- 1- Graphic design is an important communication tool that is used by nations which hosting a mega to present themselves in a positive way, to manage how they want to be seen in the international arena and enhance their national image.
- 2- Using the national identity colors in mega events' graphic design makes the design memorable to the target audience.
- 3- Using the main attractions, landmarks and the country's unique places make the audience link between the design and the hosted nation.

8- Conclusion:

The research used the qualitative method to illustrate the meaning of mega events from many perspectives, their kinds, and benefits and its importance for presenting the country expressing its identity and enhancing its national image. The research presented two examples about the way that countries are using graphic design in hosting mega events. The research analyzed data and reached to the results.

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