

Communicating through Graphics

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Abstract—Communication is an act of transferring information or knowledge from one person to another through different mediums whatsoever is easily understandable. Different people use different mediums of communication to reach out to their audiences. Architects act as a visual communicator of their ideas, they communicate through drawings with contractors or clients, writers communicate their thoughts through words whereas an artist communicate his/her ideas through art.

In all these varied communication the main objective remains the same of relating your work or thoughts to the audience and take them to an interesting journey. People tend to opt different methods to represent their thoughts and their ideas. There is a great deal in making your words understandable to people, may it be in personal life or in professional life. Sometimes people fall short of words in communicating their ideas. This paper will throw light on how graphical representation of thoughts percolate easily and makes reading interesting. The best way of communication is through graphics and visual learning makes it easier. To make this work, in one of the trainings of COA-TRC, Advanced Architectural Theories held in the year 2019 in Pune, participants were asked to read a book and convert it into an easy manual. This task was an eye opener for the participants to communicate the language of the book, the ideas of the author in a manual form which a layman can understand. One book named “Small is Beautiful” by E.F. Schumacher was converted graphically into a manual. This book was related to economics but the participants beautifully decorated this book through graphical thoughts of the author.

How graphics can make ideas simpler to understand and interesting to learn is communicated well through this task of preparation of manual. This paper tends to enhance and interest the audience in understanding graphics as an important language for communication.

Keywords: Graphics, Communication, Visual Learning, Effective communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is communication?

Communication is “a variety of behaviours, processes, and technologies by which meaning is transmitted or derived from information.”[1] Communication is required in all sorts of fields and is an art of making people understand your work, ideas, thoughts through various methods.

“Communication is not just a language. There is much non-linguistic information available when people speak like body language, facial expression and immediate environment.”[2]

We continuously interact with our environments. This interaction may be conscious or subconscious, but our mind is in a continuous process of reacting or understanding things around us. The signages, symbols, maps, posters, advertisements, banners, television, movies, colour, buildings, monuments, sculptures from everything we tend to find out a meaning. All these things are communicating with us directly or indirectly. Our brain is a sharp tool which decodes the meaning of literally everything that surrounds us.

1.2 What is graphics?

“Graphics are planar displays which use the spatial distribution of shapes, patterns, textures, and colours to convey information”[2]. For example maps, graphs, tables, diagrams, pictures, photographs. In this paper we will focus on the Graphical representations through combination of diagrams, illustrations, numbers, letters and images. Graphic images are more easily understood and remembered while they also evoke emotions.

How graphic images are understood easily Research shows, “The human brain processes images 60,000 times faster than text, and 90 percent of information transmitted to the brain is visual.”[3] In communication there are three parts, a sender, a receiver and a message to be transferred. The below graphic gives us an idea of how complete information is received by a receiver through graphics and how some part of the text is lost when the message is sent by a medium of text.



The images resonate much easily in a human brain than a text. For example, if we describe a signage: The image in Figure-1, resonates easily in an individual’s brain than the text.



Figure - 1

How graphic images are easily remembered

The text is processed by our brain and is stored by our short term memory while images are processed and sent directly to our long term memory which is why we are able to remember a visual image after so many years but not the text. For example: If you visit a mall and you see the below graphical signage of a Toilet (Figure-2) even after an year when you revisit the mall you will be able to remember the direction of the toilet.

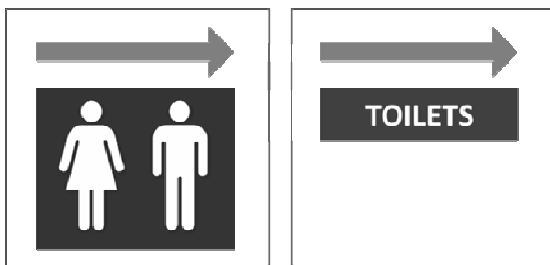


Figure-2

How graphic images evoke emotions?

Many a times an emotion is tied to a message. Such images are more likely to be understood by the audience than a message.

For example when a message with the emotion of fear is to be conveyed to the audience, the below image (Figure-3) acts very well with the situation. And the same written in a text form does not convey the emotion behind the message.



Figure-3

2. HISTORICAL METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

“In Historical age’s communications were based on the key concept of symbols. The oldest known symbols created for the purpose of communication were cave paintings, a form of rock art, dating to the Upper Palaeolithic age”. [4] In those times, messages are carved on stone pillars to communicate which was very efficient and easily understood by the era.

Every era develops a communication language to resonate the messages to their people. Visual language is one of the oldest language of communication which is being used between different range of people at global level for understanding.

3. USE OF GRAPHICS IN DAY-TO-DAY LIFE

In our day-to-day life we knowingly or unknowingly see graphics in the form of signages, advertisements, commercial hoardings, and so on. The most common problem is the increasing traffic in cities with larger risks of accidents and injury. This problem or risk is reduced through the use of proper graphical signages. But we do not pay attention or give appreciation to those graphics of traffic signals which help us in taking quick decisions during driving.

For example: In Figure-4, the signages for change in direction or flyover ahead makes the driver alert about the upcoming turns or change in road direction.

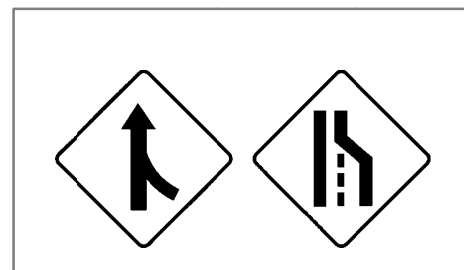


Figure-4

Figure-5, the Zebra crossing and the lane markings makes it easier to take decision while driving.

Zebra Crossing make it easier for people to cross the road safely.



Figure-5

In our daily office environments also we are able to complete the tasks efficiently if those are conveyed to us through some images. For example if in an architect’s office the design team gets some renovation project of a house. The team can

efficiently work on the project if the renovations are explained by the architect through graphics as shown in Figure-6.2 instead of verbally explaining these changes to the team.



Figure-6.1

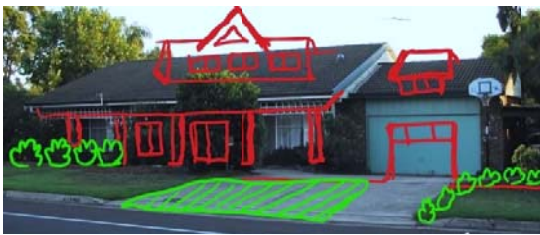


Figure-6.2.

“People following directions with illustrations do 323 percent better than those following text directions alone. People only remember 10 percent of what they hear after three days, but if a relevant image is paired with that same information, retention goes up to 65 percent.”[5] Here the team can see exactly what the architect is asking for and the work can be executed much faster with less misunderstanding.

4. EASY USE OF GRAPHICS

(Preparation of Manual, COATRC training, Pune) The book called “Small is Beautiful” by E.F. Schumacher is a message on the economic structure of western world. While preparing its manual, participants were asked to take out the crux of the book. In this particular book chapter-wise summarization has been done by the participants and also they have tried to evoke emotions from every chapter.

4.1 Chapter-1, Problems in Production

The first chapter speaks about the Problems in Production, Some of the points of summarization on which the graphic image has been developed are:

- “Modern man does not experience himself as a part of nature but as an outside force ready to dominate and conquer it”[6]. Author speaks about the battle between man and his illusion of having unlimited powers.
- “Winning the battle with nature is finding yourself on the losing side”. [6]
- Solving resources problem is creating other environmental and ecological problems.

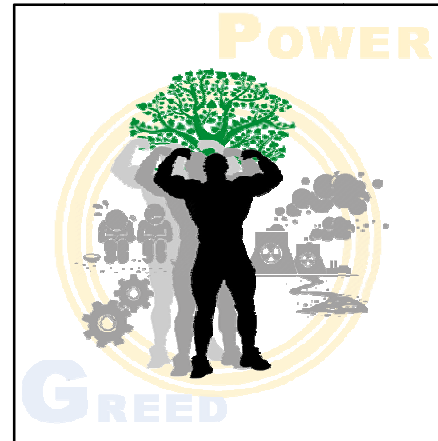


Figure-7

In this graphical representation (Figure-7), Problem for Production, A man with an illusion of having more power than nature is shown, accompanied by all the ecological problems faced due the increase in production. Also the emotions like POWER & GREED has been reflected through graphics which are evolved in man throughout this chapter.

4.2 Chapter-2, Development

In another Chapter “Development”, author has written about the emergence of dual economy and how the development should be a process of evolution. Author says: “It is not a matter of some people being rich and others being poor, both being utilised by a common way of life”. [6]

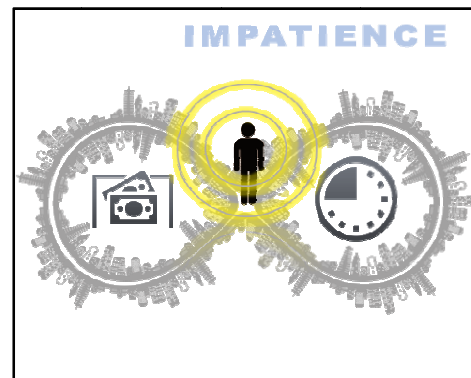


Figure-8

In this graphical representation (Figure-8), “Two different patterns of living as widely separated from each other as two different worlds”[6] are shown one being rich and other being poor, rich is graphically represented through money and poor with time. And these two people are shown in two different world but connecting in a loop to a common man who the author refers to as an ultimate source of any wealth. The emotion evoked here is IMPATIENCE of a man who wants development but don’t want to go through the lengthy process of evolution.

5. CONCLUSION

Graphics as an art of communicating among different environments and fields of education can prove to be the best suited technique of understanding things quickly. In order to interest different genre of audiences like clients, students, teachers, professionals, disables, individuals and children etc. graphical representations should be more frequently used to convey or convince your message among these audiences. In everyday reading process, one should try to learn to imagine the texts through graphics.

Graphic communication materials can serve as a motivational tool for students to continue their interest in learning new subjects. Teachers should create such graphical materials in their teaching like pictorial tables, words, concepts, ideas, posters to engage their students more in studies. Teachers should integrate their notes and knowledge in graphical representations to communicate visually with students. Such type of meaningful visuals can be a basic tool for studying a particular subject. Utilizing graphics in communicating with students can prove to be effective for studying and memorizing them during studies. This proper use of visual language can clear the misconceptions and give them a new meaning and experience while studying.

Communicating through graphics can actually be a new way of understanding things or making people understand your thoughts. Like Lateral thinking helps in solving problem using an indirect and creative approach, Graphical thinking can also make it easier to understand the meaning and find a new approach for a problem.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

In schools and colleges there should be a verbal and a visual relationship created by every teacher with their students. This simplicity in visuals will make their learning easier and interesting.

As an individual, one should start observing graphics around themselves. It will not only improve their observation skills but will also enhance their imaginative and creative side by allowing them to think graphically.

Book readers and academicians should start converting their topics or books into easy graphical manuals and notes which will help them understand the topic well and will help them explain it to others with clarity in the subject.

Communicating in Graphics is all about how you put in front of people your imagination, creativity, observation, understanding, with a meaningful twist in a medium of communication.

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