MOTION GRAPHICS APPLICATIONS: EXPLORING CONCEPTUAL LOGO DESIGN IN GHANA

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Abstract

The development of motion graphics techniques in the 20th Century has transformed the discipline of the static graphics industry. Logo designing in Ghana almost lacks a conceptual framework, therefore, this paper explores the use of motion graphics as a conceptual framework for logo designing. Through studio practice and critical observation, the study revealed the difficulty of local designers within the informal sector in producing conceptual logos for clients. Using a simple random technique, fifty (50) designers were selected from the printing and advertising firms in the Kumasi metropolis where the participants were taken through conceptual logo designing. The study established that designers need great background knowledge of the clients and their competitors in order to come out with conceptual logos that can bring out hidden messages for viewers to understand. This can only be achieved through careful design planning and execution. The study therefore recommends that the effective designing of a conceptual logo should include the conglomeration of visuals and text.

Keywords: Advertising, Conceptual logo, Design, Film, Motion Graphics

INTRODUCTION

Motion graphics could be considered essentially as graphics with movement. The development of motion graphics techniques in the 20th Century has transformed the discipline of the static graphics industry. The evolution and development of digital technology decades later brought the discipline to a much wider creative professional. Film studios pioneered the discipline in the 1950s using graphic designers to create film titles and logos among others.

Motion Graphics serves as a way of communicating with the viewer or the reader and provides in-depth information to the message. They are largely animated content which are used to create advertisements, the title sequence for movies, videos, and sharing of information (Ocula, 2016). However, it has not been used fully to assist in designing conceptual logos. More so   Logo designing in Ghana almost lacks a conceptual framework, therefore, this paper explores the use of motion graphic as a conceptual framework for logo designing. Through studio practice and critical observation, the study revealed the difficulty of local designers within the informal sector in producing conceptual logos for clients. Therefore the objective of this study seeks to assist a section of the Ghanaian motion graphic designers to gain the cognitive conceptual logo designing mindset. The other objective of this research is aimed at producing motion graphics as a resource for conceptual logo designing. In this study, the conceptual logos of six selected companies are used as a springboard to improve the designing skills of designers within the informal sector in Kumasi.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

In Kumasi, the second largest city in Ghana, there is a growing industry of graphic designers who are both formally and informally trained especially in designing and printing hubs in Asafo. These graphic artists provide services of visual communication to the public such as designing social activities invitation cards; signposts and other visual communication designing. A critical inquiry and observation revealed by the research team is the designing of conceptual logos for new companies and others who require new branding. Evidently, it seems that these graphic artists, more often, than those in the informal sector struggle to design acceptable conceptual logos for their clients. (Vallest, 2012) stated that using digital deceit to make a feeble logo design look effective is one of the simplest things to do, all designers need basically is Photoshop and just knowing the effects to use, but these types of logos will not stand the test of time, hence building of brand value will not be achieved. These inadequacies create a situation where the logos are unable to engage the viewer's mind simply because the concept does not reflect the brand value of the company.

One of the key identifiers within the field of designing and subsequently marketing is having a distinguished logo that gives you a clear identity over your competitors. Empirical studies have shown that logo plays a great deal of role in the world of business. They are visual representations that sets one company from the other. According to (Airey, 2009), logos bombard us of what to think of such as thinking of clothes labels, running shoes, TVs, and computers as an ever-present part of our daily routine. Peters, (1999, p. 41) acknowledged the prominence of a visually resilient logo: because humans think visually and a picture tells a million stories, recognizable images are associated with great brands with strong simple images that basically connect with customers. It also appears, that logos are a noticeable article of a varied collection of direct and indirect medium of communication reaching from packaging, advertising materials, letterheads, business and complementary cards.

Lidwell, (2016) suggested that the ARMM Model which stands for 'Attention, Response, Meaning and Memory' is an effective way to design logos. The authors further challenges designers to find the answers to 'why' a logo works instead of aesthetics and maintains that, "keep in mind that a logo need not employ all techniques to be successful. According to (McWade, 2005) employing one technique really well will do just fine in ensuring that people who see your logo, remember your logo". This idea of one technique per logo is shown in Figure 1 which includes logos such as Cable News Network (CNN), Cotton Incorporated, and American Dental Association (ADA). These examples listed here illustrate to an extent, some conceptual logos which the viewer must be able to engage with for some time to understand what these logos stands for. (Cabarga, 2004) is of the view that a logo is a specific design with unique characteristics made as a corporate "signature".

Motion Graphics have been a great resource for designing. (Margalit, 2015) argues that the human brain processes a video 60,000 times faster than text. Your cognitive system has to do a lot of work when reading an editorial as compared to viewing a video, similarly,

(Hooper & Hannafin, 1988) opined that it is better to recall and retain a piece of information presented in both text and pictures than text alone.

Figure 1. Conceptual logo designs (Source: McWade, 2005)

METHOD

The study adopted qualitative methods of research. Adopting the qualittive research approach, a purposive sampling method was used for the study. Therefore a mixed method approach which involves studio-based experimental design and purposive random sampling was used to establish the levels of design skill and knowledge of designers within the research scope of the Asafo Printing and Advertisement community. This township within the Kumasi municipality is well noted for the designing of posters, banners, logos, and anything related to visual communication. This advertising community has several companies involved in the design process. The research team visited these selected companies within the study area and participated in their design processes. Using a simple random technique, 50 participants (designers) were randomly selected from 20 companies within this printing and advertising township who were engaged in practical conceptual logo designing.This activity created a fertile ground for good interactions and rapport building between the research team and the designers. In this regard, they were willing to share their challenges and issues regarding their design processes.

Sensitization and Brainstorming

The project team interacted with the participants to understand their level of knowledge in terms of using motion graphics in designing conceptual logos. The two overarching research questions were posed to them as a way of sensitizing their minds on reading hidden messages behind conceptual logos and using motion graphics to design conceptual logos. The sensitization and brainstorming led to the understanding of their skills in design. It was obvious that all the participants had knowledge of some levels of software such as Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Photoshop and others that can be used in designing conceptual logos. Having brainstormed, the participants were given a chance to design a logo for a company. The following was revealed through their works:

1. Clients' Unique Selling Preposition was not considered
2. They do not consider the 5 principles of good logo designing
3. They do not follow any design process stages

     With such findings, the works produced by them did not tell or give much information about the companies in which the logos were produced for. They were made to understand that a logo has a good role of giving much information about the unique selling propositions of the company as well as being innovative, therefore, it helps distinguishes the products or services from similar competitors (Aakar, 1991), and help surpass global borders and blockades because logos basically communicate visually (Kohli et al., 2002). In this vein, several roughs and comprehensive drawings which included designing of the various characters that represents a company's brand. Together with the participants, a graphic motion was developed as a resource for conceptual logo designing. In all, the execution of the project took 8 weeks to complete.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Understanding the Concepts of Conceptual Logos
     To understand what goes into conceptual logo designing, selected logos were studied and discussed to serve as a springboard for their own concept generation and designing. The first stage described the plan of the work. The second stage focused on the discussion of conceptual logos in a video format. First, many decisions were made on issues about the creation of an inspirational education video for teaching conceptual logo designs. The selection of the logos was based on popularity and hidden messages embedded in them. The following logos were studied:

1. **Amazon** has used numerous logos over the years. The present logo depicts the outright message that they sell anything from A to Z. The arrow below the watermark envisages the smile the customer of the company would experience by shopping on the website.

Figure 2. Amazon logo
(Source: www.google.com)

2. **Baskin Robbins** Ice Cream Parlours were introduced by Burt Baskins and Irv Robbins. Baskin Robbins is widely famous for its 31 flavours "slogan". The current logo which was unveiled in 2007 showcases the number 31 in pink that represents the 31 flavours which is innovatively placed between the B and R of the logo (Heugel, 2019).

Figure 3. Baskin Robbins logo
(Source: https://www.doordash.com/business/baskin-robbins-12970/)

3. On the surface, there is not much going on with FedEx's iconic logo. It is just the name of the company in two different colours. But if you look at the gap formed between the letters 'E' and 'x', you will see a hidden arrow in the negative space. The arrow signifies the company's forward-thinking, delivery accuracy, speed of service, and outlook toward the future (Heugel, 2019).

Figure 4. FedEx logo
(Source: http://logodatabases.com/fedex-logo.html/federal-express-logo)

4. **Wikipedia** without any doubt, is one of the most frequently used sites and its globe logo is well recognized among users. The wiki globe is made up of jigsaw puzzles inscribed with letters from various written systems. But why is it unfinished? It is to denote that, data gathering is ever unending and essentially the fact that Wikipedia is a work in progress (Vesey-Byrne and Zatat, 2017).

Figure 5. Wikipedia logo
(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_logo)

5. **Gillette's** logo is a very interesting one indeed. The story behind the sharp 'G' and 'I' is that it explains the sharpness and precision of Gillette products.

Figure 6. Gillette logo
(Source: http://news.gillette.com/logo/gillette-logo)

6. The **Adidas** logo has changed over time, but it's always included three stripes. The current configuration is three stripes at an angle which together form a triangle. This conceptualizes a mountain, representing the struggles athletes must endure to achieve greatness (Heugel, 2019).

Figure 7. Adidas logo
(Source: https://www.twentytwowords.com/adidas)

Story Board

Shown below (Figures 8 and 9) are the story board used in this video from the beginning to the end which runs for 5 minutes 45 seconds. This follows the rule that educational video should be made to run for at least within 10 minutes.
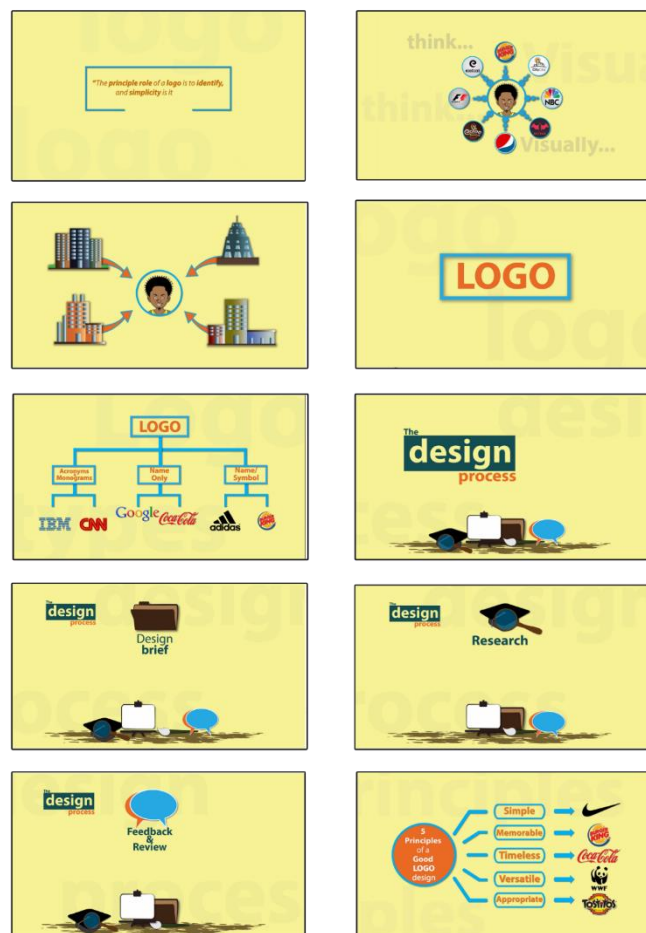
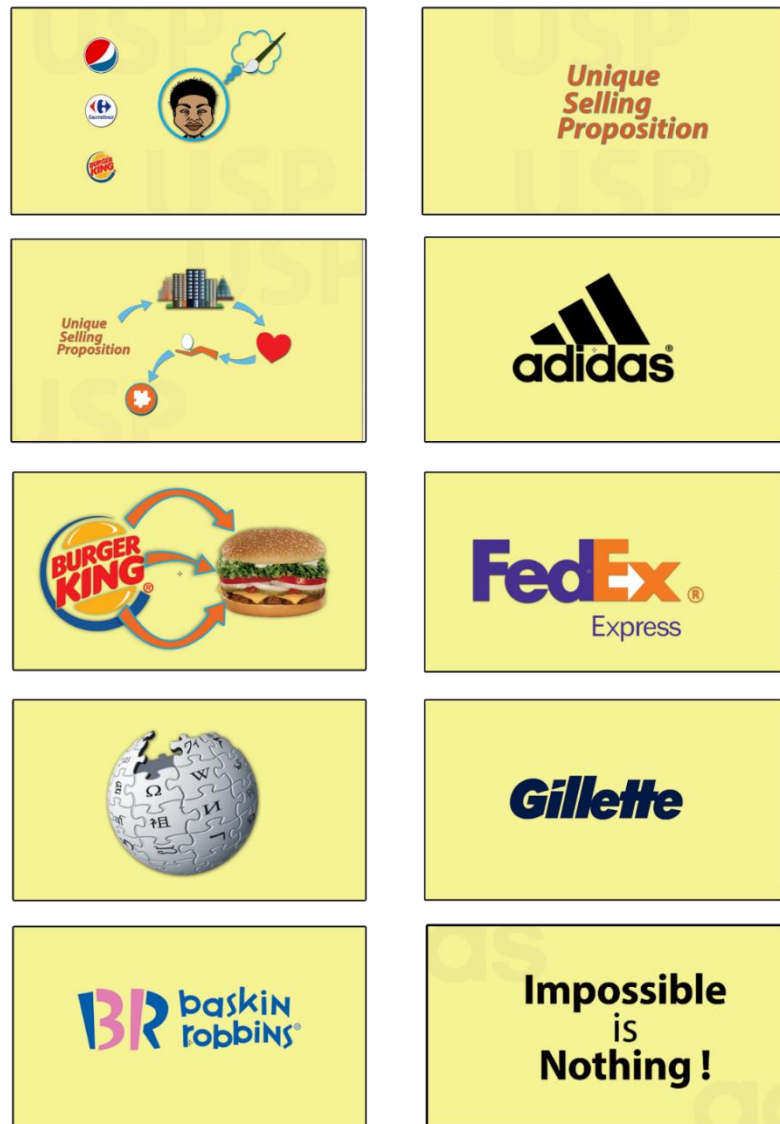

Figure 8. First part of storyboard in the video

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Figure 9. Second part of storyboard in the video

Creating the Graphic Motion

Aristotil, (2016) argued that, "First, have a definite, clear practical ideal; a goal, an objective. Secondly, have a the necessary means to achieve your ends; wisdom, money, material, and methods. Thirdly, adjust all your means to that end."

The project execution included the 3P's in production (Dubitsky, 2018) which are the pre-production stage, production, and the post-production stage. The project had all the graphical illustrations done in Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Photoshop, while the main animation was done using Adobe After Effects. A lot of deliberations were taken as to how the final work was to be executed at this stage, which included, thumbnail sketches, mind maps, and organization.

There were thorough discussions in relation to the choice of colour, layout, rendering techniques typography, principles of animation, elements, and principles of design.

Legibility comes first, style or visual appeal second, Ko, (2015), so the typeface agreed by the participants was the Myriad Pro which according to the participants, was very clear and easy to read. The participants again settled on blue, orange, bluish green and yellow colors because they complement each other (Merrill, 1983; Merrill & Bunderson, 1979).

Principles of animation like the squash and stretch, timing, and anticipation were not left out. In all these, the participants were made to understand that the clients colour and brand has an influence in the choice of colours, font type and overall design. Fig. 10 shows visualisation of ideas in Adobe Illustrator.
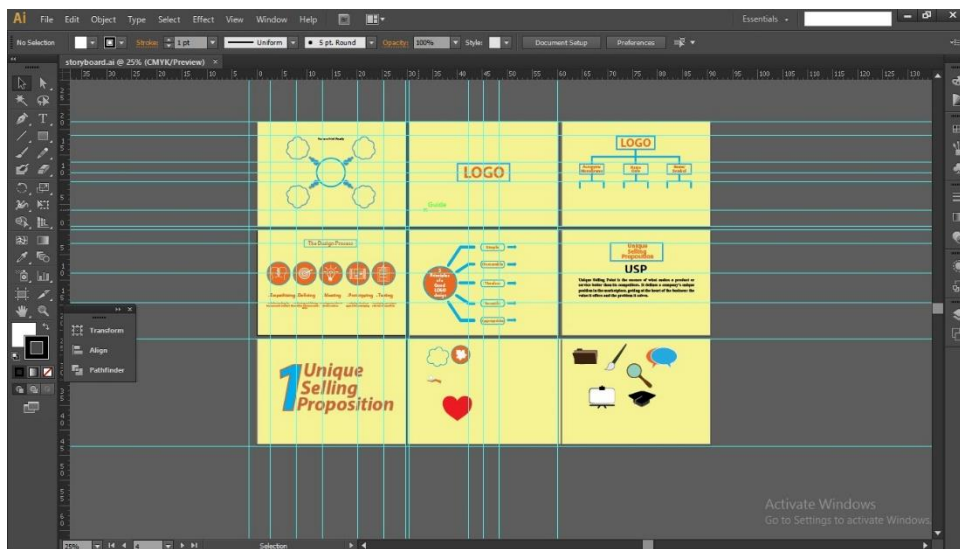

Figure 10: Visualisation of ideas in Adobe illustrator

Production Stage and Layout

The production stage was mainly the execution of the main project. The production stage started from here, because screen design plays important role as gaining attention in Gagne's events of instructional model which aids as the internal cognitive structure that formulates the platform for learning (Taylor, 1992), and it also has a vital role to play when it comes to information delivery (Snetsigner, 1993). Layout plays a significant role when it comes to designing on the screen. The art of the design and orderly formation (organization) of the various visual elements within specified dimensions is to communicate. On screen, the visual elements are mobile, and the eye is focused, moreover, viewers don't read, but rather, they scan (Dondis, 1973). According to Dondis, (1973) "The eye is constantly scanning the environment in pursuit of the many methods it has for absorbing visual information". The layout indicates where viewers/users need to look first. Therefore, the levelling of certain elements like animated characters in the video was deployed. This offered no visual surprise, which is considered totally harmonious.

Furthermore, asymmetrical type of balance came into the composition, with regards to the positioning of certain elements. It tends to be more informal. Also, some elements like the characters and fonts too were deliberately placed ambiguously. This type of placement was used in certain aspect of the video just to let the eye struggle a bit to analyze the

components as to their balance, not forgetting the rule of thirds (Thurston and Grigonis, 2018).Alignment was no exception. The visual elements have coordinated placement, so they are easy to scan and appear orderly. In addition, certain elements were placed at the top left-hand side of the screen and other elements were also positioned at the lower area of the visual field to minimize visual stress because, by the elemental relationships to the structural map, the eye favours the left-hand and the lower area of any visual field, and other elements too were placed at the top-right of the screen to cause surprise known as sharpening, for the reason that, according to Dondis, (1973), "the power of the predictability pales before the power of surprise". Fig. 11 shows layout in Adobe AfterEffects.

Figure 11: Layout in Adobe After Effects

Legibility comes first, style or visual appeal second (Orr, et al., 1994) so, deliberations were made as to what kind of typeface would best suit the research. Therefore, the project team and participant settled on the Myriad pro, which essentially, had a large family to choose from, and, for the sake of consistency. Larger font size was used for attracting readers and to lay emphasis. In fact, uppercase letters from the family of Myriad pro, were used in certain circumstances because, according to Ko, (2015), legibility comes first, style or visual appeal second, therefore, participants sought to lay emphasis on certain words, moreover, uppercase letters represent conservative, and give a feeling of formality while lowercase letters represent friendliness and down-to-earth as seen on fig. 12.

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Figure 12: Myriad Pro typeface family

Animation of characters

While there is a clear dissimilarity between human character animation and motion graphic designs, the twelve principles of animation are pertinent across these methods (Kensworthyy, 1993; Kohli et al., 2002). Again, Pannafino, (2015) emphasizes that, while there is a clear dissimilarity between human character animation and motion graphic designs, the twelve principles of animation are pertinent across these methods. With regards to the animation of characters and graphics, the research therefore agreed to implement some of the principles of animation to make the characters and graphics in the various scenes feel alive.

The squash and stretch principle, gave the characters a sense of weight and volume. Timing is an essential aspect, because, it helped in establishing personality of the characters and graphics in the various scenes, and the 'emotions' they express. Also, anticipation principle happens in three parts; the preparation for the action, the action itself, and the termination of action. Therefore, the anticipation principle was deployed to some of the characters to set the audience up for an action that is about to happen. Adobe after effect was used in the entire animation process as seen on fig. 13.

Audio and Voice Recording

According to Orr et al., (1994) research data, find it easier to complete lessons which use audio widely to present information so with this fact, voice over script was drafted, recorded and used to give more meaning to the animation itself not forgetting about the

background music which was scored in some sections of the video. Background music was scored and added to the video (as shown in Fig. 14) to break boredom.
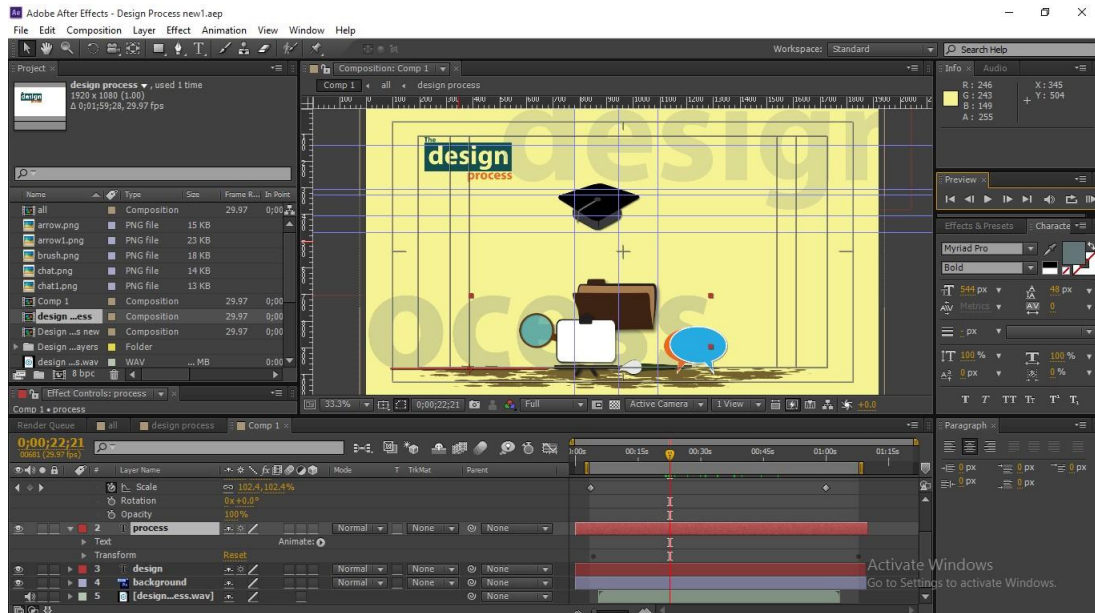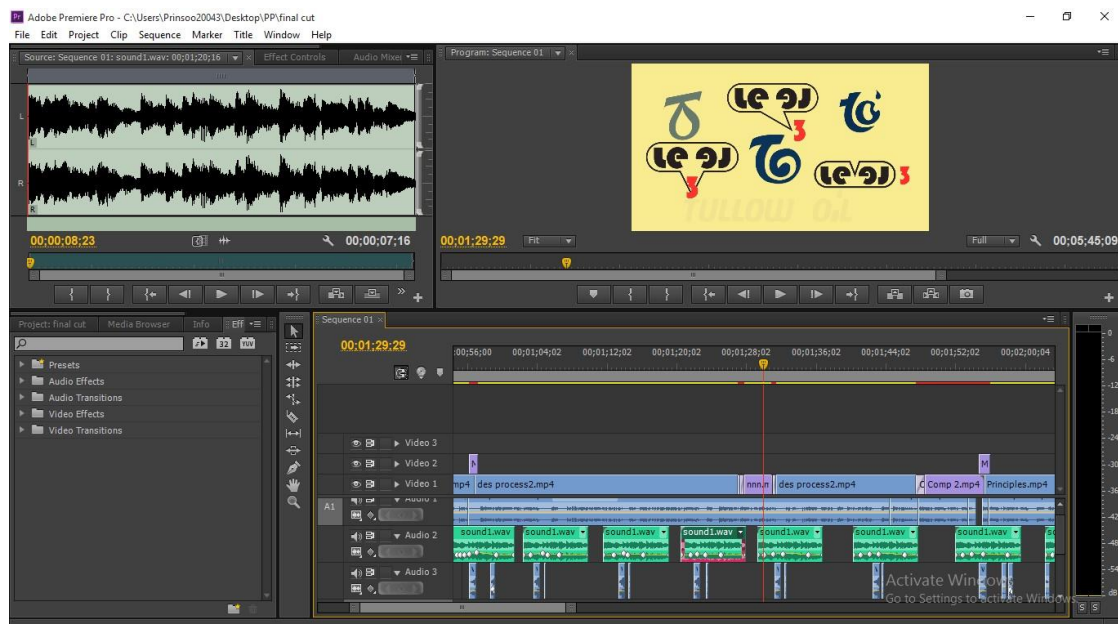

Figure 13: Animating in Adobe After Effects

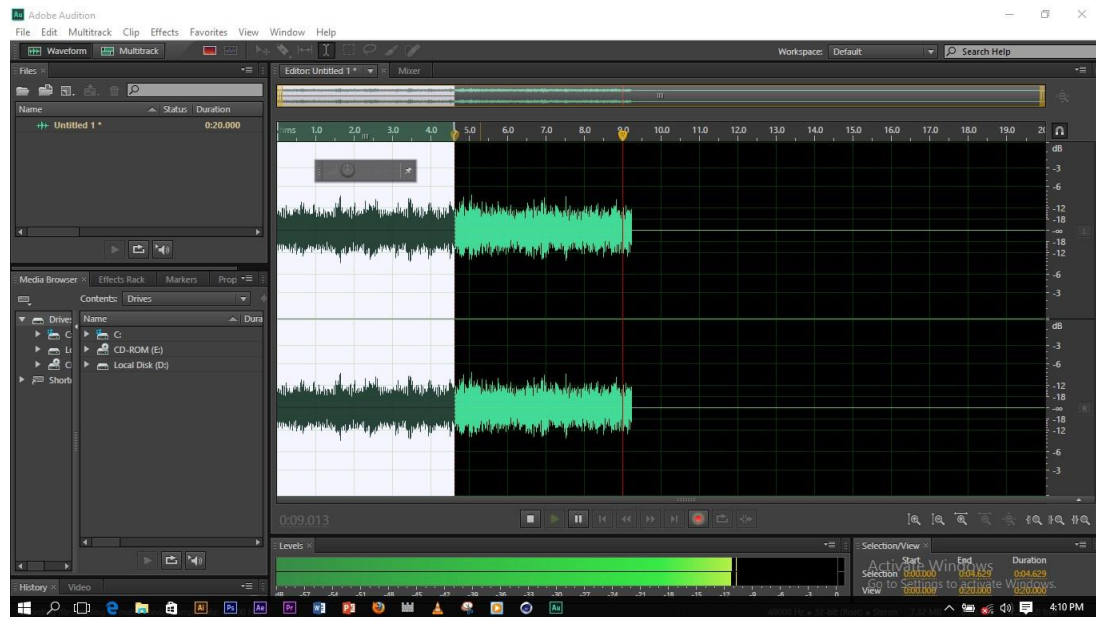

Figure 14: Scoring of background music

Figure 15: Recording of voice over sound with Adobe Audition

POST-PRODUCTION

Orr, et al., (1994) opined that, students find it easier to complete lessons which use audio extensively to present information and also, Wright, (1993) emphasized that, the combination of visual presentation with audio explanation delivers information in an easily understood format. This is the stage where all the post production editing of videos and sounds were exicuted. This included the scoring of music at the background and the editing of voice over to synchronize with the animation of characters and graphics. Since the various animated graphics were done separately, this stage provided the research the opportunity to edit and make meaning to the bits and pieces of the various visuals by using the Adobe Premiere Pro, arriving at a five minutes duration of animation.
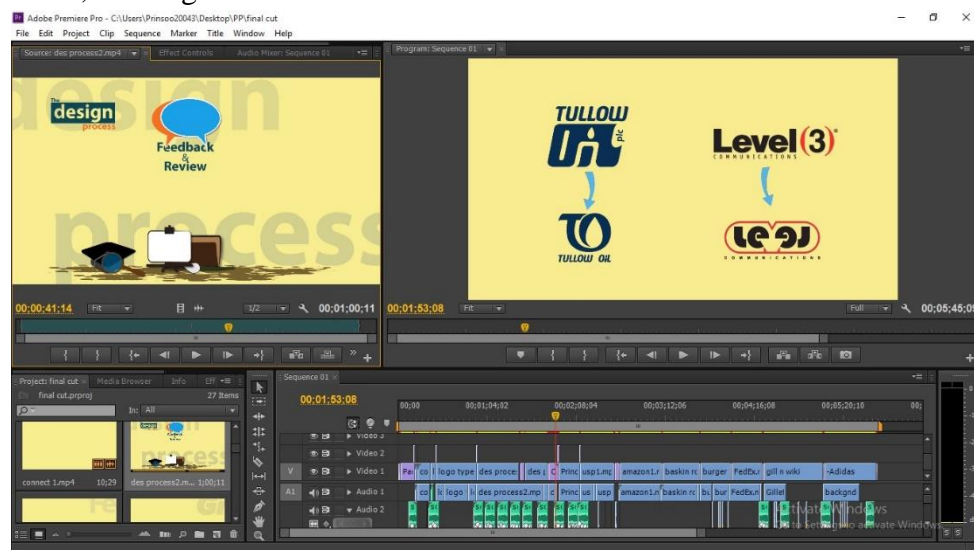

Figure 16: Editing in Premiere Pro

CREATING THE CONCEPTUAL LOGOS
Understanding the Design Process Stages

Humans think visually, so, companies try as much as possible to distinguish their brand from other similar competitors and connect effectively with their customers through the "LOGO" design. Logos can be classified into 3 main categories;

1. The Acronyms and Monograms make use of the first letters of a company's name.
   Like IBM and CNN.
2. The Name Only logo uses only the company's name.
   Examples Google and Coca Cola.
3. Name/Symbol logos combines the company's name and a symbol.
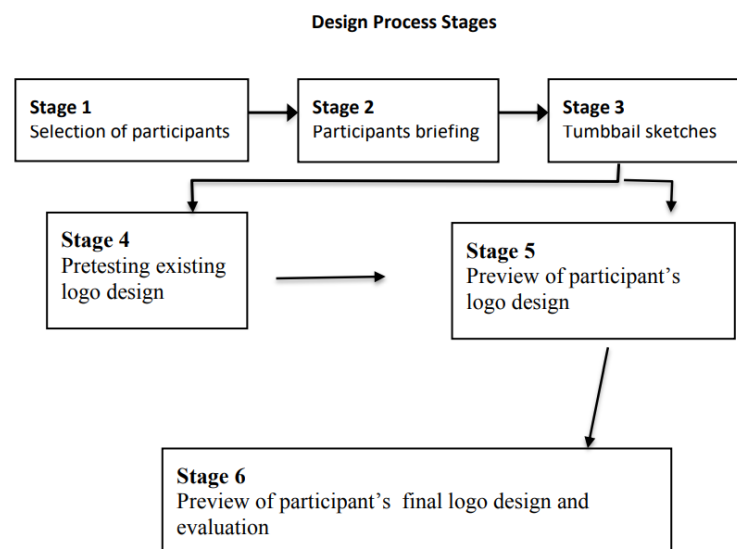   Like the Adidas and the Burger King.

Figure 17: The Design Process Stages

The participants were made to understand the design process stages as shown through discussion. One of the key process is the design brief which requires the designer to get enough information needed for the design because, great creative projects starts with a great design brief (Crowley, 2007). This information is generally supplied by the clients. However, the designer must ask very good questions to illicit good feedback. The next is further research on the client and available competitors (DeFelice, 2019). This is very crucial to inform the designer on how to create a distinguish identity that can attract customers. The further research on the clients and competitors should lead to brainstorming and the flow of ideas for designing. The next is feedback and review and then the final stage is presentation. When the designer had finalized the design and the client is happy with the resulting logo, it's time for a formal presentation to your client. The participants were made to understand in addition to the design process stages, the 5 principles of good logo design namely; Simple, Memorable, Timeless, Versatile and Appropriateness.

Creating their Own and Response

In demonstrating the knowledge acquired through the interactions and assisting them produ e designs that are more acceptable to clients and significant branding required a more significant in-depth understanding of their creative levels and production procedures. Since these designers had worked within the field over the years, manipulation of the softwares and other tools was not much of a problem. This confirms the third assumption of Knowles that prior experience in the field is very good for developing the skills and thinking (Knowles et al., 2005). They were able to overturn in producing designs that brands companies. Comments from these designers clearly point to the fact that there is hope for the development of new branding products and sustainability of the industry. The designers were reluctant to co-operate but a new twist to designing and acceptance motivated them to improve. They became very expressive at the end of the training. There is the fostering of active interest in the creation of new products when such skilled people are introduced to new vistas (Nortey and Bodjawah, 2017). Another interesting finding was that it was clearly in sight that the designers have gotten more interested in the new design concepts and have further shared ideas amongst themselves and their clients. More market-favourable works are being produced by designers when they are exposed to wider design thinking. This findings is in line with Hargrove, (2012) in relation to the training of artisans to explore their cognitive processes in a systematic way which helps them in managing their own creative thought processes and develop their metacognitive knowledge.
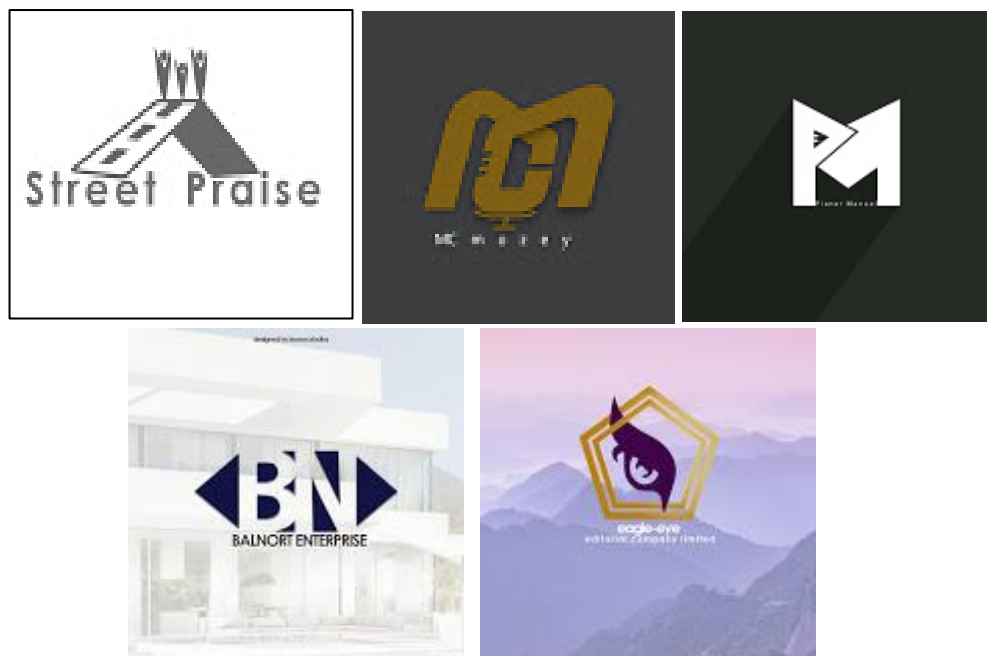

Figure 18: Editing in Premiere Pro

CONCLUSION

The results of this project point to the fact that humans are influenced by both visuals and texts. The creation of graphic motion Taylor, (1992) has recognized video is better used

for wider, intellectual material, possibly with an emotional appeal, video is not the best medium for presenting very detailed information. Audio-visual which is one of the forms of multimedia, conveys information through two concurrent sensory channels: auditory and pictorial. It often uses numerous presentation methods, such as oral and illustrative representations in the case of on-screen print and closed-captioning (Mayer, 2001).

Studies by Spaeth, (2002) has shown that, one in fifty companies will redesign their logos designs within a year, and at a substantial cost. Due to the substantial cost involved in the creation of logos every time, it is expedient that several factors be included in providing a logo that will go and stand out for years to come.

It is evidently clear that graphic motions can be a great resource for conceptual logo designing. The study has shown that designers need great background knowledge of the client and its competitors in to come out with conceptual logos that can bring out hidden messages for viewers to understand. This can only be achieved through careful design planning and execution. The effective designing of a conceptual logo includes the conglomeration of both visuals and texts.

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