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A SYSTEMATIC SCOPING INVESTIGATION OF CROSS-CULTURAL VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN.

Meghan Kelly
2012

Submitted to the Faculty of Art and Design,
in conjunction with the Monash Research Graduate School,
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in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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December 2012
Statement of original authorship

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Abstract

Designers are increasingly engaged in cross-cultural visual communication design. To date there has been limited literature to support this area of practice. The literature that is available is diverse and conflicting, drawn from an array of disciplines. Currently positions in this research field can be found through investigations of cultural studies, business and marketing, communication, advertising, psychology and branding studies, including the newly emerging discipline of place branding.

Constructing a foundation for making sense of the information forms a considerable part of this research, allowing for the identification of the broad advice in the literature advising designers who work in cross-cultural design practice. This thesis will provide a guiding framework to analyse the information gathered and forms a scoping analysis of the issues associated with the expanding area of design. This document breaks down the considerations specific to cross-cultural visual communication and through extensive research examines the areas of concern. The complexity of the investigation has been framed using a structure of three sections: the transmitter, the signal and the receiver. Within this architecture, three aspects in particular have emerged from the analysis: firstly, the issues associated with the origin of the designers when it is different from the culture of the recipient; secondly, the impact the presence of stereotypes in the signal have on the reception of the design; and finally, the impact of the recipient on the acceptance of the design in cross-cultural visual communication based on the aesthetic qualities of the design and its success in communicating.

In order to further explore this emergent field, this thesis will include in the investigation an analysis of industry practice in a parallel field, place branding. Cross-cultural design demands, by virtue of its practice to design across countries, more detailed attention to the recipient. This research will argue that place branding provides important information on the changing dynamics of message reception and the problems associated with multiple recipients. Important considerations include issues of identity creation, power struggles in representation and the difficulties in constituting a coherent and acceptable visual identity for a culture in a globalized context.

Clarification of these issues will be provided using the results of an extensive international cross-cultural design research project conducted internationally with participants from nine universities. In this research I test the discoveries of the literature review and identify important
considerations specific to cross-cultural visual communication design with each area of the basic communication process; transmitter, signal and recipient. Firstly, in regards to the role of the transmitter, a bias exists in the reception of the design based on the presumed cultural background of the transmitter. In particular, in the design solutions liked or considered successful, the origin of the designer was assumed to be from the same cultural background as the recipient. The origin of the transmitter, and whether they exist inside or outside of the culture of the recipient, is problematic when recipients use this as a means to express their dissatisfaction with the design. Secondly, in regards to the role of the signal, designers resolved the design submissions taking a themed approach and stereotypical imagery, an essential component in the understanding of the design by the recipient, is commonly evident in the design submissions. In the absence of stereotypical imagery, the recipient did not respond favourably to the design. Finally, in regards to the role of the recipient, an emotional connection was required for the recipient to consider the design highly. This was achieved when there was a strong relationship between the success in communication, the presence of stereotypical imagery and a strong aesthetic appeal in the design. Evident was the strong interlinking of each of the three components informed by the dynamic of message reception.

The results of this scoping research and the international cross-cultural design research project offer clear guidance for designers through all stages of the communication process providing better understanding of the anticipated response to design solutions in a cross-cultural context. Not only can this framework be applied in professional practice, it identifies, for the first time, a structure to the information that could be used in further studies with a focus on the specific concerns associated with cross-cultural visual communication designers.
# Table of Contents

List of Tables  
List of Figures  
List of Abbreviations

## Chapter 1. Introduction  
1.1 Background to research  
1.2 Document Structure

## Chapter 2. Literature Review and Industry Examples  
2.1 Transmitter  
2.1.1 Introduction  
2.1.2 The designer as a cultural intermediary  
2.1.3 Global design approach vs. cultural design approach  
2.1.4 Cultural appropriation  
2.1.5 Case Study: Melbourne City Council  
2.1.6 Conclusion  
2.2 Signal  
2.2.1 Introduction  
2.2.2 Role of the signal  
2.2.3 Cultural stereotypes  
2.2.4 Signals for Australia  
2.2.5 Case Study: Australia Unlimited and Sydney 2000 Olympics Games  
2.2.6 Conclusion  
2.3 Recipient  
2.3.1 Introduction  
2.3.2 Success in communication versus aesthetic appeal  
2.3.3 Corporate branding: British Airways and BHP Billiton  
2.3.4 Place branding  
2.3.5 Creating place branding images: Practice  
2.3.6 Creating place branding images: Theory  
2.3.7 Conclusion  
2.4 Literature Review Conclusion: Guiding Questions
Chapter 3. International Cross-Cultural Design

Project Overview 110

3.1 Introduction 111
3.2 Methodology 113
3.3 Project Limitations 117
3.4 Research Procedure 120
  3.4.1 The Design Stage 120
  3.4.2 The Review Stage 124
  3.4.3 Ethical Considerations 127
3.5 Project Submissions 128
3.6 Second Research Project: Deakin University 135

Chapter 4. Cross-Cultural Design Research Project Results 136

4.1 Outcomes Overview 137
4.2 Transmitter 139
  4.2.1 Identification of the origin of the designer 140
    (i) Submissions for Australia 140
    (ii) Submissions for Brazil 143
    (iii) Varying degrees of commitment identifying the origin of the designer 145
    (iv) Shift in opinion 147
  4.2.2 The number options influenced results 148
    (i) Turkish outcomes 148
    (ii) United State of America outcomes 149
    (iii) Second research project outcomes 150
    (iv) Internet influences 151
  4.2.3 Misrepresentations 154
    (i) Influence of misrepresented images 154
    (ii) Ndebele patterning 155
    (iii) Nelson Mandela 156
  4.2.4 Contribution to the field of knowledge 158
4.3 Signal 161
  4.3.1 Designer’s approach 162
    (i) Pantone Swatch Theme 163
    (ii) Blood Running in Veins Theme 165
    (iii) Footwear Theme 167
    (iv) Multiple Image Theme 169
(v) 'Take a look is there heaven' Theme 171
(vi) Collage Theme 172
(vii) Variations in response to the same theme 173
(viii) Perceptions change with further information 176
(ix) Lingo Theme 178
(x) Isolated Images 179

4.3.2 Use of stereotypical imagery 180
(i) Native Animal Submissions for Australia 182
(ii) Humorous Submissions for Australia 184
(iii) Iconic Structures for Australia 185
(iv) Indigenous Themed Submissions for Australia 186
(v) Patriotic Themed Submissions for Australia 187
(vi) Brazilian Submissions cited as Stereotypical 188
(vii) Other Country Submissions cited as Stereotypical 191
(viii) Incorrect Stereotypes 193
(ix) Second Research Project Stereotypes 195
(x) Negative Stereotypes 198
(xi) Second Research Project outcomes 203

4.3.3 Contribution to the field of knowledge 205

4.4 Recipient 207

4.4.1 Success in communication 208
(i) Australian submissions cited as successful in communication 209
(ii) Brazilian submissions cited as successful in communication 212
(iii) Other country submissions cited as successful in communication 213
(iv) Blood Running in Veins Theme 217
(v) Unity Theme 218
(vi) Face Flag Theme 219
(v) Festival Theme 220
(vi) Sports Theme 222
(vii) Singular recognition of success in communication 223
(viii) Second research project submissions cited as successful in communication 225
(ix) Cultural interpretations 228

4.4.2 Interrelationship between the results 230
(i) Success in communication and stereotypical imagery 230
(ii) Aesthetic appeal and success in communication 232
(iii) Australia 233
Chapter 5. Conclusions and Implications 246

5.1  Conclusion 247
5.2  Guiding Questions 251
5.3  Implications for Practice 258

Reference List 262

Appendices 275

Appendix A  Human Ethics Approval 275
  1. Monash University Approval 2006/847 275
  2. Monash University Request and Amendment Approval 2006/847 276
  3. Richards Henderson Consent 277
  4. Natalie Woolcock Consent 278
Appendix B  Australian Review Sheet Sample 279
Appendix C  Sample Design Brief 281
Appendix D  Conference Presentation 284
Appendix E  Disk Attached 285

Part A  First Research Project: Eight contributing countries Design Submissions Email Correspondence Sample Review Forms Spread Sheet Data of Research Outcomes

Part B  Second Research Project: Australia and Norway Design Submissions Sample Review Forms Spread Sheet Data of Research Outcomes
## List of Tables

### Chapter 2: Literature Review and Industry Examples

| Table 2.1 | Destination Brand Benefit Pyramid (Morgan, Pritchard et al. 2004, p.71) | 101 |
| Table 2.2 | Brand Benefits Pyramid (Baker 2007, p.111) | 102 |

### Chapter 4: Cross-Cultural Design Research Project Results

| Table 4.3 | Correctly identified origin of the designer | 139 |
| Table 4.4 | Australian participant results identifying the origin of the designer in the top ten aesthetically appealing design solutions | 140 |
| Table 4.5 | Brazilian participant results identifying the origin of the designer in the top ten aesthetically appealing design solutions | 143 |
| Table 4.6 | Turkish participant results identifying the origin of the designer in the top ten aesthetically appealing design solutions | 148 |
| Table 4.7 | United States of American participant results identifying the origin of the designer in the top ten aesthetically appealing design solutions | 150 |
| Table 4.8 | Stereotypes present in submissions | 181 |
| Table 4.9 | Table of stereotypes present in submissions for Australia | 181 |
| Table 4.10 | Content of postcard imagery cited as stereotypical by Brazilian recipients | 188 |
| Table 4.11 | Percentage of images cited as successful in communication | 208 |
| Table 4.12 | Percentage of images cited as successful in communication (Australia and Norway) | 225 |
| Table 4.13 | Comparison of statistics for success in communication and stereotypes present | 230 |
| Table 4.14 | The number of submissions rated in both categories: Success in communication and Aesthetic appeal. | 232 |
| Table 4.15 | Images positioned on Bill Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid | 239 |
| Table 4.16 | Cross-cultural visual communication approach based on Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid. | 243 |

### Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

| Table 5.17 | Design Risk Table | 258 |
| Table 5.18 | Defining Highly Regarded Design Solutions | 260 |
List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

Figure 1.1  Schematic diagram of a general communication system (Shannon and Weaver 1949, p.5). 8
Figure 1.2  Shannon and Weaver’s basic theory of communication reinterpreted by Meggs (1992, p.3). 8
Figure 1.3  Newcomb’s 1953 Model of communication A-B-X System (1990, p.33) 9

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Industry Examples

Figure 2.4  Left, Saki Mafundikwa, Logo for the Black Documentary Collective, New York, 2002 (Caban 2004, p.37) 21
Figure 2.5  Right, Saki Mafundikwa, Logo for the 4th Zimbabwe International Film Festival, 2001 (Caban 2004, p.37) 21
Figure 2.6  Chaz Maviyane-Davies, Christmas card for the British Council based on the ‘Three Wise Women’, 1992 (Caban 2004, p.38) 22
Figure 2.7  Halim Choueiry, Poster reflecting the typographic prose and poetry used by truck drivers as a form of prayer (Caban 2004, p.144) 22
Figure 2.8  Examples of Blissymbolics symbols (B.C.I. 2004) 25
Figure 2.9  Icons Tested for Calcium, McDonald’s Restaurant Nutrition Information Initiative (Hoffmann 2007, p.11) 26
Figure 2.10  Final Icon Solutions, McDonald’s Restaurant Nutrition Information Initiative (Hoffmann 2007, p.7) 26
Figure 2.11  Road Sign, Argentina, Demonstration of Road Signs (Jean 2004) 27
Figure 2.12  Road Sign, Australia, Demonstration of Road Signs (Jean 2004) 27
Figure 2.13  Road Sign, China, Demonstration of Road Signs (Jean 2004) 27
Figure 2.14  Blue Mountains, New South Wales, Bathroom Signage (Kelly 2006) 28
Figure 2.15  ‘Tools’ image solution for Mix06, Monash University, Melbourne (Kelly 2006) 32
Figure 2.16  Landor Associates, City of Melbourne Logo, 2009 (Lahey 2009) 34
Figure 2.17  OMG! WTF? (Chase and Galley 2010, p.19) 36
Figure 2.18  FHA Image Design, Sydney 2000 Olympic Games Image Guidelines (SOCOG 1998, p.04.04.03) 38
Figure 2.19  Tibor Kalman, Colors Magazine Issue 4, ‘Race’ cover, 1993, (Lazere 1999) 58
Figure 2.20  Justy Phillips and Dr Margaret Woodward, *The way life should be* (Phillips and Dr Woodward 2010) 63
Figure 2.21  Travis Price, *The Epiphany* (Price 2000). 64
Figure 2.22  Re, a division of M&C Saatchi, Australia Unlimited Logo, 2010 (Kinsey 2010) 67
Figure 2.23  Michael Bryce and FHA Image Design, Sydney Olympic Logo Design, 1996 (Wheeler 2006, p.41) 68
Figure 2.24  FHA Image Design, Sydney Olympic Bid Logo Design, 1992 (Wikipedia 2010) 69
Figure 2.25  Landor Associates, British Airways Original Logo, 1984 (Carter 1989, p.42) 79
Figure 2.26  Newell & Sorrell, British Airways ‘Speedmark’, 1997 (Airey 2008) 79
Figure 2.27  Newell & Sorrell, British Airways Livery Application (Pie 2004, p.149) 80
Figure 2.28  Newell & Sorrell, British Airways Livery Application (Pie 2004, p.84) 80
Figure 2.29  Newell & Sorrell, British Airways Livery Application (Gruére and Morel 1991, p.13) 81
Figure 2.30  Designer Unknown, BHP logo, (SeekLogo.com 2008) 83
Figure 2.31  FutureBrand, BHP Billiton Logo, 2001 (FutureBrand 2009) 83
Figure 2.32  Enterprise IG, GLAAD Logo (Underconsideration 2010) 83
Figure 2.33  Scotland The Brand logo, 1997 (British Embassy Brussels 2010) 89
Figure 2.34  M&C Saatchi, City of Auckland logo, 2008 (AucklandPlus 2009) 91
Figure 2.35  M&C Saatchi, Application examples of the City of Auckland logo, 2008 (AucklandPlus 2009) 91
Figure 2.36  Lloyd Northover, City of Belfast logo and application, 2008 (Belfast City Council 2009) 92
Figure 2.37  Lloyd Northover, City of Belfast logo and application, 2008 (Belfast City Council 2009) 92
Figure 2.38  Finch, 08 Liverpool European Capital of Culture Logo (Liverpool City Council 2008) 95
Figure 2.39  Atalanta Glasgow, *Glasgow: Scotland With Style* logo, 2004 (Atalanta Glasgow 2010) 97
Figure 2.40  Atalanta Glasgow, *Glasgow: Scotland With Style* logo, 2004 (Atalanta Glasgow 2010) 97
Figure 2.41  M&C Saatchi, 100% Pure New Zealand, 1999 (CreativeRoots 2011) 98
Figure 2.42  Jim Dean, Auckland Council Logo, 2010 (Auckland Council 2012) 99
Figure 2.43  Jim Dean, Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development Logo, 2010 (Auckland Council 2012) 99
Figure 2.44  (Left) Jim Dean, Auckland Council Logo, 2010
(Television New Zealand Limited 2010) 99
Figure 2.45  (Right) Tony Oliver, Auckland Regional Council (ARC) Parks Logo, 1985
(Television New Zealand Limited 2010) 99

Chapter 3: Cross-Cultural Design Research Project Overview

Figure 3.46  Cross-cultural Design Project, Compiling books (Kelly 2006) 122
Figure 3.47  Cross-cultural Design Project, Completed books (Kelly 2006) 122
Figure 3.48  Cross-cultural Design Project, Complete set of 16 books (Kelly 2006) 122
Figure 3.49  Cross-cultural Design Project, Sample package for Brazil (Kelly 2006) 123
Figure 3.50  Cross-cultural Design Project, Sample package for United States of America
(Kelly 2006) 123
Figure 3.51  Cross-cultural Design Project, Sample of completed review sheets (Kelly 2006) 125
Abbreviations

ALP  Australian Labour Party
AGDA  Australian Graphic Design Association
AIGA  American Institute of Graphic Arts
AIGA XCD  American Institute of Graphic Arts, Centre for Cross-Cultural Design
ARC  Auckland Regional Council
AUK  American University of Kuwait
BA  British Airways
BCI  Blissymbolics Communication International
BHP  Broken Hill Proprietary Limited
GLAAD  The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation
ICOGRADA  International Council of Graphic Design Associations
ICOGRADA IEN  International Council of Graphic Design Associations
International Education Network
PhD  Doctor of Philosophy
SOCOG  Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games
USA  United States of America
ZIVA  Zimbabwe Institute of Vigital Art
Chapter 1.
Introduction
1.1 Background to Research.

In a globalised environment, visual communication designers are required to understand local and international markets and develop design concepts that work across a range of cultures. As a consequence, a number of tertiary organizations now incorporate centres dedicated to cross-cultural relations. Among these are the Australian National University, the University of Western Australia and the Western Washington University. Each houses a Centre for Cross-Cultural Research. Additionally, in 2001, within the field of design, the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) established the American Institute of Graphic Arts, Centre for Cross-Cultural Design (AIGA XCD). The AIGA XCD website states that the aim of the group is to foster greater communication between designers across cultures.

We believe that it is imperative for designers to think beyond their national and cultural borders in order to create visual communication that is responsive to the diversity of audiences today (AIGA XCD 2007).

The above excerpt forms part of the mission statement of the AIGA XCD which emphasises that designers are united by the “interwoven experience of design and culture” (AIGA XCD 2007) in their lives. As a practicing designer and a lecturer in the discipline of visual communication design, I have great interest in culture, cultural differences and the relationship between culture and design, all of which lead to differences in design. Cross-cultural visual communication design is an exciting and advancing area of investigation that is relevant to contemporary design practices. Its emergence as an area of design practice has seen it expand as a topic of research. However, it is a problematic and complex area for designers and educators, new and developing, with the intersection of a number of factors with currently a limited range of theoretical underpinning.

Few have attempted to define this distinct area of communication design. Three definitions in particular represent the breadth of the topic area. Firstly, Henry Steiner (Steiner and Haas 1995, p.ix) states that cross-cultural visual communication is when designers work on projects aimed at cultures other than their own; secondly, Linda Cooper Bowen (2005, p.130) defines cross-cultural visual communication as working for clients across international cultural borders and; thirdly, Steven Rigley (as cited in Bowen 2005, p.130) defined cross-cultural visual communication as “a movement within the design community characterized by a general recognition and respect for ‘otherness’”. Each of these definitions are suitable to frame this
research as this study reflects on the professional practices of designers working for recipients across international borders and, in effect, working on projects that are aimed at cultures that are different to their own, while supporting the recognition and respect for ‘otherness’.

The complexity of the issues, and the contradictions present in existing discourses are gathered from a range of disciplines and demonstrate that this area of investigation is an emerging and undeveloped one. Consistently, designers are warned of how difficult and complex the task of cross-cultural communication is, but the few existing instructions to guide design practice are vague and contradictory. This research has revealed that what is still required, even before clear guidelines can be established, is a foundational framework of analysis that encompasses both the designer’s difficulties and user’s needs in producing stronger cross-cultural communication design methods. In other words, this nascent area lacks even the most basic understanding of the complexities for this emerging area of communication design. Primary research with designers or design students has not been carried out before. As such, a preliminary case study of over one hundred and forty design students from schools across the world forms a large part of my research process. The aim is to offer a possible way through the diverse array of topic areas and to draw together information to help define visual communicator tools in cross-cultural design for the future. This document also acknowledges that this research has operated as a scoping project, with the idea that a larger, statistically valid research project might be formed on the back of these preliminary findings in the future.

Contemporary published texts on Design that explore in some degree design practice in cross-cultural visual communication and discuss examples of cross-cultural design are primarily, Steiner and Haas (1995) Cross-Cultural Design: Communicating in the global market and Caban (2004) World Graphic Design. Both publications provide an overall visual representation of design work that stems from strong cultural influences. Readings contained in the Looking Closer series of critical writing on design practices and Soar’s (2006) Design Studies: Theory and Research in Graphic Design offer discussion regarding the need to reconsider design practices when designing across cultural divides and highlight some of the challenges that have emerged in this field.

Articles related to cross-cultural issues are also evident in design journals including Design Week, Design Issues, Creative Review, Journal of Visual Literacy and Visible Language. Such articles appearing in these journals discuss the need to understand cross-cultural visual communication and also highlight the need to consider the range of issues that will impact on communication, but do not provide clear guidance to designers. Heller (1990) addresses stereotypical imagery in design, McCoy (1997, 2006) explores design in a multicultural world and the need to focus
on the recipient, while Fiss (2006) explains that with an increasingly globalized market there is a need for designers to position themselves to work with diverse cultures explaining that the current focus is on the facilitation of images and the transferring of products across continents without consideration of their impact. The literature demonstrates the significant gap between discourse and professional practice.


Of significant importance in this investigation is the need of cross-cultural visual communicators to consider more closely the recipient in the communication process. McCoy (2006, p.203) states: “As professional designers, we have developed an effective body of theory, method, and form to deal with both the sender and message. Now we must do the same for the receiver component of the communications equation”. An earlier researcher, Buchanan (1998, p.20) took a similar position when he explained that despite the impact of mass-production, the solution is to no longer design for a universal audience, or national groups, or even large market segments, “the task is to design for the individual placed in his or her immediate context”. These comments highlight the need for additional scrutiny in cross-cultural visual communication design practice. In today’s global economy, the visual communication has to remain personal for a broad range of stakeholders, appealing to multiple recipients who hold a strong emotional investment in the message being sent. As a result there exists an increased potential for debate, dissent, conflict and miscommunication and a greater possibility for the perception and interpretation of the communication to appear different between recipients.

The contribution of this research to the study of the recipient does not include areas of investigation such as participatory design or co-design where the focus is on shifting the role of the designer to that of facilitator. “Co-designing threatens the existing power structures by requiring that control be relinquished and given to potential customers, consumers or end-users” (Sanders and Stappers 2008, p.9). An example of a co-design methodology is
evident in the design for Waterfall Way, New South Wales, re-branding exercise (Taboada, Haworth et al. 2009). In this exercise it was understood that the collaborative design process could be used as a powerful social tool to engage communities and stakeholders in a process of positive change (p.2). The role of the designer was to “facilitate the emergence of aesthetic knowledge from the people involved, and to later faithfully attend to their recommendations and finalise the visual communication material in a way that matched as much as possible the design concepts envisaged by the participants” (p.18). It was acknowledged in the Waterfall Way re-branding exercise that a co-design methodology is new to visual communication designers and recipients. It was also noted that an evaluation of the brand in terms of its acceptance, recognition and usage required further research (p.20).

The area of focus in this study is on the reception of design by a broad range of stakeholders irrespective of their participation in the design process with the aim of identifying the issues related to the acceptance or rejection of cross-cultural design. In this study the recipient does not take an equal role in the creation of the design. This research study takes the position that the designer is the expert in their field and the creator of the design, while the recipient’s role is to receive the communication with little or no interaction in the design process. As a result, user-centered design, that has had wide support in recent years, falls outside the framework of this research.

Culture is referred to extensively throughout these discussions, as culture and communication are inseparable and strongly entwined. These different titles, culture and communication, are given to different aspects of the same complex set of structures and processes (Kress 1988).

Culture is the label that refers to the set of practices that produce meanings and to the resultant objects of those practices. It refers to human engagement in those practices, and to their effect on human beings acting together as a cultural group, as a ‘culture’. ‘Communication’ is a label that refers to those meanings, and their conscious or unconscious, deliberate or accidental exchange among members of a culture, or among members of closely connected cultural groupings – in society (Kress 1988, p.11).

Culture is recognized as an important component and a necessary aspect in design practice. It is also recognized as a broad, diffuse topic underpinned by a numerous theories. No singular definition exists to suit the way designers need to reflect on culture in their design work today. Culture is a group phenomenon evolving from the interactions of people, their beliefs and their behaviours. Cultural identities emerge as people, consciously or subconsciously order their world and try to create an overall sense of well being and hope for the future (Lull 2001, p.157).
Cultural geography, an area of research that defies easy definition and can perhaps be best categorized as a way of thinking (Atkinson, Jackson et al. 2005, p.vii), emphasizes the need to consider the complex web of economic, social, cultural and political circumstances impacting on a culture; aspects not of a persons choosing. It takes into account the different readings and multiple realities of a place and representations of a place, that being a construction that is contingent, partial and unfinished. Within this debate cultural geographers engage with the complex questions of identity formation, citizenship, cultural differences and issues surrounding a sense of belonging. Within this analysis, cultural geographers now consider the representation, or a re-presentation, of cultural geographies as a strategic shift drawing methodologies from other social sciences and humanities (Duncan and Ley 1993, p.10). Much like this exploration into cross-cultural visual communication design, cultural geography draws on literary theory, postmodemism, post-colonialism and their interconnecting arguments. This is not an exhaustive list of areas to seek inspiration; commonalities extend into landscape, geographies, social psychology, cultural studies and associations with place. It recognizes that representation is a fabrication that depends in part upon the position of the creator and the recipient. The makers of these geographies are those who develop the space; those who sell the space and code the space into consumption codes; and those who reinterpret these codes against the needs and desire to define their self-identity. A dominant culture is rarely passively internalized. It is commonly negotiated, resisted, appropriated and represented by people in everyday life, just as cultural representations possess a power created by dominant groups through discourse. The interest of cultural geographers strongly intersects with communication design through the creative practices of representation and the ways in which people demonstrate their identity, belonging, and differences in society. This connection is recognized in the article of Tolia-Kelly (2012) who explains that visual culture is recognized as a means of empowering people and a catalyst for dealing with identity, trauma, rights and political notions. The possibility exists with the power of visual culture to change the political landscape and influence change, changing cultural geographies (Tolia-Kelly 2012, p.138). Where there exists a divergence, an aspect that will be positioned carefully in this research, cultural geography recognizes that geography is a central component to the creation of difference.

This document will use the definition of culture as “a complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by individuals as members of a society” (Mueller 1996, p.87) combined with the understanding presented above of cultural geographic interplay. The literature reviews will not be limited by geographical boundaries, race or religion and the concept of what constitutes the ‘cultural other’ will vary between examples. Issues emerging due to geographical constraints will be evident throughout
the investigation, however this document will also recognize collective cultures in many shapes and forms, within societal groups and beyond national boundaries. The case study of the City of Melbourne design (2009), for instance, looks at the cultural distinction between two cities in the same country and uses this to discuss the impact the culture of the designer has on the response of the recipient. The examples of Australia Unlimited (2010) and the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games design (1996) look at cultural representations of a country and the difficulties in identifying a suitable image to represent diverse cultural groups. The British Airways (1984) and BHP Billiton (2001) examples reflect on corporate representations of culture and the impact this has on the company and its broad stakeholder base. Theories of place branding will continue the discussion of culture by showing how the response of the recipient is culturally driven.

Having explored the impact of culture on cross-cultural visual communication design in its many forms in the literature review, the extensive international cross-cultural design project will use national cultural boundaries to provide further exploration of the issues presented in the literature. This was necessary to explore transnational visual communication and gather the extensive results evident in this document. This holistic approach to the analysis of culture and design allows for the thorough investigation of all of the aspects associated with the transmitter, the signal and the recipient in cross-cultural design.

The complexity of cross-cultural visual communication, and its intertwining nature with culture, quickly becomes evident in the considerations presented. This document then must be considered in the context it is portrayed, best defined as a scoping analysis of the issues associated with this expanding field. It presents boundaries, requirements and solid guidance towards further research and its limitations are clearly recognized. It provides a new way of approaching design in a cross-cultural context, an area of design practice that will continue to grow in the future.
1.2 Document Structure

A thorough analysis of cross-cultural visual communication will be presented utilising a structure of three sections, namely the transmitter (designer), the signal (designed item) and the recipient (the person who receives the communication as well as stakeholders). This linear sequence reflects the communication process and my understanding of the design process whereby a designer or transmitter creates a signal for the receiver or recipient. This research will redefine the role of the designer, analyse examples of images or symbols used in cross-cultural visual communication design and clarify the impact these factors have on the reception of the design. This structure for communication was systemized as early as 1949 by Shannon and Weaver (p.5) and again reinterpreted in 1992 by Meggs (p.3) as seen below (Figures 1.1 and 1.2).

As explained by Fiske (1983), Shannon and Weaver’s theory of communication is widely accepted as one of the main instigators in the development of Communication Studies.

**Figure 1.1** Schematic diagram of a general communication system
(Shannon and Weaver 1949, p.5)

**Figure 1.2** Shannon and Weaver’s basic theory of communication reinterpreted by Meggs (1992, p.3).
There are many criticisms of Shannon and Weaver’s theory of communication [1]. Other theories of communication also provide solid structures [2], and the interwoven nature of culture, communication and design is well understood. Nevertheless, this three-point sequence

[1] Both Barnard (2005) and Meggs (1992) conclude that this model of communication is unsatisfactory in relation to visual communication design. It is cited as not suitable for “dealing with different, more complex, forms of communication” (Barnard 2005, p.24) and seen as “inadequate to explain communicative art forms including literature, music or graphic design” (Meggs 1992, p.3) because it addresses only the method of communication and not the content or purpose of communication (Barnard 2005, p.20). Barnard identifies the lack of consideration of how meaning is formed when he explains that this model “fails to account for communication” (Barnard 2005, p.22) and questions what constitutes the transmitter, the signal and the receiver. In other words, he recognizes the limited definition of the roles of each of the participants. Subsequently, Barnard identifies more sophisticated versions of the basic model of communication yet states that all versions fail to consider the creation of meaning and the role of the active consumer or interpreter.

[2] In an attempt to include a social context to the communication process, Theodore Newcomb, as cited by Fiske (1990), proposed a triangular structure to the communication process where A is the sender, B is the receiver and X forms the third corner of the triangle and represents the social environment. Any change in one of these elements automatically affects the others (see below Figure 1.3).

![Figure 1.3 Newcomb’s 1953 Model of communication A-B-X System (Fiske 1990, p.33)](Image)

Again in this instance the development of meaning is already determined prior to the transmission between participants. The process by which it is transported, or the process by which it is received, is considered to have no impact on the message. Newcomb takes the view that any message interpreted by the receiver is, or should be, identical to the one transmitted and there is no room for interpretation. Any message that is received and deemed different to the one that is sent is seen as a failure in the communication process and as the fault of the sender who formulated the message (Fiske 1990).

William Gudykunst (1994, p.9), on the other hand, argues that communication is the exchange of messages and the creation of meaning, where “meanings can not be transmitted from one person to another. Only messages can be transmitted”. When we send a message we attach a certain meaning to that message, and then the person who interpret our message attaches his or her own meaning as well. The meaning that is attached is drawn from our environment and based in our social context such as class, gender, nationality and culture. The message itself is neutral in the process.
provides a solid anatomy for the presentation of the complexity of cross-cultural visual communication. The simplicity of this structure offers a clear framework to test the assumptions and contradictions presented in the literature and a format to review material that has not been synthesised in previous investigations, allowing for the comprehensive examination of each of the stages that impact on cross-cultural visual communication.

The first chapter will review the literature that exists on the role of the transmitter in visual communication, identifying how the designer must undertake careful considerations when designing across cultures. For example, they must consider their application of cultural imagery, or their choice not to include certain cultural signals, and the wider ethical impact of their design choices. In this chapter, a further consideration, that being the impact the culture of the designer has on the visual communication, will be investigated with the understanding that the culture of the designer and the culture of the recipient must come into alignment for communication to be transferred from the transmitter to the recipient. Emerging from this investigation is a revelation of the level of bias that exists in the perceptions of the recipient based on what they assume are the cultural influences of the designer.

The second chapter will explore the literature on the role of the signal. To begin with, discussion will surround Semiotics and Cognitive theories which both consider cultural implications on perception and the generation of meaning in communication. This leads to the use of stereotypes in communication creating ‘ingroups’ and ‘outgroups’. From a design perspective, the literature on the use of stereotypical imagery does not clearly define for visual communication designers as to when, or when they should not use stereotypes. Steven Heller (2005) provides some guidance when he explains that context is extremely important and positive connections are essential. An analysis of the visual representation of Australia, for instance, demonstrates the difficulty in sourcing appropriate imagery to visually represent a culture. The diverse range of options available to the designer isolates some cultural groups while giving power to others and reflects the issues to be covered in Chapter 2.1 Transmitter, highlighting the enormous responsibility placed on the designer. It has been noted that the design industry in Australia is yet to create a uniquely Australian visual vernacular (Poynor 2006). This is demonstrated by two design approaches, Australia Unlimited and the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. Both incorporate complex issues surrounding cross-cultural visual communication and the diversity of options available to the designer. Reviewing the literature gives the distinct impression that designing across cultures is a complex task and the results will be controversial.
The final section in the literature review and industry examples explores the role of the recipient in cross-cultural visual communication. I will argue that our understanding of the complexities of designing in a cross-cultural context can be expanded with an examination of the recent developments in the research of place branding. Place branding and cross-cultural visual communication both involve the consideration of multiple stakeholders who hold a strong emotional investment in the message being sent and received. Both fields of study are controversial, mired in cultural identity issues. Due to the breadth and disparity of multiple stakeholders, there exists an increased possibility for failure and the increased potential for negative criticism. Two factors, in particular, can be drawn from place branding literature and applied to the analysis of cross-cultural visual communication. The first factor is the importance of the emotional connection of the communication between the signal and the recipient. The second factor is the proven success of what constitutes effective communication in place branding theories. Most informative is Bill Baker’s (2007) Brand Benefit’s Pyramid offering a new method of categorizing images in cross-cultural design. The Brand Benefit’s Pyramid demonstrates that there are very few design solutions able to visually represent the deep, emotional needs and social benefits of a culture to the recipient, highlighting the huge disparity between what the recipient would like to see and what the designer is providing. Recognizing this disparity demonstrates the need to reconsider the imagery used in cross-cultural visual communication to create a stronger connection between the recipient and the signal.

The literature review draws on the writing available to designers and design associated discourses. Whilst it is acknowledged that references can be found in other disciplines, I have focussed on the references most applicable to the area in question. This methodological decision was made to structure disciplinary-specific advice from within the literature likely to be utilised by designers themselves. Through an investigation and clarification of the issues associated specifically with cross-cultural visual communication design and closely related fields, this thesis offers a framework for the existing material, identifying and clarifying the contradictory information that is currently circulating.

The practical examples of visual communication design used throughout the literature review have been presented to provide support to the topics under discussion and are used to support the arguments presented. Many of the industry examples have been chosen as they have a commentary from the design community as well as clearly documented responses from the recipient as debated through the media. These examples demonstrate the controversy surrounding the design, indicating reasons for their acceptance or rejection.
To further expand on this understanding, an extensive international cross-cultural visual communication design project, taking over two years, was conducted with participants from nine countries chosen for their diversity - Australia, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Turkey, Qatar, United States of America, Zimbabwe and Norway. Over 560 designs were submitted and reviewed by over 140 student and lecturer participants. The design research project was a necessary and important process in providing clarity to the debates surrounding cross-cultural visual communication design. A case study methodology was employed where participants produced postcard style images, followed by participants’ review of these submissions. This methodological structure, where participants create the images as well as review the images, is not commonly used in visual research (Rose 2007, p.6). However, due to the complexity of the area of investigation I deemed this as the most suitable method to explore each of the stages of the visual communication process. Design work was created specifically for this project and the recipient’s responses were a reflection of the design submitted. The creation of the images by the transmitter allowed for a large number of design solutions to be collected following a similar topic area. Reflection of the patterns that emerged between the participating countries provided insight into the design process of the transmitters. The review of the images by the recipient provided insight into the choice of imagery by the transmitter, namely the use of stereotypical imagery and clearer definition of what images were cited as stereotypical. This in turn provided insight into the patterns of response by the recipient. Taking this approach generated a large amount of data that revealed three clear and distinct informative patterns in the cross-cultural visual communication process, one from each of the sections presented: transmitter, signal and recipient. In summary, firstly, there was a strong bias present in the assumption made by the recipient as to the origin of the designer and these assumptions were often incorrect. Design solutions cited as appealing were commonly thought to be designed by a transmitter from the country of the recipient. Design solutions commonly cited as less appealing were thought to be designed by a transmitter from a country that was not the same as that of the recipient. Secondly, postcard submissions that did not contain stereotypes were often rejected because they did not resonate with the recipient. Stereotypes were the means by which the recipient communicated their views on the design solution and not having the ability to refer to a stereotypical image resulted in submissions cited as less appealing. Thirdly, recipients indicated a preference for design submissions demonstrating local rather than global imagery. In other words, the submissions demonstrating an insight into the local community were cited as more appealing and successful in communication than those demonstrating a global sense of community.
There were recognized limitations to the international cross-cultural design research project, particularly as the original brief was interpreted and then communicated via an intermediary. As a result, tight control over the delivery of the brief and the context of production was necessarily sacrificed. For different reasons, not all of the participating countries were able to contribute equally, and therefore the depth of discussion and the number of participants varied between countries. In some instances, the information provided was either incomplete, outside the boundaries of the brief, or may have provided fewer contributions than anticipated. Along with this, the project was required to fit in with timetabling and subjects being delivered by the Universities resulting in some local variations to the design brief. Having said that, while contributions have not contributed equitably to the data bank of information gathered, all of the contributions provided insights into the process and their outcomes have been included.

Due to the limitations, it must be re- emphasised that this research project is best defined as a scoping project, supported by an international cross-cultural design research project. The scoping research was created to investigate the conflicting and diverse information evident in the literature, and determine key issues that are unique to this discipline, assisting in the formation of solutions to manage those issues. This investigation plays a pivotal role in determining the way forward in research of this area and provides clear guidance to visual communicators who endeavour to design for cultures other than their own. It provides a necessary first step to research, cementing a framework for further investigation and can be used to inform a new generation of designers who are required to work with an understanding of cross-cultural visual communication design.
Chapter 2.
Literature Review and Industry Examples
2.1 Transmitter

2.1.1 Introduction

The central focus of Chapter 2.1 will be on the role of the transmitter, or designer, when working in a cross-cultural design environment. It is commonly understood that the role of the designer in visual communication is to select the words, images, phrases or symbols to convey the intended message to the recipient or stakeholder, and the recipient then assigns meaning to that message. “Establishing mutual knowledge, then, is an essential ingredient of eliciting shared meaning in communicative acts” (Berthon, Pitt and Campbell, 2009, p.357). Oosthuizen stated in 2004 (p.71) that good graphic design has the capability of transcending cultures, backgrounds, economic status, and languages but little of the brilliance of good graphic design is evident. This is a typical statement in design literature presenting the view that visual communication design has the ability to work well in a cross-cultural context, yet designs commonly draw criticism. I will demonstrate that although visual communication design has the ability to transcend cultural divides, and dialogue exists encouraging designers to investigate and consider the issues associated with designing across culture, very little guidance is available to inform designers of how best to navigate this area of professional practice. The aim of this chapter is to understand the areas of exiting literature that can be used to inform professional practice and identify the areas in need of further research.

The focus of the analysis in this chapter has been gathered predominantly from literature informing design practice and discussing design from the designer’s perspective. This will also be informed by the recipient’s response to design that has been generated in media discussion. As a result, design examples chosen to support the discussion have been selected due to their documented debates in literature. To reiterate on comments made earlier in Chapter 1.1 Background to Research, emphasis on the recipient’s response is not the same as the emphasis placed on the user in user-centred design, but a method adopted to uncover the problems associated with the reception of designer-initiated cross-cultural design communication.

In summary, three main areas of investigation will be presented in Chapter 2.1. The first is the role of the designer as a cultural intermediary; the second is the design a transmitter may create, which could be either a global centred or culture centred design, and the impact each of these categories has on the recipient; the third is the difference between the transmitter who designs
from within the cultural group to one who designs externally to the cultural group and the consequential response of the recipient. In each instance, including the response of the recipient to the communication challenges the commonly held understanding of the role of the transmitter.

To elaborate further, I will consider the role of the designer as a cultural intermediary, where the designer takes the position of informing, inspiring and engaging a broader audience through visual communication, delivering a view of culture informed by others (Mills 1963, Nixon 1997, Soar 2004). As Soar (2004) explains, designers move quickly to continually source things that are new and repackage them to suit a broader audience. Designers, as cultural intermediates use cultural components as an integral part of their design process. (Rowden, 2004, Haslem 2009, Buck-Coleman 2010). This leads to the first area of debate where the culture of the designer is considered to be evident in the design work produced by the designer (Rowden 2004). This is certainly true in the case of the designers who discuss their work in Caban’s (2004) publication, World of Graphic Design, when it is explained that within a global community of designers there exists a group of visual communicators who use a strong “native visual expression”. For instance, “although there is no such thing as a distinctive Colombian style of graphic design, it is possible to identify a number of native design elements that are characteristic of the graphic expression of Latin America” (2004, p.10). The comment of Caban on the work of Colombian graphic designers highlights the visual differences of each area around the world and the unique vernacular that exists in different cultural groups.

The culture of the designer and the evidence of culture in design work are challenged when we consider the impact of globalization and design. As Caban (2004, p.8) explains, it is becoming more and more difficult to source examples of design work that have not been influenced by technology and a standardized approach to suit a global economy. This leads to an examination of two different approaches that can be taken to produce design outcomes, as defined by Kostelnick (1995): the global centred design approach or the cultural centred design approach. A global centred design approach is a design that is void of recognizable cultural imagery whereas a cultural centred design approach is a design that contains culturally specific design components. Global centred design examples can be seen in Blissymbolics, created by Charles K Bliss (B.C.I. 2004) or the McDonald’s Restaurant Nutrition Information Initiative (Hoffmann 2007) where a series of symbols have been developed to overcome the barrier of differing languages and the ability to read. In this instance, it becomes evident that extensive education is required to assist in ensuring clear understanding for the recipients. Alternative to this is the culture centred approach where sign systems are adapted to suit local situations and become
an expression of different cultural identities and where design is defined by the social and cultural constructs of the recipient, as seen in the work identified by Caban (2004). Interestingly, education is again required to establish mutual understanding between the transmitter and the recipient.

This leads me to the discussion on the choice of imagery made by the designer. A designer who chooses to create visual communication strategies utilizing culturally specific components needs to consider issues of cultural appropriation and for this reason, analysis of the existing literature and the current understanding of cultural appropriation for design practitioners will be presented in this chapter. I will take the position that a designer, when offered employment, will take on the brief regardless of cultural implications. Issues of cultural appropriation however, come into effect if the choice of imagery in the design may offend the recipient and therefore impact on reception. Heyd (2003) explains that it is often difficult to define factual information about a culture and therefore it is often difficult to determine the likelihood of offending the recipient or when cultural appropriation has occurred, and this leads to two points that will be scrutinized. Firstly whether someone from outside a cultural group looking in, as Kennedy (2007) explains, or a designer who has trained in a country other than their own and returns with the new influences combined with the traditional, as Caban (2004) refers to, or whether a designer who is a member of the same cultural group as the recipient are better suited to communicate on behalf of a cultural group. Secondly, the ethical responsibility and the power granted to the designer in the choice of imagery they use. Indeed, Heyd (2003) argues that culturally specific imagery may give one cultural group leverage to promote or demote another cultural group. As Ruffins (1997) explains, some groups are better at using political and economic tactics to exert power over other cultural groups just as some cultural groups are better at defending themselves against power being initiated. Steiner (1995), on the other hand, believes that societies benefit from a transferral of knowledge, ideas and representations and that asserting a cultural identity allows for greater prosperity for the cultural group. This debate will be informed by theories of post-colonialism and discussions on the shift in colonial domination, essential considerations when you reflect on Buchanan and McCoy’s comments presented earlier in Chapter 1.1 Background to Research identifying the need to communicate to the individual in his or her context.

The final aspect in the analysis of the role of the designer is the importance attached to the origin of the designer and the impact their culture will have on the reception of the design. Again, referring back to Kennedy (2007) and Henderson (Personal communication, September 24, 2009) who are of the opinion that a designer external to a cultural group has the ability to
see the culture in a new light resulting in a unique and innovative design solution, the case study of the ‘M’ logo from the City of Melbourne, the capital city of Victoria, Australia, introduces a new aspect to cross-cultural visual communication where the origin of the designer was granted a symbolic value by the recipient. The City of Melbourne ‘M’ design created controversy based on the fact that the design group creating the solution was from Sydney, the capital city of New South Wales, Australia, an external location to those engaging with the design. Based on an analysis of this case study it became evident that the origin of the designer becomes the means through which the recipient articulated their concerns for the design solution, introducing a new facet to be negotiated by the designer in the management of the design process.

2.1.2 The designer as a cultural intermediary

The concept of cultural intermediary was first introduced by C. Wright Mills (1963) who wrote an essay entitled Man in the Middle: the Designer, but was formalized by Nixon in 1997. Although Mills was discussing the concept of a circuit of culture, in his essay Mills explored the idea that the everyday life experiences presented to us are not solid or immediate facts, but stereotypes of meaning delivered by witnesses we have more than likely never met and never shall meet. In other words, our view of reality is not based on pristine experiences as much as it is exposure to culture strategically delivered to us by someone else.

The most embraceable and the most specialized domain of modern society, the cultural apparatus of art, science and learning fulfills the most functions: it conquers nature and remakes the environment; it defines the changing nature of man, and grasps the drift of world affairs; it revives old aspirations and shapes new ones…. The world men are going to believe they understand is now, in this cultural apparatus, being defined and built, made into a slogan, a story, a diagram, a release, a dream, a fact, a blue-print, a tune, a sketch, a formula; and presented to them (Mills 1963, pp.376-377).

Designers therefore play the role of cultural intermediary, a term Sean Nixon (1997) uses frequently in his chapter ‘Circulating Culture’ in Production of Culture / Cultures of Production. Nixon considers that both the Advertising and Design professions play “a pivotal role in articulating production with consumption through their ‘symbolic expertise’ in making goods and services ‘meaningful’” (p.8). To do this they link the world of engineers and technicians with that of the consumer and, as a result, complete the circuit of culture, locating the designer as a participant in cultural production.
A more contemporary view of the same point has been raised by Haslem (2009, p.25) who writes: “As communication designers we create a visual text that contributes to the creation of the social world”. Designers work hard to stay ahead while at the same time becoming the cultural intermediary between the general public and all things fashionable. “The problem, though, is that once everyone else gets their hands on it, it ain’t fresh no more; so off we move again” (Soar 2004, p.10). By the time a new image or idea or product is adopted by mainstream consumers, we are actually seeing the end of the trend. Marketing does not reflect popular culture, it reports on it after the fact (Hall 2000).

Matt Soar (2004), in his presentation at the AIGA FutureHistory Conference in Chicago, revisited the term ‘cultural intermediary’ when he suggested the graphic designers’ role is to expose themselves to the very latest styles, films, books and gadgets and everything that is new in the world and use this information in their own work to communicate to a wider audience. By this account, the designer, in their hunt for things that are new and interesting, develop many of their own tastes and preferences.

Although designers work to formal practices, their own cultural preferences and tastes impact on the production of solutions and designers should become self-reflective about this. “The need to understand how personal beliefs of race, religion, socio-economic class and other differences impact visual messages is an ethical component of the graphic designer’s and graphic design educator’s professional duties” (Buck-Coleman 2010, p.191).

You cannot escape yourself. You have culture. Not necessarily one of appeal or relevance to your audience, though you may hope so, but the culmination of your evolution. To a large extent, regardless of how you present yourself, this culture will remain visible, a display of self, for better or worse, which cannot easily be distinguished or ignored (Rowden 2004, p.133).

As culture is an integral part of the designer and the design process, it could be demonstrated that the culture of the designer can be clearly identified in some design work. There is a small community of designers, mainly from non-European cultures, who strive to maintain the richness and variety of visual communication by drawing on their cultural background, using strongly customary cultural elements in their design work. In a rare book reflecting on design and culture, Caban (2004) demonstrates distinct qualities of design work between different geographical regions around the world. The significance of Caban’s book *World Graphic Design* (2004) is such that I will spend a number of pages discussing the work presented. Two considerations emerged that are worth presenting in relation to my analysis of cross-cultural visual communication.
design. The first is the design qualities that have been identified by Caban as being distinctly reflective of a culture group; the second is that although many of the designers presented in the book were educated in a country different to where they were born, their design work remains culturally connected to their country of origin. The relationship designers have, and the pride with which the designers place their loyalty to their own cultural groups, is strongly evident throughout the discussion.

Caban explains that there are distinct design qualities for different regions globally and Chinese calligraphy and pictographic symbols that stem from the third century, for instance, are still an influence in design in modern day China. Asian designers suggest the use of the brush is a visual element that is distinctly Asian. As an extension of this, Taiwanese design influences stem from not only Chinese cultural traditions but also from the impact of various colonizers, Dutch, Spanish and Japanese. The result is a distinct blend of Asian and Western design approaches creating a recognizable Taiwanese style. Contemporary Latin American visual communicators occasionally draw on the mythical figures and naturalistic images of animals, plants and humans that were strong imagery in pre-Hispanic art in Mexico and the Latin America region. Furthermore, Argentina, inhabited by descendants of Europe, has a strong European flavour to its design work. Indeed, many Latin American design practitioners have had overseas experience in Europe or the United States of America, leading to a blend of native and international design styles. Arguably this could be a demonstration of a lack of ‘purity’ in the visual representation of culture, yet there remains a visual style that is culturally distinctive and based on the country of origin of the designer.

Providing more detail, Caban identifies that African designers felt colours were the most significant component to characterize their region. “Colours of Africa reflect its heat, natural environment, human qualities and conflicts” (Caban 2004, p.21). Images of the spirits, traditional stories and human rights issues remain the dominant African vernacular. Although there is a pressure to adopt a Western lifestyle which has lead to a decline in the use of traditional images, the African style has recently transformed into a new, contemporary ‘cross-cultural soup’, resulting in a unique, distinctive African style while maintaining the connections with African history, spiritual beliefs and the unique landscape (Caban 2004).

Saki Mafundikwa, who was trained in the methods of visual communication strongly influenced by the philosophies of Modernism and the Swiss design movement, was educated in Zimbabwe and the United States of America. Recognizing that his folio was a mix of Swiss and African, Mafundikwa made a conscious decision to identify himself with his African cultural heritage.
This has lead to the 1997 founding of the Zimbabwean Institute of Vigital Arts (ZIVA) where the emphasis is on the creation of new ideas in visual communication and a clear visual language that represents his country and his region. “Mention Africa to most people in other parts of the world and the words they say come to mind are sun, heat, nature, friendly, organic, human, developing, ethnic, strife, art, music etc.” (Caban 2004, p.37) visually represented with ‘colours, colours and colours’. The following examples of Mafundikwa’s design work, Figure 2.4 and Figure 2.5, demonstrate an emphasis on colours connected to the African region.

![Figure 2.4](image1.png) Left, Saki Mafundikwa, Logo for the Black Documentary Collective, New York, 2002 (Caban 2004, p.37)

![Figure 2.5](image2.png) Right, Saki Mafundikwa, Logo for the 4th Zimbabwe International Film Festival, 2001 (Caban 2004, p.37)

This leads to my second point. Caban identified that education was considered a strong contributing factor in the development of a cultural visual language. He acknowledges that the majority of the designers whose work is represented in his book have undertaken their formal training in countries other than their own. “Having honed their skills and acquired a grasp of international approaches and technologies, they were often disappointed to find on their return that many of the visual traditions of their homeland were being lost” (Caban 2004, p.8).

Zimbabwean designer Chaz Maviyane-Davies, for instance, has used his international training to develop his own unique style with influences from local and international regions. An example of Maviyane-Davies’ design work can be seen in Figure 2.6 below.

> “While I was at college in England I was always aware of my background and the role I hoped to play when I returned to an independent Zimbabwe,” he says. “I was influenced by the graphics of nations in situations similar to mine, especially Cuban posters. Through their colour, courage and vibrancy they expressed a freedom and vigour I knew existed somewhere
in my subconscious. They spoke of liberation, dignity and identity. My knowledge of this, acquired during my time abroad, helped me to develop my personal style of expression” (Caban 2004, p.12).

Figure 2.6 Chaz Maviyane-Davies, Christmas card for the British Council based on the ‘Three Wise Women’, 1992 (Caban 2004, p.38)

Lebanese designer Halim Choueiry was also educated in a country different from that where he now resides. Choueiry considers it to his advantage that he has come from a rich Arabic culture and yet had the opportunity to be educated and practice design in both Lebanon and Western countries. Choueiry believes these opportunities have given him the ability to understand both cultures and interpret their visual suggestions together in his design work. As Choueiry explains: “Three languages sometimes exist simultaneously on the same page of a design work – it is an incredible melting pot” (Caban 2004, p.144). Choueiry’s poster (Figure 2.7 below) used by truck drivers as a form of prayer clearly illustrates this comment.

Figure 2.7 Halim Choueiry, Poster reflecting the typographic prose and poetry used by truck drivers as a form of prayer (Caban 2004, p.144)

Caban (2004) explains that the growth of visual communication design in Iran, which he describes as slow, has met with resistance because of the connections it has with Western culture. Middle Eastern design is often easily identifiable with brilliant colours, intricate geometric
patterns and traditional calligraphy, demonstrating that in the Middle East most designers are still strongly influenced by Arab traditions and ancient cultures. Iranian art theorist, Firooz Shivanlou (Caban 2004, p.133) warned the impact of a foreign culture would be disturbing and destructive to the interpretation of elements in Iranian art. Yet, this sense of destruction has not eventuated in the work of Iranian artists and designers. Iran’s ancient art has instead been used for extension and experimentation in design while still preserving intricate spiritual and emotional qualities (Caban 2004, p.133).

Further to the discussion by Caban (2004), a blog posted by the AIGA XCD discussing design with Graphic Design students studying at the American University of Kuwait (AUK) (Dadkhah, Sarieddine, Muhammad and Al-Mastaki 2009) questioned the impact design education had on their philosophy of visual communication. The students explained that design in Kuwait is still emerging and it was felt that designers were yet to identify themselves with a visual design culture. The Graphic Design students believed that design education provided the tools to designers to assist in creating a distinct Kuwait visual language. Arabic calligraphy was common in design solutions and much of the cultural visual language was seen in the promotional material for Islamic organizations, banks and telecommunication companies.

“We live in a part of the world where certain values such as religion, conservativeness, segregation, morals and ethics are highly promoted. There is a clear line between good and bad, do’s and don’ts and black and white which is practiced here religiously”

(Dadkhah, Sarieddine et al. 2009)

The design education of the Kuwait students defined the boundaries of what was acceptable and what was not in their own culture along with presenting global strategies and interpretations. The combination of these influences exposes the students to an emerging visual communication style and a new visual communication vernacular, culturally identifiable and culturally influenced. The impact of culture on the designer and the decision the designer makes in the representation of their culture is strongly evident in the examples shown. Using contemporary techniques, designers endeavoured to renew distinctive visual traditions in a new format, supporting their role as cultural intermediary. Drawing on cultural aspects in design work then becomes a calculated decision. In other words, the decision designer’s make in the choice of imagery they will use will consequently impact on the reception of the design. The work of Caban’s (2004) book explores the design work of designers who represent their own culture. The question to still be explored is the impact of the designer where the design is from a culture other than that of the recipient. Interrogation of this aspect is not as readily
available, supporting the need for this scoping research. It is the designer’s role to make an informed decision and this aspect will be discussed further in ensuing chapters.

2.1.3 Global design approach vs. cultural design approach

Visual communicators, in their role as cultural intermediaries, can choose to engage with cultural imagery, as demonstrated in the previous examples, or they can choose to avoid images with cultural connections. Charles Kostelnick (1995) argues that strategies used by designers for adapting design generally fall into two opposing approaches: a cultural-focused approach using cultural imagery in a design solution or a global (universal) focused approach where designs are void of any cultural connection. This is a useful categorization for this research. The cultural-focused approach is defined as a social viewpoint where interpretation of a message is a learned experience that varies across cultural groups. Culturally centred design approaches have been demonstrated in the examples presented earlier during discussions of the design work in Caban’s (2004) book World Graphic Design. The design work of Hayashi, Maviyane-Davis, Mafundikwa and Choueiry demonstrate a strong link to culturally specific imagery drawn from the designer’s cultural backgrounds and traditions. The opposing position is the global approach, based on the ability to interpret visual imagery in the same way regardless of culture where visual language can be designed for broad audiences. Having investigated a culture centred approach in Chapter 2.1.2 The Designer as Cultural Intermediary; this chapter will focus on a global centred design approach. To begin with, I will look at two examples of global centred design followed by two examples where global designs have taken on local influences.

The first example of a global centred design approach, Blissymbolics, created by Charles K Bliss (B.C.I. 2004), is constructed of a symbol language of pictographs designed to overcome the barrier of differing language. Bliss found his application had a greater, more rewarding use when used by children to overcome speech impairment. Using the principle of basic block building techniques, Blissymbolic characters may be used on their own with a basic semantic meaning or combined with other Bliss characters to form words. Approximately 900 basic characters have been developed from Semantography and used as components for generating a new vocabulary. Approximately 3,000 characters exist in its most complex form. An example of Blissymbolic characters is presented in Figure 2.8 below.
However, there are limitations in the development of a universal means of visual communication. Unless one is able to use a graphic device that is already known and accepted, one must have the means to have the proposed symbol taught, “otherwise it will not be a symbol but a mere graphic device subject to different interpretation by different people, or ignored entirely” (Gyorgy 1966, p.115). For this reason, Blissymbolics requires an extensive education program for the symbols to be understood.

The second example of a global centred design approach can be seen with McDonald’s Restaurant group’s development of a global design strategy. In a similar attempt to create an international symbolic language, in this case for nutrition, McDonald’s Restaurant group undertook a Nutrition Information Initiative (Hoffmann 2007) with the aim of making nutritional information more accessible and understandable for its international customer base. McDonald’s created a new visual language for nutrition that could communicate universally without words or language skills. The aim was to develop a suitable form of communication for patrons who may have limited literacy or difficulty reading, or for restaurants located in countries where multiple languages are spoken.

Thirteen thousand responses were collected to review the development of five icons. It was found that the extent of feedback was extremely widespread. Below, Figure 2.9, is a reference demonstrating some of the views presented in the research for the icons designed for calcium.
Figure 2.9 Icons Tested for Calcium, McDonald’s Restaurant Nutrition Information Initiative (Hoffmann 2007, p.11)

Patrons who frequent the restaurants of the top ten countries, which constituted approximately 80% of the business, primarily determined the final solutions. The project manager from ENLASO, the organization commissioned to undertake the extensive research, commented that “the response such images evoke may not always be universal, but the potency of such images can be universal. Visual resonates with all peoples” (Hoffmann 2007, p.15). Posters and an education campaign supported the implementation. Again this project highlighted the fact that although the designer’s intentions are to create a global design solution, an extensive education process for the recipient would be needed to assist in creating a clear understanding of the symbols. The final solutions are presented below in Figure 2.10.

Figure 2.10 Final Icon Solutions, McDonald’s Restaurant Nutrition Information Initiative (Hoffmann 2007, p.7)

Even though global centred design is created to communicate to a broad range of recipients, local influences can emerge. Consciously or unconsciously, global visual languages are modified to suit a cultural purpose. “It is not surprising to find that the sign systems that Western citizens...
take for granted at airports, railway stations and hospitals are being amended in non-Western countries to make more sense to local populations” (Evamy 2003, p.14). Even fairly fundamental signs such as road signs, shown below in Figures 2.11-2.13 (Jean 2004) change and adapt in shape and content across cultures. New signs are being designed to reflect local needs and as a result, local sign languages are evolving to become an expression of different cultural identities.

By way of closure to this part of the discussion, an informal example of a global design being adapted at a local level and requiring additional cues to achieve communication can be demonstrated with a family visit to Scenic World in the Blue Mountains, New South Wales, Australia, and subsequently, a visit to the restrooms (Figure 2.14). To understand the context of this sign, Scenic World in the Blue Mountains is a location that receives many diverse local and international tourist visitors. Present at each sink in the restroom was a carefully designed piece of communication explaining the process of pressing a button to have water flow to wash hands. Above each nicely designed message was a fairly crude drawing of the same process shown from a different angle. It appeared that few people understood the carefully designed plaque and needed additional information to educate them in getting water to flow from the tap. I had seen and experienced a sign like that before but it still took me a moment to consider what I had to do. I could well imagine people who had not seen a similar process having trouble translating the message. In this instance education of the recipient and additional information was required to assist in effective communication. This sign was the instigating moment to the research of cross-cultural visual communication design and raised, for me, many questions about visual communication in a cross-cultural context.
This examination of a global centred approach or a culture centred approach to design is an important part of this research. As has been presented, signs and symbols work as visual shorthand in communication. Many have been developed out of a need to overcome language differences or illiteracy, while others have been developed for individuals to communicate amongst themselves, one to one. Visual information processing is greatly influenced by and guided by what has been learned and experienced in the past and these experiences are culturally biased, requiring an understanding of conventional codes. Design itself is a social act, defined by the social and cultural conditioning of the recipient. The choice of imagery, a concern of the designer, will impact on the recipient in different ways. This is explored further in the international cross-cultural design research project where participant’s submissions can be seen to take one of these approaches which, in turn, impacts on the response of the recipient who takes note of the use of cultural iconography or the lack of cultural imagery. Having investigated how the origin of the design will impact on the choice of imagery, I will continue with, firstly issues associated with cultural appropriation and secondly, how the recipient responds to the origin of the designer.

### 2.1.4 Cultural appropriation

Designers have the ability to make a choice in the imagery used in design work, that is, whether they take a globally centred design approach or a culturally centred design approach. Choices in the use of material with a strong cultural connection require additional consideration as inappropriate choices of cultural imagery, or the borrowing or taking of a valued cultural item, commonly referred to as cultural appropriation, can be considered equivalent to theft. Ultimately, a moral problem exists if cultural appropriation leads to a loss of income for the
original culture, threatens the perceived authenticity or threatens the identity of the original group. Threats may arise in four ways: firstly, the appropriation of goods by outsiders leading to a false portrayal or caricature image of the original culture; secondly, the borrowing of ideas and art styles leading to the inability of original owners to further use the ideas and images; thirdly, the use of cultural artefacts or cultural representations by people with different standards to those presented by the original culture and finally, the unauthorised use of a culture’s identity.

While some see cultural appropriation as theft, problematic and unacceptable, others see it as innocent, perhaps useful or even an essential part to the development of a culture. Their interpretation is that it can be a help to generate interest in the original group, increase the value of traditional or original items, perhaps bringing a culture to a broader audience. Having a cross-cultural aesthetic appreciation can be seen to enrich our understanding of different cultures and essentially honour their accomplishments. For example rap music or flamenco dancing are brought to a wider audience through amateur and professional groups. According to Hal Duncan “simply representing a culture in terms of artefacts, practices and persons doesn’t mean you are laying claim to those artefacts, following those practices, mimicking those persons. It doesn’t mean you’re doing a big land-grab on that cultural territory, setting up a fence, and saying ‘This is mine now’” (Duncan 2006, p.1). Instead you are honouring them by broadening their appeal.

There are also long standing contradictions between cultural definition, the definition of something belonging to a distinct cultural group, and cultural control, the exerting of social, economic or political influence over issues of belonging. Cultural appropriation works under the pretence that there are majority and minority cultural groups within one location. Knowledge that may seem impartial may actually work in favour of some groups and consequently against other groups. The iconography of emblems, flags, badges and signs can be used as representational forms of power. “Struggles over the monopoly of the power to make people see and believe, to get them to know and recognize, to impose the legitimate definition of the divisions of the social world and, thereby, to make and unmake groups” (Bourdieu 1999, p.221) comes from the choice and use of images.

Considering further the issues of power, Stuart Hall (1996) explains the relationship between history and cultural identity can be explained in two ways. The first is in terms of one shared culture and a collective view formed through a shared history and ancestry where history plays a role in the creation of power within a culture. Cultural identities reflect common codes and historical experiences, which shape our meaning and frame our terms of reference. The second
term of cultural identity recognizes that while there are many points of similarity there are also points of difference reflecting what a culture has become. A continuous interplay of history, culture and power create a constant transformation, positioning people within the narratives of the past and the future. The past continues to influence a culture and impacts on the politics of positioning and the politics of identity.

Studies of colonialism and post-colonialism, discussed also in the next chapter in relation to stereotypical imagery, theorize the actual or metaphorical demonstration of oppression (Moon 2001, p.102). Colonialism is based on the creation of stories, paintings and the visual narratives of the new arrivals and how they see the new land to which they have moved. It also involves the consequential displacement or dispossession of indigenous people who are forced to change their cultural narratives. “Compared with the discourse of the dominant gender or class, colonialist discourse as the discourse of the dominant race is characterized by its ability to retain relatively uncontested authority” (Lee 1997, p.103). The effect on individuals and their societies impacts language, stories and beliefs as people are forced to adopt the traditions of the newly arrived settlers.

Post-colonialism, the reassertion of a culture that has previously been oppressed by the arrival of a different culture, occurs with the resurgence of the minority culture and the backlash that changes the dynamics back to the power of the minority group. Expressions are evident as writers, readers, critics and visual communicators express the political struggle of colonised people. It is a resource to assist in the interrogation of privilege, power and inequity (Iazeel 2012, p.4). The colonised people succeed in re-establishing their language and stories, turning away from the dominant culture, moving away from the culture of the newcomers.

The discourse surrounding ideas of place demonstrates an active participation in the creation of ideas and images used to support or negate positions of power. This aspect of power at play within a culture results in a challenging environment constantly negotiating cultural assets and the ownership of cultural items. Ruffins (1997, p.5) claims that “there is no single definition of the term cultural ownership that would be universally accepted across the various disciplines of art history, anthropology, or political science” and while no group has the legal power to control appropriation, some are better at using political and economic tactics to effectively protest. For visual communication designers, the choice of visual imagery offers the opportunity to promote or demote cultural groups. Choosing to use the artefacts of one cultural group promotes that cultural group over the others that exist in a community. While the colonial empire undertook to civilize and advance cultures by transforming them to one culture, the infusion of a primitive
and exotic cultural production is used to enrich Western cultural production (Fiss 2009, p.5). As a result, Fiss declares, “local design cultures are both challenged and enabled by the increasing globalization of the marketplace” (p.3) and the use of cultural artefacts. The problem with determining if there has been an issue of cultural appropriation comes in defining factual information about that culture. This is often difficult to do when appreciation of a culture is deeply rooted within members of that culture. Individuals, over time, are conditioned in aesthetic appreciation through non-formal modes of articulation acquired over time and not formally articulated (Heyd 2003, p.39).

According to Henry Steiner (1995) protecting cultures from ‘contamination’ is a misguided notion that suggests isolation will maintain purity and integrity. Steiner supports the approach of combining culturally specific imagery drawn from a range of cultural regions. “Societies prosper when they intermingle, when ideas and knowledge are transferred in the exciting dance of cultural cross-pollination” (1995, p.viii). Using the traditions of unfamiliar societies as inspiration and integrating themes and symbols from different cultures is difficult but Steiner suggests that clear communication of the message, a basic outcome for good designers, becomes essential for those working cross-culturally.

Statements of representation with the combination of two different cultures became the area of investigation of a research project called MIX06. Russell Kennedy, from Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, in conjunction with Robert Peters from the University of Hartford, Connecticut, United States of America, conducted a cultural exchange project with visual communication students from Australia and the United States of America. Participants were asked to design visual representations of the cultural identities of their own countries acknowledging the Indigenous culture of that country within today’s contemporary society. Designers worked in consultation with local indigenous representatives over a number of weeks throughout 2006, exploring images of Australian identity or American identity depending on where the students were located. The end result was an intriguing exhibition of 30 digital images presented online, attempting to appropriately, ethically and respectfully combine Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures.

Having the good fortune to be a colleague and designer on this project, I can relay first hand experience of the collaboration and the exercise. As a non-indigenous Australian, I found I was overly cautious of using any symbol or sign that might well be considered as stealing or misappropriating what is rightfully Indigenous. To eliminate any misconception I took the position of representing a non-indigenous perspective on our cultural relationship.
Using the topic of ‘Tools’, the design solution created (Figure 2.15 below) was the image of the Australian flag made of recyclable and non-recyclable materials, such as plastic bags, placed on the traditional red soil of central Australia. This image aimed to highlight the contrast of how non-Indigenous communities use and respect their land compared with Indigenous communities. The traditional Indigenous use of land is protective and respectful whereas it is greatly disconcerting to see how migrants to this land do not, in the main, demonstrate the same understanding and respect.

![Image of Australian flag made of recyclable and non-recyclable materials](image)

**Figure 2.15** ‘Tools’ image solution for MIX06, Monash University, Melbourne (Kelly 2006).

The project, MIX06, could be defined as an intermingling of two cultures, a term Steiner used in 1995. In practice, the choice of imagery was an important consideration in this project and was strongly influenced by the boundaries established by the culture of the designer. I felt that the challenges that exist between the intended transfer of meaning from the transmitter to the recipient, and that which occurs, were accentuated by knowing this design was for a cross-cultural context. I do not consider the intermingling of cultures caused a negative impact on either cultural group. The views presented were predominantly those of the dominant cultural group on behalf of the minority cultural group yet the position the dominant cultural group was endeavouring to take was that of support by highlighting the contemporary issues of indigenous representation. In doing so, it can be seen that the dominant cultural group were maintaining their position of power, however, I believe visual representations of minority groups are necessary to empower their position.
2.1.5 Case Study: Melbourne City Council

This discussion makes the presumption that design and the direction of design solutions lie solely in the hands of designers. A further consideration is the extent to which cultural capital or economic gain influences the outcome of the design process. This is difficult to measure when there are also considerable influences and inputs from colleagues, competitors and clients. As pointed out earlier, designers are cultural intermediaries and “design does not lie entirely within the framework of design culture or in the hands of a few gifted individuals. It lies within the framework of culture as a whole” (Buchanan 1998, p.4). This framework is constantly changing, altering the attitudes of the public and corporations, and the way we understand all of the professions with which design is associated. As our culture continues to change, the role of design and the discipline of design thinking also need to change.

Rowden (2004) explains that culture is an unavoidable and integral part of the designer. It is not always an easily distinguishable component yet the culture of the designer will have an impact on the design process and therefore the visual communication solution. “We cannot, as designers, separate ourselves from the social setting we inhabit” (Haslem 2009, p.20). Subsequently, it can be deduced that if the designer were from a culture that is different from that of the recipient, this would impact on the transmission of the message. The origin of the designer, therefore, becomes a component to consider in the success or failure of the visual communication.

The impact the origin of the designer has on the reception of the visual communication became the primary topic of concern surrounding the 2009 launch of the City of Melbourne logo in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Chosen for its documented debates surrounding issues of culture and, more significantly, the culture or origin of the transmitter, this example of design provides a strong connection to the findings in the international cross-cultural design research project. Although this industry example is based on geographical definitions of culture within the same country, the same issues surrounding the origin of the designer in cross-cultural visual communication can be seen in the research project outcomes with international participants. The City of Melbourne logo design highlights an important consideration in cross-cultural visual communication that has not been investigated in other literary resources and therefore will be presented here.
On Wednesday July 22, 2009, when the Melbourne City Council launched a new logo for the City of Melbourne (Figure 2.16 below), the logo was to replace an old logo that was considered to no longer reflect modern Melbourne and Melbourne’s true international standing. Described by Melbourne’s Lord Mayor, Mr Robert Doyle, as “a symbol to the world of how cool, intellectual, creative and urbane we are”, the logo replaced “about 50 different logos” the city used for its various services (Lahey 2009). When launching the new identity, Doyle claimed that although the old logo had “served us well”, it was “a bit daggy” and the new ‘M’ design would represent Melbourne as “the modern, vibrant, cool city Melbourne is today and will continue to be in the future” (Lahey 2009). The identity will be used to bring together Melbourne under one unified, positive, future focused and flexible design.

Figure 2.16 Landor Associates, City of Melbourne Logo, 2009 (Lahey 2009).

The recipients voiced concern over the design. Questions were raised such as “Where are the gardens? Are they the green bits? I think it needs some laneways” (Lahey 2009), reflecting the commonly held belief that Melbourne, known as the garden state, also has some unique characteristics that are worth promoting, such as its system of laneways and hidden pathways.

As opposition to the design intensified, the debate surrounding the identity of the designer also introduced a new area of concern. The logo had not been designed in Melbourne by a Melbourne agency, rather the design commission had been won by the Sydney based, American owned firm, Landor Associates. Doyle defended the decision not to hire a Melbourne company to undertake the work by stating that “we could [have], but I wanted the best product and this is not work that is actually done very widely” (Lahey 2009).
In response to these comments, the Victorian Chapter of the Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA) issued an open letter to the Lord Mayor. Expressing concern over the release of the City of Melbourne brand mark, Andrew Ashton (AGDA Victorian Treasurer), and David Pidgeon (AGDA Victorian Councillor), clearly questioned Doyle’s decision.

Mr. Doyle, the pool of communication and brand design talent in Melbourne is unrivalled in this country and is arguably the most diverse in South East Asia. It is this fact that leaves us dismayed when trying to understand why you chose to appoint a Sydney based / American owned firm to complete a task that could have been just as successfully completed by any number of Victoria’s internationally acclaimed graphic designers (Ashton and Pidgeon 2009).

Ashton and Pidgeon’s open letter also stated that it was “frankly insulting to the original creator of the incumbent City of Melbourne brand Mr Richard Henderson of FHA Image Design” that the logo that has served the City for over twenty years was now being referred to as “daggy” and “dated” (Ashton and Pidgeon 2009). It was also claimed in the letter that the reference to the old logo as “daggy” and “dated” decreased the quality and depth of discussion on the community debates with reference to communication and brand design. The concluding comments read:

“We urge you to consider and support fellow Victorian designers as you will find that many of these professionals are in their own right symbols to the world of ‘how cool, intellectual, CREATIVE and urbane’ Victorians are” (Ashton and Pidgeon 2009).

The comments from AGDA were aimed at publicly declaring their concern that the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Mr. Doyle, felt Melbourne designers would not be able to provide the same product as an ‘external’, Sydney based design company. This bought forward the topic of the origin of the designer and lead to a renewed criticism of the logo based on the view that those outside a location did not understand and fully appreciate the cultural subtleties of a place as those who reside within that place. Online commentary at the time offered insight into the views of the Australian public and the debate that extended through the design community.

The ‘design local’ issue arises mainly because the new identity conveys no feel for Melbourne’s unique soul and is widely seen as a missed opportunity to do something really good. It’s not certain that local designers would have managed this, but surely more likely? (Flâneurs 2009).
These people (Melbourne designers) helped make Melbourne what it is. Who knows it better than them and who continues to make Melbourne a cultural hub? If you know this, the rest is easy (Jackett 2009).

During this time, designers Chase and Galley (2010) launched a broad page magazine. ‘Design Reporter’ was established to create intelligent and inclusive journalism with the aim of critiquing design in a way Chase and Galley thought was not being debated through the mainstream press in Australia. Within the magazine, Design Reporter published their opinion of the new ‘M’ logo design, as seen below, Figure 2.17.

Figure 2.17 OMG! WTF? (Chase and Galley 2010, p.19).

The debate continued when AGDA sponsored a presentation by Mike Staniford, Executive Creative Director, Landor Associates, in Melbourne on October 10, 2010 (Staniford 2010). This gave Staniford the opportunity to reply to the criticism directed at the Melbourne logo. It was explained that there was not an opportunity for a proposal to appoint the designers as Landor Associates’ sister advertising agency, George Patterson Y&R, had been in discussion with the City of Melbourne over other promotional work. As the work progressed, recommendations emerged to redesign the branding for the City of Melbourne and Landor Associates were brought into the discussion. Staniford agreed that world-class talent could be found everywhere and that the competitive market was now global. Everyone, he said, has the opportunity to work in different countries just as Landor and Associates does. As it turned out, Landor Associates had just lost a pitch in London to a Melbourne based company. The aim of Landor Associates was to hand the work to a local design studio that would team with the City of Melbourne to work at the local level of application. This would ensure visual consistency is maintained. Staniford explained that the response to the Melbourne logo was a positive thing and he was pleased it promoted discussion about design.

Staniford (2010) discussed the branding approach of a number of his place branding clients, and emphasized the fact that place branding is not just a logo, but a presentation of the vision
and values of an organization. This image needs to be supported by the stakeholders at the various points of engagement with the brand. He went on to explain that people do not like change and change was sometimes hard to take and hard to accept. Staniford explained that the general public does not fully understand the business intentions of place branding so can only be a judge of the design. Interestingly, as Staniford discussed this view, he regularly displayed the logos of place branding campaigns, just as the general public use the logo to express their opinions of the campaign. This point should not be underestimated, as the visual communication strategy becomes the centre point by which debates over design solutions pivot and components of the design become the means by which recipients are able to articulate their views.

I understand that the above case study may appear as simply a dispute between Melbourne based designers and the City of Melbourne, yet the underpinning issues have relevance to the role of the transmitter in the communication process. The impact the origin of the designer has on the reception of the design and the role the designer takes in the choice of images presented provide significant contributions to the research outcomes. This debate circles around the question of who is better at resolving design solutions that have strong cultural associations; the designer who is internal to the cultural group, or the designer who is external to the cultural group? It has been raised by Russell Kennedy, president of ICOGRADA that people who are new to a country “often see their adopted country with fresh eyes and adventurous enthusiasm” (p.10) giving them a better understanding of the vernacular than those who were born in that country. Kennedy uses the example of David Lancashire who migrated to Australia and who has undertaken a great deal of work interfacing Australian Indigenous with Australian non-Indigenous vernaculars. Described by Kennedy as being honest and without prejudice, Lancashire’s work is sensitive and respectful. “Designing in this area when one is not Aboriginal requires a clear and considered methodology, acquired knowledge and respect for Indigenous culture” (Kennedy 2007, p.10). He goes on to explain it may takes years to gain the required trust and respect to work collaboratively (2007, p.10). During this time an appreciation and understanding may emerge and the risk of making an error in judgment may be minimized. The boundaries between two cultures can be blurred as one starts to assimilate into their new chosen culture.

Richard Henderson also refers to this topic in an interview discussing the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games identity program (Personal communication, September 24, 2009). “We designed this (the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games identity program) from Melbourne for Sydney. This whole thing was such an interesting outcome because we saw Sydney as Sydneysiders couldn’t see
their own city, because we were outside Sydney”. The design of the Olympic Rings reflecting in water (Figure 2.18) was created as Henderson and his team of designers were leaving a Sydney restaurant one mild evening.

“There was a moment with the look and feel (when) hey, the way the lights are reflected in the harbour; rings, harbour, connection of the two, water. You use your external antennae. What is so special about this place? And bang. You arrive at something like this” (R. Henderson, personal communication, September 24, 2009).

In another example from a different discipline, linguist Usunier (1996) supports the view that someone may have a better understanding of a culture if they are on the ‘outside looking in’ when he refers to his research. Usunier explains that it is more important to understand the unique qualities of a foreign language and a few of its words than it is to have a full command of the grammar and fluency. “It is often useful to be an outsider in relation to what is observed culturally and in language terms an insider in reporting what has been observed” (Usunier 1996, p.388).

One might wonder whether it would be a more realistic approach to have only natives of a language and culture write about cultural topics for their fellow citizens. If we think of anthropology, a discipline with a high record of reporting on other cultures, it seems that the answer would be ‘yes’. Famous anthropologists generally belonged to the cultures of their publishers and readers, not to the cultures they observed. The same holds true for area
specialists. For instance, the two specialists of French culture are Theodore Zeldin of Harvard University and John Ardagh, a British journalist. Similarly, the most prominent specialist of French contemporary civilization in Germany is a German, Ulrich Wickert (Usunier 1996, p.388).

With reference to the argument that someone new to a country can see the country with fresh eyes (Kennedy 2007, Usunier 1996), Natalie Woolcock (2007) a research student at Monash University in Melbourne but based in Stuttgart, Germany in 2007, was appointed to redesign the City Council identity for one of the communities near Stuttgart.

“I was quite surprised when they approached me to re-do their Identity. My first question to them - what can an Australian (with limited German) do for you that a local designer cannot... and they replied - you can see us from the outside... and see our weakness, strengths and uniqueness that we cannot see anymore from the inside. One thing that has worked with the job - I’ve kept their main original element (or a crest) but modernized it and given them a whole new look and feel with brochure layouts, photography etc. I think a designer coming from within the area would have probably thrown away the Crest - or been too scared to touch it!” (Email, N. Woolcock, Tues, 17 April, 2007).

Social psychology explains that when an ‘outgroup’ member does something that is perceived as negative, the prejudiced perceiver is more likely to attribute the action to internal, genetically determined factors than when the same act is committed by an ‘ingroup’ member. When the prejudiced perceiver views a positive action from the ‘outgroup’ member, they will most likely attribute it to luck, exceptional effort, or the exceptional case (Nelson 2006). This theory can be translated into a response of a design. When an external designer creates a design that is unacceptable, the recipient is more likely to attribute the miscommunication to a bias that exists in the transmitter, demonstrating a lack of understanding by the external designer. When the ‘outgroup’ member creates an acceptable design, it is more likely to be attributed to luck than skill.

From a design perspective, professional practitioners suggest there are advantages when a designer is appointed from outside of the cultural group they are designing for. Such designers are able to see a culture in a new light, informing their design process. Yet, from a recipient’s perspective, the relationship is extremely important, as the recipient favours designers whose culture is the same as their own. Their response, as demonstrated in the City of Melbourne example, indicates that the recipient would prefer an insider design to ensure accurate visually representation. The origin of the designer, if known by the recipient, contributes a new consideration to the discussion on communication in a cross-cultural design environment.
and this will be explored further in the international cross-cultural design research project. These different perspectives are important facets to clarify with the role of the transmitter in cross-cultural visual communication design, introducing a new consideration to the impact of the origin of the designer.

### 2.1.6 Conclusion

As cultural intermediaries, designers draw on their ability to source cultural iconography and combine cultures to create culturally distinctive communication strategies. Theoretically then, the culture of the transmitter will have an impact on their visual communication strategy and, in effect, the culture of the designer will have an impact on the reception of the design.

As professional practitioners, designers are able to provide a global perspective to their visual communication solution, limiting the impact their culture will have on the design, or they may choose to take a cultural centred approach drawing on cultural aspects to embed in their designs. Design education teaches the boundaries of acceptability yet, as cultural intermediaries, designers consistently aim to move beyond those boundaries as they look for something new. In a cross-cultural design context, there is a greater propensity for the designer to push the boundaries of cultural influence in their design practice, to move beyond the culturally acceptable, and draw on influences that may not be considered acceptable or understandable to the cross-cultural audience. When these boundaries are challenged, education of the recipient is required to assist with success in communication.

There are many considerations for the designer working in a cross-cultural context. Those listed above, although challenging, need to be identified and negotiated by the designer. The origin of the designer, however, is a new area that can be seen to have an impact on the reception of the design. Recipients, in the industry example of the City of Melbourne livery, indicate that it was not acceptable to have an ‘outsider’ visually represent them when they believed an ‘insider’ would be in a stronger position to understand their culture and therefore be more accurate in the creation of a visual representation. In this instance, the recipient used the origin of the designer as a tool to articulate their concerns and participate in the debate about design, introducing an additional factor to manage in the design process of cross-cultural visual communication.
Each of the points outlined contribute to the complexity of designing in a cross-cultural context and are examined in the research project. Identified within this investigation is the need for designers to continue to push cultural boundaries and re-package cultural iconography in their design work that is in contrast to the recipient’s need for cultural stability and accurate representation. Also recognized is the need for designers to understand cultural appropriation when the cultural group may not be able to identify or articulate the boundaries. And finally, the advantages for designers to be external to a cultural group offering new insight into the cultural group to create a unique interpretation of their visual representation is in contrast to the recipient’s need to be comfortable that they will be understood and appropriately represented, preferably by someone from within their cultural group who would know and understand them. These conflicting perspectives highlight a new consideration, not previously examined in literature, within the role of the transmitter in cross-cultural visual communication.
2.2 Signal

2.2.1 Introduction

Investigating the signal allows us to identify some of the issues that are evident in the creation and reception of imagery used in cross-cultural visual communication design. It is the designer’s responsibility to negotiate appropriate signals to effectively communicate to the recipient, who then bring culturally based perceptions to the reading of the message. As mentioned earlier, the culture of the designer and the culture of the recipient must come into alignment for communication to be transferred from the transmitter to the recipient. The role of the signal is a difficult role to isolate and is best discussed by considering the perceptions and interpretations of the recipient. Geographic-cultural factors once again, are integral to any discussion on cross-cultural visual communication and this includes the role of the signal.

A main consideration of this study has been to investigate the place of stereotyping in our perceptions of other cultures in the design and, in turn, reception of cross-cultural visual communication. Supported by the findings of the major scoping project undertaken for this research, I will conclude that the presence or absence of stereotypes impact significantly on the recipient’s responses to the design work. More specifically, stereotypes were the means by which recipients articulated their views of the design solution. When stereotypical imagery was not present, rejection of a design solution was more likely, therefore making stereotypical imagery a desirable component in cross-cultural visual communication design.

I will argue that it is very difficult, and highly unlikely, to create imagery deemed acceptable and appropriate by all members of a cultural group. The number of options available, diversity of stakeholders, and the passion of recipients, culminate in a challenging and complex task. Stereotypes are essential for recipients to quickly and efficiently understand the world around them (Nelson 2006, p.37; Matsumoto and Juang 2004, p.77), yet the literature analysing the use of stereotypes in visual communication is divided. Lee, Jussim, McCauley (1995, p.162) states that people from different cultures should avoid stereotyping to avoid offending recipients while Matsumoto and Juang (2004) explain that stereotypes are integral to our psychological processes and therefore unavoidable. In contrast, Heller (2005) believes stereotypes are simplistic and wrong. Heller also explains that stereotypes that create positive connections are acceptable but negative stereotypes will be rejected. However, he emphasises that the context in which they are placed is extremely important. In essence, the literature demonstrates
a presumption that the designer will be able to identify a stereotype and avoid its use or inappropriate use. Incorrect choices in imagery can be detrimental to cultural groups, “for if these differences and the potentially skewed perspectives are not recognized, then slippage between accurate and faulty messages will occur within graphic compositions that can potentially influence the greater population” (Buck-Coleman 2010, p.191). An additional concern, as Pitchford (2008, p.104) explains, is that no single image can capture the full complexity of a place or culture. This is evident in the analysis of attempts to visually define Australia and the many options that can be used to represent such a diverse country. In reality, no member of a defined geographical culture is likely to have the same encounter and response (Hodge 1988, p.10) and a unified perspective is unlikely.

The literature review supports my research findings that an appropriate signal for cross-cultural visual communication, that being one that all recipients agree upon, is highly unlikely. Yet, designs representing aspects of Australia continue to be created; for example, Re, a division of M&C Saatchi designed the Australia Unlimited logo, 2010 (Kinsey 2010), a design that demonstrates a stylised view of the shape of Australia while Michael Bryce and FHA Image Design designed the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games Design, 1996 (Wheeler 2006, p.41), a design that draws on culturally iconic imagery to represent the nation. These two designs were chosen to present here as they are completed under the two design categorizations presented in the previous section (see Chapter 2.2.2 Global design approach vs. cultural design approach): global centred and cultural centred design approaches. The different design approaches show the diversity of representations for Australia and, although controversy surrounded each of these designs, the possibility exists for effective communication regardless of the difficult constraints. This investigation presents the issues surrounding the reception of each of the designs, as documented in the media, and the dialogue presented by the different stakeholders groups.
2.2.2 Role of the signal

When interpreting a form of visual communication, people from different cultures share many of the same methods of communication, the same process of perception and similar levels of understanding. And yet, along with these commonalities, there are nonetheless consistent differences in the way people communicate as they apply systematic coding to their reading of an image (Furnham and Bochner 1986, p.205). These conventions of coding vary from culture to culture, which then suggests that the reading and understanding of the meaning of the communication would also vary between cultures, raising particular problems for cross-cultural communication.

Presented in the first section of this document were the issues surrounding the role of the designer, and after this section I will present the issues surrounding the role of the recipient. Placed in the middle are the theoretical positions related to our reading of a signal with a focus on the construction of coding and stereotypical representations. This chapter 2.2.2 Role of the Signal will begin with presenting the understanding of visual perception as provided by semiotic theorists, social psychologists and the design community.

Within the visual system, components of information are absorbed in successive samples. The individual is not aware of the sequence of information inputs, only of the total scene. Input may even occur over time until awareness happens. However, visual reception extends beyond the signal. Information available in an environment may be picked up by observers and then shared and interpretations may include additional information from gestures, signs, pictures and words. As well, the social aspects of interpretation and perception cannot be separated from the message being delivered. “Perception is inevitably a constructive process which creates the world to suit the perceiver; that we see things not as they are but as we are” (Gibson 1950, p.210). Gibson (1950) explains: “only in an unfamiliar environment or a problem situation do we become fully aware of the literal visual world. One has to pause to look in order to see it” (p.212).

In an attempt to understand how visual signals may form an intelligible language, various theories, drawn from the discipline of linguistics, have been developed. Semiotics, a research methodology that examines the use of what are called signs to produce meaning, is an analytical approach to the construction and interpretation of visual communication. Theories of Semiotics attempt to view the exchange of communication as an interactive process that involves the production and exchange of meanings between participants (Fiske 1990). These theories have
proven to be helpful in addressing the process by which images relate to cumulative meaning (Barry 1997, p.117). It is a useful tool in understanding the problems associated with communicating across cultures. This analytical approach and research methodology examines the construction and interpretation of meaning between participants through the use of signs (Schirato and Webb 2004, p.197).

The linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, was influential in the development of semiology as a theory of signs, believing that “human beings are sign-using, sign-generating and sign-interpreting creatures - even though we may not be fully aware of the fact that we are doing so” (Berger 2005, p.11). Saussure felt that the interaction and negotiation of the signs and codes are influenced by the constraint of cultural beliefs and values. Signs, according to Saussure, acquire meaning through their difference from other signs, the implication being that the semiotics is a culturally determined system that will differ across cultures (Ashcroft, Griffiths et al. 1998, p.61). Saussure divided signs into two parts, the signifier (the sound or object) and the signified (the concept that it presents). The item of communication, the written, drawn, printed or displayed piece of visual communication, is the signifier. This would include the shapes, lines, colours, textures and layouts used by the graphic designer to produce the message. Depending on the context in which these signifiers appear and the codes being used in that appearance, the signified or associated message would change. Signs and codes can only be explained in relation to learned and variable cultural rules. Semiology, then, considers communication as a cultural phenomenon (Barnard 2005). This places graphic design under the same umbrella as language, as both disciplines have the meaning of communication socially and culturally constructed and negotiated.

While Saussure was not interested in how communities established and agreed on their associations of signifiers and signifieds, the anthropologist and ethnographer, Levi-Strauss, influenced by Saussure, developed the concept of the myth as a different structure within communication that can be altered, expanded, reduced, paraphrased and manipulated. The basic structure remains the same while the content of the story or myth may change. Myths help to reconcile the contradictions and oppositions that exist in every culture. Under this thinking, groups in our society who have control over language generate myths and the media determines the constraints to our meaning system. These meanings are part of our natural order and establish the boundaries of the notions that establish structure in our society. For instance, these ordered structures define our understanding of success and failure, what signifies good health and bad health, masculinity and femininity. Both approaches, that of Saussure and Levi-Strauss, offer a structuralist analysis of communication, the effect of which
was an attempt to bring order to the chaos evident in the irresolvable effect of contradiction (Klages 2006, p.46).

While Saussure was primarily interested in effects of signs language, Charles Sanders Peirce, philosopher and logician, who developed his own form of semiology around the same time, was interested in how signs work and how we interpret them. Peirce identified three classes of signs in his study of visual messages: iconic, indexical and symbolic. Iconic signs are those that communicate through resemblance or similarity where the relationship between the sign and the object is natural [3]. Indexical signs can be used to represent an object through close association. Symbolic signs are those that have abstract associations and whose meaning is determined through the confines of culture and cultural conventions. The cultural conventions and traditions dictate the meaning; for example, the dove symbolizes hope and peace. As a result, symbolic signs may not be accessible to those outside the culture or there may be an overlapping of categories and meanings that give one sign various interpretations. While both Saussure and Peirce placed the sign at the core of their development of semiotics, Peirce was also concerned with how the reader plays a role in how meaning is formed. The three main areas of concern for Peirce were the signs themselves, the way signs are organized into systems and the context in which signs appear (Crowe 2003, p.16).

Like Peirce, Umberto Eco’s interest was in the role of the relationship between the creator of a work of art and the reader (Eco 1989). Eco recognized that images already contain codes that people understand and iconic signs reproduce a perception of reality, not reality itself. Eco’s theories of perception take the view that the perceptual process is composed of distinct and separate units combining to create meaning. This view is similar to the gestalt view of perception where connections are made between images and experiences. Perception is the common point “where seeing, imagining, and aesthetic response meet” (Barry 1997, p.124). It is a complex phenomenon influenced by a broad range of factors; physical, physiological, neuro-physiological, linguistic, cultural and psychological. Perception includes a person’s mental state, their level of motivation, their past experiences and learnt experiences. Reinforcement of

[3] The three classes of signs listed above are a common understanding of Peirce. Peirce also developed many subsets of signs and complex systems that are also commonly acknowledged however these fall outside the scope of this research study.
these elements is influenced by personality, beliefs, attitudes and values (Laungani 2007, p.165) all of which are separate, dynamic, interactive components that make up a person’s understanding of the world. Therefore, our cultural upbringing plays a significant role in the way we perceive ourselves, others, and the environment around us, along with the symbols we use to communicate. The reader plays a part in the communication process by applying their knowledge of systematic coding — gathered through their experiences of complex social, cultural understandings — to their reading of an image. Crowe suggests that since these conventions of coding vary from culture to culture, the reading and understanding of the meaning of the communication will also vary across cultures.

Primarily, cognitive perception considers the human mind as a complex living organism that can perceive images in many ways. Mental processes allow meaningful connections to be made between what people see and what they understand. The balance between the amount of information offered to the reader and the information required to achieve legibility varies according to the requirements of the communication strategy. “Some types of visual communication clearly need structure and order; signs which because of their practical application need to be read and understood quickly. In other cases where the practical application is less important there are signs which merely seek to give information as opposed to meaning” (Crowe 2003, pp.172-173). As Crowe explains, to read a road sign is to understand the message, whereas, to read a form of visual communication is to respond to the aesthetic qualities and be engaged with the process of interpretation. Signs that require a quick understanding and speed in communication must put a priority of understanding over meaning. Alternatively, signs that open the possibilities of meaning will move away from common and known forms of signs and introduce messages to offer the reader options on how to interpret the communication.

Umberto Eco extends the exploration of perception by including the role of the recipient in communication and the relationship between the creator of a work of art and the reader (as cited in Crowe 2003, p.166). Eco introduced the term ‘open work’ to define design work that proposes a wider range of interpretative possibilities and allows for a number of possible readings. Interpretation of open work “is the guarantee of a particularly rich kind of pleasure that our civilization pursues as one of its most precious values, since every aspect of our culture invites us to conceive, feel, and thus see the world as possibility” (Eco 1989, p.104). The more open the work and the greater the freedom allowed to the recipient, the more likely the interpretation will differ from what is intended. In other words, the larger the possibilities offered to the viewer, the less effective the communication. It is considered by Eco that the greater
the freedom to interpret the visual communication the more enjoyable and challenging the experience is for the recipient.

Different definitions of how the sender constructs the message and the receiver interprets the information leads us to believe “that there are consistent and systematic cultural differences in the way in which people send and receive information” (Furnham and Bochner 1986, p.205) as their codes of communication differ. Interestingly, the closer the cultures are in language, the more the messages can become distorted, as they may not realise they are sending unintended information. Two cultural groups that may share the same linguistic form, for instance, may not realize that they are sending unintended messages and distorting incoming information because similarities in language may obscure any differences that might exist. The sender, who creates the message, has a strong role to play in the communication process and the receiver, who is the recipient of the message, has an equally important role. If the two are not aligned, the communication is open to misinterpretation.

Stuart Hall raises the question of how people know how to interpret signs. “His answer is that there are codes that we learn as we grow up in a culture that tell us how to interpret signs of all kinds – words, images, sounds and so on” (Berger 2005, p.168). Since all cultural objects convey meaning and all cultural practices depend on meaning, they also make use of signs and underlying codes and conventions. Hall’s theories extend to the use of images in popular culture. These theories demonstrate the power the media has to represent social and cultural issues or racial groups highlighting togetherness or difference, promoting one group over another. This is supported by Kress and van Leeuwen who explain that “the dominant visual language is now controlled by the global cultural/technological empires of the mass media” (1996, p.4). The spread of images through electronic media create social and cultural conditions to make and remake the visual language in contemporary society.

In 2006, Katherine McCoy introduced a new focus when she referred to the nature of changes in the practice of graphic design. For over 150 years design worked to satisfy the Industrial Revolution’s need for mass communication. Mass production was based on the principle of one product, one communication strategy and all problems solved. “The economies of mass production reduced diversity and individuality but produced lots of affordable goodies” (McCoy 2006, p.201). According to McCoy, we are experiencing the end of mass communication, “narrowcasting instead of broadcasting, subcultures instead of mass culture, and tailored products instead of mass production” (2006, p.201). Diversification, decentralization, downsizing and disunity have led us to a producer centred system with
specifically tailored communication processes through specifically tailored channels. As a result, the communication process has changed. Designers must understand their audiences, their needs, their values and their unique methods of communication. The process of sender – message – receiver needs to be reconsidered. McCoy explains that the role of the receiver should be given the same focus in teaching and research as the other components of the communication process. No longer can we rely on the mass communication methods for all of the graphic design problems we face. Instead we must more closely consider the receiver and use their differences and diversities to enrich the message we send.

Even as far back as 1994 a similar view was being discussed. Poynor, in his book ‘Design without Boundaries’, states that we need “design that talks to diverse groups in specially made visual languages each group will understand” (1998, p.28). Poynor noted that design needed to be more inclusive and more genuinely multicultural. Nearly twenty years later, with the impact of globalization, the discussion continues. A renewed debate now considers designing in a cross-cultural context and the new challenge this places on the visual communicator. Designers must negotiate their way through the myriad of considerations and a broad range of stakeholders to achieve an effective communication strategy.

Each of the theories presented above have relevance to the construction and the perception of the signal. While visual sensations are not culturally defined, strongly embedded in the discussion of visual perception are the cultural aspects of communication. Visual messages have power to inform, educate and persuade a culture and these theories help our understanding of the way we see and process images. It reminds us, once again, that culture and communication are inseparable activities.
2.2.3 Cultural stereotypes

As stated earlier, it is the designer’s responsibility to negotiate appropriate signals to effectively communicate to the recipient, who then brings geoculturally-based perceptions to the message (Furnham and Bochner 1986). Designers, to this point, have not been provided with consistent guidance to navigate the use of stereotypical imagery in a cross-cultural context. The aims of this section will be to clarify the literature available to visual communicators on the use of stereotypical imagery and lead to a discussion on how to resolve visual imagery when predominantly broad advice is evident. Providing the foundations for this analysis of the literature, I will begin with an overview on the impact of culture on stereotypes. This will be followed by a reflection on the discourse surrounding the use of stereotypes in advertising, social studies and design.

Group members attempt to see their group as a different entity from other groups. They are motivated to look at the positive attributes of their group and preserve and protect these differences to achieve a positive group distinction, which, in turn, increases their loyalty to their group. Defined by Tajfel and Turner (1986) as the Social Identity Theory, the same principles can be applied to cultural identities. People who have contact with other cultures have an increased awareness of their own differences. They have a positive group distinction with their own culture and therefore remain loyal to the membership of that group. They become proud of their differences and often it is not until they have contact with other cultures that they feel the need to protect that to which they are loyal.

As previously stated, culture is defined by the codes that produce meaning to a group. It can be said that culture embodies the best that has been thought or said of a group in society maintained through shared values and systems of representation (Hall 1999, p.2-4). Cultures have a complex set of rules, prohibitions, permissions, values and classifications. Kress (1988, p.12) explains that these codes appear as normal and natural to the general population. As a result we accept these sets of rules as the natural order of how things should be. People who share a language, a history and a way of life, have connections that run very deep. “Culture gives us a mirror upon which to look and see ourselves, after which we model ourselves” (Simmons 2006, p.1). According to Usunier (1996, p.383) our own thought framework is established automatically and unconsciously and reflects the values of our national culture, something we do not choose. This allows us to evaluate people, interpret situations, and defines the attitude we should adopt to communicate and negotiate with others from our culture.
Humans, generally, have a strong need to live in a predictable, ordered environment. To achieve this, our selective attention leads us to applying a stereotype to people we meet based on our cultural understanding and our loyalty to our cultural groups. Stereotypes, defined by Hilton and von Hippel (1996, p.240) as beliefs about characteristics, attributes and behaviours of certain groups and their members, give us the ability to make assumptions quickly and efficiently so we can move on to other matters of importance. “Stereotypes enable the perceiver to very quickly arrive at an evaluation of a target individual on the basis of very little information” (Nelson 2006, p.37). They can be formed and reinforced with very little exposure or no exposure at all to the group that has been stereotyped. In doing this, we tend to look for the information that is consistent with our stereotypes and largely ignore that which is not consistent. This means that stereotypes are maintained through confirmation of what is already believed or remembered.

“Where customs differ, communication is difficult, time is short, and attention spans are limited, both parties are likely to “code” observations in the most efficient way possible” (Pitchford 2008, p.97) giving people the opportunity to reduce complex information to smaller and more manageable proportions. Pitchford explains that touristic representations can become stereotyped and both the ‘host’ and ‘guest’ can create distorted, stereotypical views of each other. There is no guarantee that people’s perceptions will be free of distortion.

Stereotypes are more often discriminatory and tend to take on a life of their own. It is relatively easy for negative stereotypes to develop because of our cultural upbringing, cultural filters and expectations based on our own social environment. “Stereotypes are an integral and important part of a complete package of psychological processes that constitute our sense of self and self-concept” (Matsumoto and Juang 2004, p.77). When they come across a culture that is different from their own, people use stereotyping as a basic means of managing the complexities of that culture. Stereotypes are never true of every group member and using stereotypes is always open to the potential for unfair and inaccurate interpretation.

Stereotypes develop from this point into either the ‘ingroups’ (groups to which we belong) or ‘outgroups’ (groups to which we do not belong). This basic level of classification is often reinforced through television, films, magazines and other media. We use the media as a tool to help us decide the acceptability of our beliefs and attitudes towards others and “one may come to believe that these attitudes represent the normal, or mainstream, view of society” (Nelson 2006, p.35).
Considering the discourse in other discipline areas, social psychologists, according to Lee, Jussim et al., (1995), concern themselves with the use of stereotyping when the beliefs are based on either ascribed or achieved characteristics. Characteristics obtained at birth are defined as ascribed characteristics while those, which are freely chosen, are defined as achieved characteristics. "When an individual freely chooses a category membership, he or she is well aware of the potential stereotypes that may follow this decision" (1995, p.288). Stereotyping on ascribed characteristics and classifying people according to a few broad categories such as race, sex, age or religion leads to far more serious outcomes and opens the potential for negative relations. Hilton and Hippel (1996, p.241) take a similar position when they explain that stereotypes based on race, religion, gender or the characteristics of a person have great potential for error.

Hilton and Hippel (1996, p.241) outline in their article, Stereotypes, that the features of race, religion and gender are formed based on real characteristics of the individual. Alternative to this, Hilton and Hippel explain that stereotypes can be formed through accurate representations based on a local reality to which the individual has been exposed. These stereotypes mean perceivers fail to notice individual differences and, instead, differentiate using distinctive, localized group features.

In addition to this, there are differences between cultural stereotypes and individual stereotypes. A stereotype that is shared by the wider community is a cultural stereotype, whereas a stereotype held by an individual and based on individual experiences and beliefs, is an individual stereotype. These may vary and intertwine but the cultural stereotypes have a greater tendency to shape beliefs and understanding (Nelson 2006). For example, Gruére and Morel (1991) conducted research looking at how the French were culturally stereotyped by other nationalities. Each nationality had a different set of traits it used to describe French nationals. The Germans saw the French as pretentious and offhand, fashionable, womanising, frivolous, fickle, but still well mannered and resourceful. The British saw the French as nationalistic, chauvinistic, centralistic, polite but not open-minded, humourless and short-tempered. The Dutch saw the French as cultured, fond of good living, fidgety, talkative, not very serious, with feelings of superiority. The Swedish saw the French as possessing a superiority complex, scornful, boastful, talkative, immoral, disorganized with a suffocating hierarchy. The North Africans saw the French as fairly racist, stingy, reasonably honest, with good education and good food, although they were considered selfish. Finally, Asians saw the French as exhibitionists, bureaucratic and reticent in making friends. Although some of the characteristics assigned to the French by the various national groups were similar, each group saw the French differently.
As Nelson (2006) emphasises, the use of stereotypes can be seen to impact the reception of the message. In 2003, a study looking at the effect of interpersonal communication as a source of maintaining stereotypes determined that when communicating through a chain of people “stereotype-relevant information tends to become more stereotypical, thus confirming the stereotypes held by recipients of communication” (Lyons and Kashima 2003, p.989). The research was conducted using student participants, the majority of whom were women, with a mean age of 18.7 years. A story was given to the participants with ten consistently stereotypical characteristics and ten inconsistent stereotypical characteristics. One part of the study was to have participants write down their impressions of the story, while the second part of the project was to have participants reproduce the story for another participant to read. The findings determined that as messages were transferred between audience members, individuals contributed to the maintenance of stereotypes and the biases that emerged continued through the line of communication (Lyons and Kashima 2003, p.1013). Changing stereotypical views was difficult as information passed between people and the communication was combined and incorporated with current knowledge. If the information was considered inconsistent with current knowledge it was changed in favour of stereotypical consistencies already understood. The more reliable the source or the closer the relationship between the sender and the recipient, the more acceptable the stereotype inconsistencies became. However, if the relationship between the sender and receiver was distant, the stereotype was changed to one that was felt to be more consistent with current understanding.

Supporting this analysis, the following paragraphs provide examples of research projects that highlight the reception of stereotypical visual imagery in differing circumstances. Each of these projects demonstrates the response of the recipient to the stereotypical imagery presented and highlights the difficulty of the designer in anticipating the response of the recipient. The first of these research projects was undertaken by Leigh Anne Steere (1999) who conducted an experiment with sixteen African American women aged between 25 and 73. The experiment was derived as part of an undergraduate communications class and was informally arranged by invitation through friends and their networks. Guests were divided into teams of four and given a range of magazines to choose images and colour swatches. Participants were required to cut out the images they considered distasteful and offensive from a large array of magazines as well as those thought to celebrate African American women. A number of themes became evident when reviewing the choice of images. These women liked images that showed strong, confident, professional black people, and warned against comic or negative images of black men. They wanted to see a range of African American skin complexions, body shapes and hairstyles, and they appreciated images conveying a sense of family and community. They also preferred
true-to-life colours, situations, and facial expressions. The discussions resulting from Steere’s (1999) research were considered emotional and intense, incorporating issues of history, current events and culture. The end result of this study was a general appreciation that we all need to learn to realise and accept that we each have our biases and prejudices and these are manifested in our use of stereotypes. Designers and advertising professionals need to understand this will occur, be open to the potential of making mistakes and humbly correct them when they occur. It was concluded in Steere’s research that this process is often difficult to undertake, as stereotypes are difficult to negotiate.

The second research project investigating the impact of stereotypical imagery was called Sticks and Stones and was aimed at teaching designers their ethical responsibility to create tolerant, informed messages in their design practice by exploring the presence of stereotypes in their design work. The pilot program, conducted from 2005 to 2006, engaged more than 75 graphic design students from locations within the United States of America representing different religions, ethnicities, sexual orientations and socioeconomic backgrounds. The innovative curriculum brought together students from diverse geographical regions to create a self-portrait that visually and graphically demonstrated themselves and the influences in their lives. The project resulted in design work that was intended to confront social intolerances and challenge stereotypical interpretations in visual communication. Participants were asked to graphically demonstrate how place helped to shape them; their home, their travels and their community. These were exchanged with participants from other schools who were then required to label and define the stereotypes reflected in the designs. Students were encouraged to ignore political correctness and label the images with honesty allowing the examining of both the use of language and the use of visual imagery. Students then gathered for a discussion about what imagery was misleading, and what terms were used, forcing a re-examination of labels and the stereotypes identified in the designs. “Students learned first-hand how it feels to be stereotyped and to stereotype others and how misinformed language can shift perceptions” (Buck-Coleman 2010, p.196). The project highlighted for students the potential power designers’ hold and the responsibility they have to ensure positive contributions to cultures and communities. This response from one of the participating students was indicative of the group: “I found it interesting that something we do without thinking can really affect other people in a profound way” (Buck-Coleman 2010, p.196).

Perhaps it is easy to dismiss the need to educate students about racism, diversity and stereotypes as redundant or unnecessary. After all, we entered a new millennium with a climate
of ultra political correctness… We have begun to breakdown the prominent racial and prejudicial forces but there is still much work to be done (Buck-Coleman 2010, p.190).

Interestingly, Sticks and Stones was conducted at the same time as the research project presented in this document and uses a similar process whereby participants created the images and participant reviewed the images. Iterations of Sticks and Stones have continued in 2010 through a range of projects and the continuation of this analysis highlights the necessity to educate designers on their use of imagery and in particular, use of stereotypes. This also demonstrates the lack of impact awareness within current design literature. For instance, Lee, Jussim et al. (1995) state that “traditionally, researchers in cross-cultural communication and management hold that to facilitate cross-cultural communication, people from different cultures should avoid stereotyping” (p.162). Yet, in an online creative forum defining the role of stereotypes in design, Steven Heller (2005a), co-chair of the MFA Design Program, explains that it depends on the stereotype being used as to the success or failure of the communication. He believes stereotypes are a useful marketing tool, that can be appealing and beneficial in the right context, but if designers feel their work is beginning to create stereotypes, promote stereotypes or being used by others to create stereotypes, they should not be used. We should look at the use of stereotypes as simplistic and wrong, “unless, of course, the stereotypes don’t hurt. There are many of those that will play themselves out” (2005a). In a similar discussion in AIGA Forum, Heller explained that “context is everything” (2005b). Stereotypes are created and enjoyed in many environments but the right venue is essential or the creation becomes simply a very bad idea. Using stereotypes requires the designer to make the decision on ‘when to use and when to refuse’. “Stereotypes are bad when they support ostensibly venal ideologies. Otherwise, they are part of the communications vocabulary, in a way are symbolic of their respective times” (Heller 2005b).

This discussion on the use of stereotypical imagery connects with earlier discussion of cultural appropriation and colonialism. To speak of control, contrast and difference, one also speaks of colonialism and post-colonial theories. Similarly, the use of stereotypical imagery demonstrates a process of power by creating discriminatory and authorized forms of political control. Homi Bhabha, a leading post-colonial scholar who has contributed greatly to our comprehension of identities in post-colonial globality (Shome and Hegde 2010, p.101) explains that to establish a stereotype, the stereotype requires a continual and repetitive chain of other stereotypes. The aim of colonial discourse is to construct a definition of people based on racial origin in order to establish a system of administration and instruction; a system of management
and power. Theories of Colonialism investigate the social reality of the ‘other’ who is a separate entity that is knowable and visible (Bhabha 2004, p.70-71).

Bhabha writes that his understanding of colonial discourse suggests there should be a shift away from defining stereotypes as positive or negative. Instead there should be a focus on the process of subjectification made possible through our understanding and discussion of stereotypes. Bhabha (2004, p.75) explains that stereotypes are not a simplification but a false representation of a given reality, informed by a process of knowledge, an offering at any one time and a secure point of identification. It can be ascertained that post-colonialism is a form of "minority discourse," and a "product of damage" emerging as a result of material deracination and cultural marginalization (Lee 1997, p.113).

The construction of images, positive or negative, is a crucial and necessary process of subjectification, and hence, stereotypical imagery plays a role in the development of post-colonial resistance. In other words, reproduction can lead to the consolidation and perpetuation of the reality; and yet reproduction can lead to an emergence of a minority group as they naturally work through the process of subversion through appropriation.

In a very preliminary way, that the stereotype is a complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode of representation, as anxious as it is assertive, and demands not only that we extend our critical and political objectives but that we change the object of the analysis itself (Bhabha 2004, p.70).

Edward Said (1991) explains that knowledge about the ‘other’, and the establishing of this knowledge, creates power. Consequentially, social attitudes, ideologies and practices reduce the capacity of the cultural group being written about. Arbitrary connections between signifiers and the signified get made, enforced, expanded, reproduced, and/or modified through discourse. Once associations have been made connecting certain signifiers with certain signifieds, those signs are viewed as real, true or factual (Klages 2006, p.154).

As a result, post-colonial discourse and the use of stereotypical imagery extend into other categorizations of power struggles. For instance, post-colonial theorists have entered the debate of cultural globalization with an interest in the relationship between the local community and the global community, and the understanding of social and cultural organizations that transcend boundaries of nation or state. Bhabha himself recognizes that cultures should not be based on a range of separate and distinct systems of behaviour, attitudes and values. Instead, cultural differences exist in not what the distinctive systems are but how they came to be known and
therefore come into being. How they establish themselves gives authority to our terms of reference and how we order our priorities. The issue still exists in who controls the process, who benefits from it and how are these systems represented?

Lina Khatib (2010) agrees when she explains that global and local cultures are constantly interacting and post-colonial discourse now relates to areas beyond borders. “The world today is witnessing the emergence of new forms of affiliation that transcend the nation yet that do not necessarily mean that the nation is under threat” (p.279) providing interconnecting communities and organizations, creating affiliations of local, global, regional and religious. Khatib argues that although cultural identities are historically grounded they are also transformable, creating open identities that are simultaneously global and local.

The Benetton advertising campaigns of 1984 to 1992 is an industry example that encapsulates many of the issues presented in the analysis of cultural stereotypes and, from earlier chapters, the choice of imagery by the designer. Italian photographer Oliviero Toscani photographed the advertising campaigns, and the Benetton magazine Colors, was designed by Tibor Kalman from 1991 to 1995. The campaigns were designed to balance different cultural groups and challenge conventional cultural perspectives by merging the profile of minority cultural groups with that of the majority cultural group. The aim of the magazine was to present the similarities of people by grouping people into the tribes of countries, cities and cultures and then pointing out the interesting differences within subgroups and subcultures. It worked with the notion that if certain beliefs could be changed in a safe and legitimate environment, it would facilitate positive change in a dominant culture. The magazine presented the position that we do not have to give up anything to achieve a better world, just be willing to accept most people. The campaign and magazine was produced with the intention of changing the world and influencing cultures through presenting radical and adventurous communication to mainstream markets. Written in the first issue published in 1991 was the statement: “Your culture (whoever you are) is as important as our culture (whoever we are)” (Tyler 1996, p.60). An example of the front cover of Colors magazine, Issue 4, can be seen below in Figure 2.19.
The campaigns were praise for incorporating urgent social concerns and drawing attention to the issues most pressing in society at the time. In support of the campaign were comments such as “Toscani did no more than make visible this invisible stamp of discrimination, marginalization and alienation” (Salvemini 2002, p.114). The initial campaign from 1984-1989 presented people smiling and happy demonstrating unity by emphasising difference, yet as the campaigns unfolded from 1989 to 1992 the images became more controversial. Initially demonstrating portrayals of racial harmony, the campaigns moved to be a vehicle to highlight topical issues and present strong social statements including images of an electric chair, a gangster funeral and an Aids victims nearing death. Toscani turned human suffering into a fashion statement and ignited a debate about the acceptable choice of imagery. Toscani was said to be occupying a moral high ground not normally granted to advertising material and as a result Benetton was condemned for its appropriation of serious issues to sell products. Advertising for the purpose of encouraging consumption was being replaced by Benetton with advertising as a social commentary, a role normally allocated to news broadcast. The Benetton campaign had the result of breaking down aspects of the media and re-establish commonly held views of advertising and news. Benetton condemned the criticism as a form of censorship stating that Benetton was about social responsibility, lifestyle and a worldview claiming other advertising campaigns were missing the opportunity to engage in social debate (Giroux 2009).

Regardless of the intent of Toscani and Benetton, the campaigns can be seen to be a demonstration of power and the politics of exploitation using stereotypical imagery. Toscani’s photographs, aimed at creating scenes of social harmony and world peace by placing representations of difference in a wider context of unity, can be described also as a vision put forward by a dominant culture, reflecting it and the values it adhered to, not a vision that celebrates diversity. The end result is Benetton’s reduction of complex cultural and racial
identities into narratives controlled by a strongly white European/Anglo-Saxon influence. Representations of difference are simple stylistic variation so they do not become a point of conflict and upset the image of unity (Tyler 1996, p.62).

The example of Benetton is quite distant from the conclusions presented earlier of Steere (1999) who explains that stereotypes are a difficult component to negotiate and with the potential for mistakes to occur, designers must offer humble apologies and correct any error they make. Toscani consciously played with controversial imagery and chose to reduce culture and racial differences to simplistic representations (Back and Quaade 1993, p.79). As previously stated, it is relatively easy for negative stereotypes to develop because of cultural upbringing, cultural filters and expectations based on our own social environment. However, there appears to be recognition that appealing stereotypes, creating positive connections, are acceptable while negative stereotypes will be rejected. The complexity of this issue will be further analysed in the following section, 2.2.4 Signals for Australia. In this section the signals used to visually represent Australia and demonstrating the diversity of options that must be negotiated to create a single representational image will be demonstrated. This research study, however, provides insight into the considerations a designer must navigate to align the culture of the designer to that of the recipient for communication to be transferred from the transmitter to the recipient.

2.2.4 Signals for Australia

Much of the foregoing discussion on the signal, culture and use of stereotypes converges when discussing the visual representation of a country. For example, an analysis of the visual representation of Australia demonstrates that in addition to consideration of attitudes, perceptions and stereotypical imagery, varying options and opinions emerge over time. Recipients have their own perception of a country and cultural relationship with their community while designers must face their own issues to create a unifying visual representation. It is difficult to create a single image as an appropriate image of a country or community, and as will be discussed in this chapter reviewing representations of Australia, it is difficult to create a single image to visually represent such a diverse nation. This discussion is important to the analysis of the role of the signal. It establishes overarching areas of debate and when compared with content in further chapters, in particular the analysis of place branding, highlights the interrelationship between cultural representation, economics and politics. These connections, along with the importance of landscape in visual representations, support my earlier association with the theories and principles of cultural geography.
Ethnic and national identities are extremely complex phenomena, so that images, like summary statistics, may be useful or misleading, but they necessarily involve the loss of information. Again, images are by nature two-dimensional, so that no single image can begin to capture the full complexity (Pitchford 2008, p.104).

For many years the image Australia presented of itself was a stereotypical one of a sun-drenched, sunburnt and satisfied white Australia (Powerhouse Museum 2007). It offered the view that we were a country of sheep farmers living life in the open air and playing sport, particularly cricket. Strong links to the British Empire merged with images of Australia being an exotic destination with thriving cities. Australians were proud to be associated with the bush pioneering spirit of being a larrikin and convict ancestors, once considered a shameful admission, are now more commonly acknowledged as an admirable connection and worth boasting about.

In the early years of the nation, Australia was seen as a place where diverse communities came together and united with a strong conformist element evident and endorsed in its attitude. Those who were prepared “to shed their old ways and be like the rest of us” were included and “those who could not or would not change were marginalised and excluded, just as Aboriginal Australian had been” (Hodge 1988, p.8). By the 1960s this view was challenged when the message from the government changed to one of inclusion and acceptance. Although these efforts were considered to be “tokenistic and designed to defuse the latent alienation of immigrant communities whose members were being denied full and equal membership of the society to which they had given their commitment” (Hodge 1988, p.8) the migration policy did eventually succeed. It was considered that Australians did not like the migrant populations but they disliked more having attention drawn to them by being considered nasty and un-accepting of the new members of their community. With an open tolerance, migrants found security, prosperity and self-confidence and eventually there was a transformation in society in unexpected ways making Australia a more diverse, lively and exciting place (Lack and Templeton 1995; Alcoff and Mendieta 2003).

However, it was not only Australia’s growing immigrant population that needed to find inclusion within its iconography, its Indigenous population, to this point, marginalised and widely rejected, also needed to find acceptance. Indigenous iconography, an additional consideration to the visual representation of Australia, has slowly permeated into the dominant community. It started in 1971 when Harold Thomas designed an indigenous flag that, in 1972, was flown on the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the forecourt of Parliament House in Canberra. This flag was adopted nationally by the Aboriginal communities and it is now recognized by the Australian
federal and state governments as a symbolic representation of indigenous Australians, often flown in conjunction with the Australian flag (Powerhouse 2007).

No non-Aboriginal Australian with any sense or sensitivity would presume to define Aboriginal identity. And no one Aboriginal Australian can confidently speak for all Aboriginal people whose diversity is no less complex now than it was in 1788 before European arrival. These are two of the fundamental characteristics of Aboriginality in contemporary Australia: it is exclusive and it is infinitely diverse (Hodge 1988, p.4).

In addition to the pioneer, convict, farming, multicultural or indigenous options to include in a visual representation of Australia, there is also the landscape to consider. Australia, in 1974, signed with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Convention to recognize areas in its natural landscape as heritage areas worth preserving and protecting because of their unique qualities. The Great Barrier Reef, Sydney Harbour Bridge, Sydney Opera House, Uluru (Ayers Rock) and the Blue Mountains progressively became areas of public interest and pride. Conservation issues and heritage considerations meant these areas developed into focus points for the community. Gradually Australians came to appreciate some of the more unique sites that now represent iconic symbols of Australia.

With the complexity of how Australia has been shaped and the evolution of recognized icons of Australia, the Bicentenary of Australia in 1988 required a concerted effort to define Australia as a nation. According to Anne Game (1989) the more effort that was made to construct a sense of unity, the more the differences became visible. The search for identity often returned to landscape. On the one hand there exists the Red Centre, a desert area depicted as harsh and uncaring, inhabited by dingoes and snakes, yet also seen as magical and inspiring and representational of indigenous Australia. On the other hand there exists Bondi Beach, an urban environment representing the multicultural diversity of a young, vibrant nation. “As with other sites of national identity there is a stock of myths and images around the Australianness of Bondi” (Game 1989, p.1). Each site has a competing and contested claim.

As an alternative to defining Australia by landscape, it may be represented in the actions of the people and the myths that evolve because of these actions. There is a belief that Australians are a pioneering people, innovators and improvisers when times are tough and things are scarce and Australians are perceived to be practical bushmen, capable, inventive and with a love of the outdoors. The question is whether these ways of defining Australia in terms of landscape, and actions or myths surrounding its people, ring true in the reality of representations of Australia.
Jackson (2006) reviewed three writings on Australian industrial design in an attempt to source a national design sensibility and concluded that the view Australian’s have of themselves in relation to industrial design is simply not true. Jackson explains that “bicentennial writings gave rise to what can be termed a national delusion – a series of what I have identified as ‘design myths’ beloved by Australians, but which have no real evidence in fact” (p.250).

The local variations in population make-up between city and country, from one state to another, even from one suburban street to another, ensure that no single Australian has a first hand encounter with the reality of the complex diversity of the whole country. The image we have of who we Australians are is a construct, based on our personal experiences. Images of an Australian-ness that no longer exists must be deconstructed and then reconstructed to reflect the present reality (Hodge 1988, p.10).

Visual communication design in Australia struggles to create a uniquely cultural position. Little of contemporary Australian graphic design “seems to be informed by a strong sense of place” (Poynor 2006, p.111). “Australian designers would sooner smash their G4s than resort to touristic clichés such as kangaroos, koalas and bush hats hung with bottle corks” (Poynor 2006, p.110). Poynor explains that this is more than likely due to the pressure of external forces that see Australia as an attractive market with potential. He goes on to say that corporate global brands treat design in Australia as simply local maintenance of their international brand, reducing the opportunity to create an Australian national expression.

‘There is still a lot of cultural cringe,’ says Penny Bowring. ‘There are still a lot of Australians who don’t have confidence in what we produce ourselves and will say that anything that’s international has got to be better than anything that’s local’ (Poynor 2006, p.114).

Recently, with the establishing of The Australia Project, the challenge to explore and redefine the national stereotype was put to the Australian creative community. Three Australian designers, Chris Edser, Scott Heinrich and Yianni Hill (2010) posed three specific question: Who as Australians are we? What are we doing? Where are we going? Edser, Heinrich and Hill understood that there were potentially over 22 million responses and opinions that can be gathered from these questions. Their hope was that this project would reveal unique and personal perspectives on Australia today. Although there is an opportunity for anyone to contribute to this project, participants, selected through a short-listing process, were asked to creatively express their view of Australia. It is difficult to critique the large amount of material that has been contributed to the project and add to the commentary that exists online at the website of The Australia Project (Edser, Heinrich et al. 2010). The diversity of imagery
presented equates to the diversity of opinions and contemporary issues that face the country. For example, one contribution entitled ‘The way life should be’, from Justy Phillips and Dr Margaret Woodward (2010), explored the complex relationship of tourism with the Australian culture through the visual representations purchased by tourists (Figure 2.20 below). In particular, this project combines tourist tea towels with the domestic footstool, reflecting on the representations of contemporary Australian culture combined with the common household item.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 2.20** Justy Phillips and Dr Margaret Woodward, *The way life should be* (Phillips and Dr Woodward 2010)

Topical and political issues are evident on the Australia Project website (Edser, Heinrich et al. 2010). Participants have the ability to visually express their opinions and make clear statements on the contemporary issues debated in Australia presenting negative representations and commentary. For instance, addressing the question from a different perspective, Travis Price (2000) explored the influence of American pop culture on the Australian culture. Price’s illustration of a koala dressed in US apparel reflects his own dismay at the wearing of a US brand, seeing it as declaring loyalty to the US popular culture and not that of Australia. Price discusses the speed at which youth have access to the popular culture of other countries with the onset of the Internet. This has resulted in a faster turnover of trends and consumption of items. Price explains that the image (Figure 2.21) was “also a metaphor for other underlying political issues we have begun to question in the last decade”.

![Image](image.jpg)
Adding to this discussion, Poynor (2006) suggests the Australian design industry should consider design that is unique to Australia and look at the unique cultural demands of the country it appears in. Perhaps perceptions will then change and an individual identity will be allowed to flourish. The Australia Project, although still in its infancy and currently confined to the design industry audiences, wishes to use the contributions for a wider discussion through exhibitions and publication opportunities. The larger debate will create greater diversity but will hopefully result in a new vernacular that will enable Australian design to celebrate Australia’s unique position.

The difficulty in creating the visual representation of a country is not a phenomenon unique to Australia. Gustavo Piqueira (2006) in his article ‘In search of Brazil’ looks for the graphic language that reflects what it is to be Brazilian and found that most concepts fall short of being an adequate representation of the diverse nature of Brazil. Carnival in Rio de Janeiro and the image of a Brazilian woman parading down the street are images widely presented to encourage tourism and are not seen as images representing ‘the real Brazil’. Soccer playing youth or indigenous tribes attempting to maintain their customs and traditions are the various faces that are fundamentally those presented for tourism. Instead Brazil faces the same uncertainty as Australia; it is diverse, exotic, with past and present roots and a broad base upon which to create a national identity. No one image has yet been found to suit such a diverse culture.
2.2.5 Case Study: Australia Unlimited and Sydney 2000 Olympic Games

Demonstrated in the previous section is the difficulty in designing for a diverse country. But Australia, like others, perseveres in the attempt. Each of the examples presented below, Australia Unlimited and the Sydney 2000 Olympic livery, fit the criteria of being an example were a large number of stakeholders are not participants in the design process, and where documented debates can be pieced together through media and design literature. It is also important to note that the examples represent a range of business-based priorities, for different purposes, yet each has been required to engage a home grown audience and an external cultural group. They highlight how the topic of national identity and visual representation is partly generated through state and national newspapers resulting in community debate. Eleni Hale, in her article Spelling it all out, (2009) refers to researcher Mark McCrindle when he reveals “Australians had a love-hate relationship with clichés. We rely on them even though we groan when other people use them” (p.19). It is claimed that nearly half of all Australians hate the use of clichés yet almost all Australians use them. “But we had a soft spot for ‘no worries’, ‘she’ll be right’ and ‘fair dinkum’” (Hale 2009, p.19). Another article, referring to Australian tourism and the representation of Australia to overseas markets, stated that “Australia ‘had a lot going for it’ but lacked ‘identity’ as a tourism destination” (Rolfe 2009, p.35). Rolfe (2009) refers to Poon Tip, founder of a large adventure travel company, who claims that “most Australian campaigns have had beaches or mountains in them, but not everyone wants a mountain or a beach on their holiday” (p.35) and most attempts to promote Australia to an overseas market were ‘seriously underselling’ the nation.

This section will review two designs relevant to an Australian identity. The first is a design for building the brand of Australia for international corporate investment and the second is the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games livery. These two designs have been chosen as examples for their different approaches. The first design demonstrates a global centred design approach while the second design demonstrates a cultural centred design approach, drawing on previous discussions in Chapter 2.1.3 Global design approach vs. cultural design approach. The two brands are both required to portray Australia to an internal and external community which can also be explained as different geographical-cultural regions or across cultures. Evident in this investigation is the process of acceptance of each design where both designs were met with some discouragement.
To begin with, on September 16, 2009, The Sydney Morning Herald reported that the Federal Government of Australia was launching a promotion to reposition the nation’s image on a cultural and intellectual capacity rather than looking at the country as a valuable tourism destination. “We are calling on Australia’s best creative minds to put their hands up to redefine and enhance Australia’s global image” (Crean 2009). The Australian Minister for Trade, Mr Simon Crean, stated that “we will be looking for agencies to build a contemporary national brand – one which captures the essence of Australia – not just a great place to visit but a great place to live, work, and invest – a trusted trading partner and a great place to pursue an education” (Crean 2009). The aim of the campaign is to promote Australia as an innovative nation, emphasising that it can be the supplier of clean energy and clean food to the rest of the world. The tender release asked for expressions of interest from suitably qualified companies to develop a contemporary national brand and implement innovative and cost effective ways to promote the brand internationally. Crean explained that the design must go beyond the promotion of Australia as a tourist destination, a position that is already well established, to instead encourage and build international business relationships (Markessinis 2010).

Building Brand Australia was an initiative launched by Crean in response to the Mortimer Report, 1996 – 1997 Review of Export Policies and Programs, completed by Mr David Mortimer AO and Dr John Edwards. This review of over 160 written submissions and consultations involving more than 170 organizations and individuals from around Australia resulted in recommendations on trade and investment policy and exports promotion programs for the Government to consider. Within this report, concerns were raised about how Australia was positioning itself on an international level (Crean 2008).

The outcome of Building Brand Australia initiative was revealed on May 14, 2010. The new national brand was named Australia Unlimited and the campaign was explained to be a distinctive concept that would be the face of Australia on a national stage for much of the 21st Century (Figure 2.22). “Brand Australia is about selling Australia to the world and demonstrating the full versatility and diversity this nation has to offer” (Crean 2010). The Australia Unlimited logo would be used to promote business, science and the arts rather than promoting Australia as a great place to visit.
Figure 2.22 Re, a division of M&C Saatchi, *Australia Unlimited* Logo, 2010 (Kinsey 2010)

The brand identity was designed by Re, a group of brand designers working out of the Sydney office of advertising agency M&C Saatchi. As stated on the Brand Australia website:

“The logo is a representation of Australia symbolising our growth and expansion. It embraces the best of who we are and speaks to the future-focused nature of our endeavours and our outward looking approach to global affairs. Many people look at it and see an outline of Australia. Some see arrows. Others will see a variety of symbols. It is the inherent simplicity of the logo that allows people to create their own perspective on Australia. The interpretations are unlimited” (Austrade 2010).

The design was seen by some as “yet another image for international people to recognize and connect with Australia” (Harrison 2010). The *Logobird* website, created by Duane Kinsey (2010), dedicated to discussion about visual communication, presented criticism of the design. Comments included “framing the shape of Australia with two boomerangs is a little too clichéd”, “the typography is dull” and the design “fails to represent anything remotely Australian” (Kinsey 2010). It was agreed that time would determine the success of the design.

A second example, the *Sydney 2000 Olympic Games* livery, chosen for its distinctly different approach to the visual representation of Australia, can be seen to be far less abstract in its symbolism. The host country for the Olympic Games has the right to use the Olympic logo in conjunction with their own trademark and mascot. “The challenge is to capture the spirit of the Olympics and combine it with the distinctive culture” (Wheeler 2006, p.241) of the host nation. The importance of designing the identity for an Olympic Games can be summed up in a comment made by Arquitecto Pedro Ramirez Vázquez, President of the Organizing Committee for the Games of the XIX Olympiad for 2000. “Of least importance was the Olympic competition; the records fade away, but the image of a country does not” (Rivas and Sarhandi 2001, p.74). The project becomes an enormous responsibility to provide an image that satisfies
the world, as well as solving the internal issues of communication. “Culturally, logistically, politically and aesthetically it is more complex than ‘selling’ anything” (Rivas and Sarhandi 2001).

The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games logo (Figure 2.23 below), when launched on Saturday September 14, 1996, was described as a logo “created in harbour blue, shades of red and yellow ochre and white,” and showing “an athlete made up of boomerangs carrying the Olympic flame in the shape of the Opera House” (Dasey 1996, p.5). Trevor Flett (as cited in Dasey 1996, p.5) from FHA Image Design, the organization appointed to create the Sydney Olympic logo, admitted he thought there would be controversy over choosing the design and claims that he also had doubts about the concept at the start. Flett said he looked forward to the controversy and felt that if there were no controversy the logo would be considered boring. “We initially thought, ‘Boomerangs? How clichéd is that?’ But we eventually decided that because they were such Australian icons, we had to work with (them) and we have got to be proud of them” (as cited in Dasey 1996, p.5). Initially rejected by the designers, the design was retrieved when the final version of another logo was not considered to capture the spirit of the Games.

![Figure 2.23](image)

Figure 2.23 Michael Bryce and FHA Image Design, Sydney Olympic Logo Design, 1996 (Wheeler 2006, p.41)

The chosen solution came as an extension from a logo originally designed for the bid to win the Olympic Games for Australia (Figure 2.24). The bid logo was described as a series of squiggles representing the Sydney Opera House. The new logo, on the other hand, was considered to represent more aspects of Australia and the fact that an Olympic Games is an event for athletes, to represent all athletes.
Even with considerable research, endorsement by many organizations and public consultation, the Olympic Games visual identity program met with controversy. Responses varied “with comments ranging from wonderful to corny” (Susskind and Guilliatt 1996, p.4). Some enjoyed the dynamic quality of the logo, its the use of colour and its mix of Australia’s white and Indigenous cultures, the sails of the Opera House, the boomerangs and the sun.

Views that expressed an unfavourable response ranged from considering the new design to be ‘corny’, difficult to read, confused and with ‘too many disparate elements’ (Susskind and Guilliatt 1996, p.4). It was thought that the earlier logo designed for the bid to win the Olympic Games was more effective. “It was a single symbol that suggested verve, energy and something the world could clearly identify as Australian” (Susskind and Guilliatt 1996, p.4). Initially there was concern that the logo would contain a kangaroo, and after all of the complaints about kangaroos, some were upset that the final logo contained boomerangs, an icon that was considered a cultural cringe. It was argued that it was illogical to use a boomerang to represent an athlete’s limb. The Federal President of the Australian Labour Party (ALP) at that time, Mr Barry Jones, thought the logo looked pretty dreadful. “I am at a loss to know why it appealed so much to the judges. It is a collection of clichés” (Weekes 1996, p.3).

Amongst the variety of public responses were comments considering that it was “probably good timing to have an Aboriginal cultural symbol for the Olympics. It’s probably a very good thing” (Dasey 1996, p.5). One representative of the Indigenous community, aboriginal activist Michael Mansell, expressed the view that “Australian sports officials have no right to use indigenous symbols. Aborigines should boycott the logo and associated products” (Dasey 1996, p.4). In the same article, Ric Birch, Artistic Director of the Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) took a more pragmatic view when he said “the thing
about Australia is that we've got 17 million people with 17 million different opinions” (Dasey 1996, p.5).

In an interview I had with the leading designer of the Sydney Olympic Identity Program, Richard Henderson, now a prominent Melbourne designer and founder of R-Co., Henderson acknowledged that there were a number of influencing factors that determined the outcome of the visual identity program. As Henderson explains, the design was required to communicate before it was required to be aesthetically pleasing.

In actual fact, the solution, whilst I don’t actually think from a design aesthetic, if I had to say is that good, if I was to hold it up as the ultimate piece of our best design, well I’d say no it wasn’t. On the other hand, if I was to hold it up as saying that did it hit the mark, did it actually help generate one million dollars worth of sponsorship, and still talk about it as an icon, it did reflect to the world as Australian content. It became the benchmark for the next two games (R. Henderson, personal communication, September 24, 2009).

In criticism of the final Sydney 2000 Olympic Games logo, Henderson explains that the solution is full of stereotypical imagery, “perhaps trying to put a lot of stories into a mark when it should actually be something very, like, I love New York, a simple powerful, simple statement” (R. Henderson, personal communication, September 24, 2009). All of the additional connotations attached to the final design can water down the impact as it attempts to mean something to everyone.

The question was then asked whether it becomes frustrating when people evaluate the design without understanding all of the process that lead to that design solution. Henderson (R. Henderson, personal communication, September 24, 2009) explains there are many stakeholders involved, each paying taxes, each from the local community, unified in the way they feel about themselves. Quite often there are too many stakeholders involved in the decision making process, and the design process becomes flawed.

This is where the designer, the creative director and the team, it is critical that they are able to engender trust, responsibility and the recognition of expertise to be able to take something that could be ordinary and make it extraordinary and a lot of this work is basically quite honesty ordinary (R. Henderson, personal communication, September 24, 2009).

Henderson continued to explain that clients must appreciate that the designer is an expert and the designer has a responsibility to ensure the client understands the expert point of view.
The process can be a difficult one as Henderson elaborates when referring to the *Sydney 2000 Olympic Games* design process.

And all the bitchiness that went with it, I can add, and we do the world’s best that has been replicated (R. Henderson, personal communication, September 24, 2009).

A number of years down the track, the Sydney Olympic logo is now considered to be a large factor in the successful of the Sydney Olympics marketing campaign. Graham Hankinson (2007) felt that the logo helped build a positive reputation that has been sustained well beyond the event. As suggested by Arquitecto Pedro Ramirez Vázquez, President of the Organizing Committee for the Games of the XIX Olympiad, the records have faded, but the image of Sydney, presented at the Sydney Olympic Games, has not (Rivas and Sarhandi 2001).

One of the greatest opportunities that hosting an Olympics offers a country brand is the permission to display the country’s true colors and unique experiences. Unlike conventional tourism marketing, the Olympics is a chance to put aside the usual, oversimplified mass-marketing approaches and instead share a detailed, authentic and idiosyncratic experience of the host country (FutureBrand 2008).

There is consistently an outpouring of passionate responses when a design is required to appeal to many stakeholders. Nevertheless, it is difficult to get all parties to agree on a single idea or concept. One of the main issues for those involved in branding an organization such as the *Australia Unlimited* design, or an event such as the *Sydney 2000 Olympic Games* design, is to keep participants objective and keep the customer focused. The potential for bias is large when the brand involves stakeholders and recipients who were born, educated and live in the culture or community of the design. Governments are often the largest stakeholders and their agenda can be different to that of other stakeholders. This analysis of the design approach and reception for the examples highlights a number of the challenges to negotiate in cross-cultural visual communication, leaving the designer in the unenviable position of facing a very difficult task. Differences in opinion are evident between designers as well as between stakeholders and the examples presented here are important in that no matter how prepared one may be, differences in opinion will remain. Not all recipients are able to contribute to the design process and, as can be seen in these examples, recipients’ still express their views of the design outcomes.
2.2.6 Conclusion

The consistent and systematic cultural differences in communication support our understanding that culture and communication are inseparable activities. Stereotypes are an unavoidable factor to be considered in cross-cultural visual communication. The development of stereotypes is a natural part of the process of communication for humans as they attempt to understand their position in their own environment and quickly make evaluation of information presented to them (Nelson 2006, p.37). The ascribed or achieved characteristics are often reinforced through television, films, magazines and the visual media. These, in turn, are used to help us decide what beliefs and attitudes towards others are acceptable or not. Stereotypes are based on limited information and are often negative, never really true, and not an accurate perception. They are strongly embedded and therefore difficult to change. Even when challenged, people often revert back to their original perceptions. From this develops a sense of ‘ingroup’ and ‘outgroup’.

The responsibility of successfully identifying and using, or avoiding, stereotypical imagery is an important role of the visual communicator. The literature provides limited guidance to the designer as they attempt to navigate their way to the correct use of imagery in cross-cultural design. The clearest advice is to consider the context in which the stereotypical image will appear and work towards using positive stereotypes. This recommendation will be further analysed in subsequent chapters.

It is very difficult to create a single image to define a country and challenges will arise in creating an appropriate representation. Whether the image is based on references to the landscape, the people, myths that exist or iconic architecture, careful consideration of how this image will reflect and support the diversity of a country is needed. The ever-changing environment makes the process challenging and often controversial. The analysis of the visual representation of Australia, including the *Australia Unlimited* and the *Sydney 2000 Olympic Games* designs, are examples demonstrating the complexity of the associations a signal can provide. Whether it be the myriad of stories that can be told, the heritage listed natural features, the iconic human made structures, the historic associations of an area, or clichéd and stereotypical images, each offer distinctly different messages to the broad and varied stakeholders who engage with the communication.

The results of the literature review for the signal lead me to argue that it is very difficult, and highly unlikely, to create imagery deemed acceptable and appropriate by all members of a cultural group. The number of options available, diversity of stakeholders, and the passion of
recipients, culminate in a challenging and complex task. Not all of the stakeholders will contribute to the design process yet still feel the need to voice their opinion in the outcomes. This aspect of cross-cultural visual communication introduces an impact on reception that must be considered.
2.3 Recipient

2.3.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the changing dynamics of message reception through industry examples of national, corporate, and place branding design. Although these examples are not always clear instances of cross-cultural design, the culture and recipient dynamic offers useful information for achieving more clarity in cross-cultural design practice. These particular examples are intimately involved in issues of cultural identity and recipient’s attempts to negotiate their own cultural connections. Success, as defined by the recipient and how the recipient responds to visual communication design will be analysed. The recipient’s response can provide us with considerable information to inform design practice.

The process of communication, as discussed earlier in the introduction and as identified in Shannon and Weaver’s (1949) schematic diagram of a general communication system, involves the transmitter who selects words, images, phrases or symbols to create a signal for the conveyance of an intended message to the recipient, who then assigns meaning to that message. “Establishing mutual knowledge, then, is an essential ingredient of eliciting shared meaning in communicative acts” (Berthon, Pitt et al. 2009, p.357). To achieve this, success needs to occur through each stage of the communication process, with the transmitter, the signal and the recipient. Success, however, is difficult to measure. In the past, as Frances Butler (1989), states there have not been any tools for audience evaluation in graphic design (p.158).

To structure the analysis of the role the recipient plays in cross-cultural visual communication, discussion will centre on a number of aspects. The first of these is clarifying the importance of successful communication and its relationship with the aesthetic appeal of the design. The designer is required to design to communicate (Bruinsma 2002, Peuersson 2004) while at the same time provide aesthetic appeal in order for the communication to break through the barrage of information presented to people each day (Pynor 2001, Lupton 2003). The challenge is to achieve a balance between the success in communication and aesthetic appeal. Yet, debates exist on whether one aspect should take priority over the other. Firstly, this chapter will review the debate surrounding success in communication and aesthetic appeal in relation to the objectives of cross-geocultural design, informing this discussion with a focus on the views of the recipient.
Secondly, this chapter will highlight the variation of response to design over time. Reflecting on two specific campaigns will do this: British Airways (BA) livery redesign in 1990, and the rebranding of Broken Hill Proprietary Limited (BHP) to BHP Billiton in 1996. These campaigns were chosen because of the documented widespread response they received and the disparate end results. Evidence of visual communication strategies that are seen as unsuccessful or as a failure are promptly withdrawn from sight, making the ability to learn from the design process and the design outcomes difficult. The controversy and ensuing backlash that surrounds campaigns such as these, when they are launched, can be mapped through the opinions and debates presented in the media. For these two campaigns, I will undertake a review of the responses of the recipients through the local media and design community forums. This will demonstrate some distinct patterns. In each instance there was a strong public outcry where the recipients did not accept the livery or the design strategy. In the case of British Airways, the outcry resulted in the campaign being withdrawn, whereas BHP Billiton’s design was continued and still exists today. Each of these programs offers insight into the impact culture has on the design process and consequently the reception of the design. It is evident that recipients voice their concerns over changes in the visual representation of companies, particularly when the recipient has a strong connection to the organization.

Along with the above-mentioned campaigns, the analysis of the response of the recipients through local and national media consistently demonstrates that not everyone is going to be happy with the design strategies and citizens are not always the ambassadors of the communication campaign organizers had hoped they would be. For example, when investigating the logos of Scotland, Auckland and Belfast, the images that were presented in the livery were not always the impressions the recipients believed should be used to represent themselves and their communities. The logos of place branding, seen to be the intersection between tourism and nationalism, have become the means by which the recipients voice their opinion and channel their concerns. It appears that with the increase in diversity of recipients and complexity of designing for place branding, a common language and global design approach has emerged. Common descriptive terms such as ‘diverse’, ‘vibrant’ or ‘inspiring’ are used to describe a place (Julier 2005) and common language such as ‘representative of our diversity’, ‘unite and support’ or ‘telling our story’ are terms used to communicate with the recipient (AucklandPlus 2009).

Information has emerged within the place branding literature that could be used as a tool for cross-cultural visual communication designers to assist with the issues highlighted above. Amongst this information, reference is made to the Destination Brand Benefit Pyramids provided by Morgan, Prichard and Pride (2004) and Baker (2007). These pyramids are
beneficial in structuring and understanding different design approaches and how they are likely to be received. The framework provides guidance to categorizations that move beyond the visual stereotypes and introduce a new vernacular that can be used to engage stakeholders and recipients. This new vernacular addresses the issues of communication between the transmitter and the recipient. Introducing this understanding to the design community provides a theoretical framework for designers to better deal with the recipient component of cross-cultural visual communication.

2.3.2 Success in communication versus aesthetic appeal

Peuersson (2004), who defines Graphic Design as “the art and craft of bringing a functional, aesthetic, and organized structure to groups of diverse elements” (p.8) also states that “the goal of communication-oriented design of messages should always be clarity of communication” (p.2). Yet, as ‘cultural agents’, designers make a huge difference; they know how to make things look appealing and are experts in imaginative communication that can work with a broad audience. As professional practitioners that link peripheral organizations with the greater community, they can channel the social discourse into the public domain “keeping the eyes and minds of their fellow citizens wide open” (Bruinsma 2002, p.60). Presented in this positive sense, design can be considered as a problem solving tool and a visual language with the ability to activate “a critical sensibility instead of merely triggering buying impulses” (Bruinsma 2002, p.59). Yet, in a negative sense, “critics argue that while it is a force, graphic design is also the tool of marketers and promoters that have tapped into hip codes as a way to entice and allure consumers into brand loyalties resulting in unnecessary expenditures that perpetuate wasteful indulgences” (Heller 2002, p.47). Ellen Lupton agrees when she describes graphic design as an area most at blame for visual waste and overload in modern society. “Typically, graphic designers provide the spit and polish but not the shoe” (Lupton 2003, p.23).

Although Lupton (2003) can be interpreted as putting forward the argument that designers are skilled at providing the aesthetic appeal to visual communication, there is debate about whether the role of the designer is to provide clear communication over and above aesthetic appeal. This debate emerged in a discussion between Tibor Kalman and Joe Duffy in 1990 (Heller 1990), when Duffy raised the ethical dilemma that designers must deal with when faced with the situation of choosing between two standards: one that applies to clients who allow them to do ‘good’ work but may not pay, and the other that applies to clients who will pay but for
whom designers resolve not to do the same quality of work but merely provide the ‘spit and polish’, as Lupton (2003) describes it, to sell the product [4]. Kalman agrees when he states:

I think that my overall worry about the design business is whether as a group we are becoming overly influenced by money and professional success, and whether that’s impacting on our ability to criticize our clients and make impact on the world and as a group influence culture (Heller 1990, p.69).

Adrian Shaughnessy, in his article From Here To Here (2004) argues that there are two distinct strands of graphic design: one where graphic designers fulfil their traditional obligation as transmitters of commercial information and messages, and secondly where design is used in radical, adventurous and sometimes purposeless activities, defined by Shaughnessy as ‘design-culture graphics’ (pp. 54-55). He explains that graphic design has moved beyond being just a specialist discipline and has become a culture in its own right. This debate, spanning 20 years, emerges in literature at regular intervals and separates the topic of successful communication from the consideration of aesthetic appeal. Poynor (2001) explains that people generally understand that design adds value just as people generally value appearances and effective communication. Products have been enhanced, organizations have grown and cultures have developed as a result of what design can offer. “The world outside design heard the message and design literacy is at an all time high” (Poynor 2001, p.115).

Within the communication process, the transmitter may formulate their message with either a focus on the success in communication or on aesthetic appeal, whereas the recipient may prefer the communication to be either strong in information or strong in transformation. Informational communication provides the receiver with factual and relevant information in a clear and concise way, giving the receiver the ability to make a logical decision. Transformational communication, on the other hand, looks at the experience and the mood involved in sending

[4] According to Ken Garland, regardless of the argument that one may vary the quality of the design work they produce, a business must be profitable before it can indulge in any area of passion, and there is no real difference between the design works done in the commercial arena and that done outside the commercial environment. Each relies on the commercial environment to finance it and both require the good health and resilience of a profitable economy to maintain the industry of design (Garland 1999, p.187). Duffy agrees when he looks at this argument from a creative perspective and suggests that “we don’t do work we are not proud of; we do not work for people who won’t allow us to do good work” (Heller 1990, p.69). His philosophy is to design to the same high standards irrespective of the client base and the income potential. Ideally, the passion should be for the process of design and to do the best one can.
the communication without addressing the facts. It is a process of inspiring and challenging the receiver through enthusiastic and unique communication techniques. The two processes, formulating the message and interpreting the message, each have an impact on the meaning of the message.

Designers have the ability to create design submissions based on success in communication (an informational approach) or aesthetic appeal (a transformational approach), yet recipients from different cultural groups have a tendency to favour particular approaches in their communication. The cultural differences in the preferences of the recipients will impact on the success of the communication strategy. Understanding more clearly the balance between the two considerations and their impact on the recipient can assist with the management of cross-cultural design.

**2.3.3 Corporate branding: British Airways and BHP Billiton**

The balance between success in communication and aesthetic appeal is strongly impacted by the emotional connection of the recipient with the brand. When analysing the British Airways and BHP Billiton design implementations, recognition of the views of the recipient in the debate surrounding success in communication and aesthetic appeal introduce new complexities based on a strong connection and emotional attachment in the aesthetic sphere.

These two case studies are important within the context of the research in that they equate, perhaps because of size, but certainly because of emotional connection, to the issues identified with cross-cultural visual communication. There exists a strong impact from the response of the recipient, which, in the case of British Airways, altered the course of the design strategy. The lessons to be learned provide insight into the complex relationship between the recipients and the signal. Similar patterns will be identified later in this chapter in the response of the recipients to place branding.

In 1987, when British Airways (BA) was privatised, the “BA” abbreviation of British Airways was jokingly referred to as ‘Bloody Awful’ and the company repositioned itself around the idea of ‘the world’s favourite airline’. The emphasis in this voice was on the word ‘favourite’. “Over the years, BA conducted dozens of change programs aimed at developing a service-minded culture.
These programs considerably improved BA’s image with its customers, allowing the airline to overcome its former reputation for incompetence and indifference” (Hatch and Schultz 2008, p.3). The British Flag dominated the tail fins of each aircraft and the logo (Figure 2.25) was on the nose of each plane.

*Figure 2.25* Landor Associates, British Airways Original Logo, 1984 (Carter 1989, p.42)

Research in the mid-1990’s discovered that the customer base of British Airways was shifting and only 40 percent of its passengers were British. It was considered that to increase market share, British Airways should be more appealing to the broader client base it was attracting. Rather than represent British Airways with an entirely new vision and make a dramatic change from being ‘the world’s favourite airline’, the decision was made to shift the emphasis of the positioning line from ‘favourite’ to ‘world’s’. This shift called for the need to address the British Airways market in a more global context, rather than local, and introduce a bold, new visual identity. In 1997, British Airways launched a new corporate identity program repositioning British Airways as a ‘world’ airline.

The logo was replaced by a design labelled the ‘Speedmark’ (Figure 2.26 below). The ‘Speedmark’, looking like a twisted ribbon, blue on one side and red on the other, was designed as a contemporary version of the Union Jack without a direct reference to the British national flag.

*Figure 2.26* Newell & Sorrell, British Airways ‘Speedmark’, 1997 (Airey 2008)
The tail fins of each plane had previously carried the British flag, denoting planes as being those of British Airways. Tail fin designs were replaced by a series of symbolic images created by designers representing a mix of cultures. British Airways planned to commission 50 world images to be used on the tail fins. Applications from artists around the world including Southern Africa, Hong Kong, The Netherlands, Ireland and the North West Pacific Coast were amongst the first to be launched. “According to a company spokesperson at the time, the new airplane livery was ‘a creative expression of a company, which, both in the letter and the spirit, regards the whole world as its customer’” (Hatch and Schultz 2008, p.4). The images below (Figures 2.27 – 2.29) are examples of the new design strategy.

![Figure 2.27](image1.png) Newell & Sorrell, British Airways Livery Application (Pie 2004, p.149)

![Figure 2.28](image2.png) Newell & Sorrell, British Airways Livery Application (Pie 2004, p.84)
As a consequence of this innovation, the British design community saw British Airways as brave and forward-thinking (Tullo 1997, p.13). Four of the first twelve world art images were by British artists, and this was seen as British Airways cementing its relationship with the British community. The name of the company still appeared in full with the word British emblazoned on every plane, endorsing the company’s support for British heritage for which it was renowned. The timing of the design strategy was considered appropriate as it was launched at a time when “curry overtook fish and chips as Britain’s most popular food” (Briscoe 1997, p.13). The tail fins were seen to have charm and humour and were described as the sort of style not usually associated with a large multinational business. It was perceived as an imaginative and exciting direction and British Airways was “one on the few organizations which could even contemplate a concept like this” (Davis 1997, p.12).

A more critical review came from the comments made by Daniel Kraft, designer, who stated:

> Viewed individually (the Speedmark and artworks) produce beautiful and fresh surprises. All the same, as a fleet these tails may prove problematic for building a leading international identity. BA has elected to promote a “global personality” through ethnic diversity. Does “global personality” exist beyond cliché? (Kraft 1997, p.10).

The cultural representations on the tail fins of each plane became the most controversial aspect of the new identity program and created considerable outcry. British Airways underestimated the effect the Union Jack, carried by its fleet of airplanes, had on the British public. As patrons trusted their lives to a transport company, national identity reflected in the Union Jack, gave them reassurance. It symbolised national pride for its British passengers and the British public. Its removal was seen as an insult delivered on a global stage, further distancing the airline from
its cultural heritage. Lady Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister at the time, entered into the debate when she covered the tail fin painted with a Kalahari tribal pattern with her handkerchief, indicating her disgust at the disappearance of the old design (Briscoe 1997; Minale 1997). This incident occurred at a Tory political conference where a model British Airways jumbo was on display. The Prime Minister’s action immediately sent a message to the British community that the designs were unacceptable. Indeed, the livery was never fully accepted by the British public. The debate escalated, and as a consequence, no further designs were released and the program was cancelled.

Hatch and Schultz (2003) explain that the rebranding for British Airways was a complicated issue. They pose the question: if British Airways had understood the views of the British traditionalist would it have leapt so quickly into the new globally diverse image, or if it had been strongly committed to a global image would it have cancelled its new livery so quickly? At the time of the launch British Airways would have adamantly testified that it did everything right, yet Hatch and Schultz propose they did not integrate all of the pieces of the puzzle. The creation of an organizational identity, as suggested by Hatch and Schultz (2003, 2008) involves a relationship between strategic vision, organizational culture and the stakeholders’ image of that organization. When these factors are misaligned, the potential of the organization cannot be reached. Any imbalance in the presentation of an organization’s identity will affect the perception of the corporate brand. “Companies face many disruptions to their identity conversations making them occasionally incoherent – or even worse, completely disconnecting their cultural heritage from their stakeholders’ image” (Hatch and Schultz 2008, p.55). In this instance, the vision, culture and image of British Airways were misaligned. The culture did not support the image, and the image was not supported by the stakeholder’s vision.

Understanding an organization’s culture, like another person’s identity, is a process of decoding. Its visual identity (corporate identity) tells you one set of messages, whilst its culture of behaviour affirms or denies this (Rowden 2004, p.134).

It has been suggested by Hatch and Schultz (2003, p.1061) that British Airways should have continued with the campaign instead of panicking and withdrawing the program. Adjustments should have been made to the promotion of the new identity in response to the objections. This would have saved British Airways the embarrassment of withdrawing the costly program and given time for the stakeholders to adapt and absorb the changes. This, in fact, was the approach taken by BHP Billiton when faced with a similar response from recipients, however this design was not withdrawn, resulting in gradual acceptance.
2009 saw a name change for the Broken Hill Proprietary Company (BHP) and the subsequent development of a new logo for BHP Billiton indicating a cultural shift following a new merger. After 115 years of the same BHP logo (Figure 2.30), seen as a stylised version of Australia, the new logo was aimed at creating a strong response, demonstrating that BHP was developing into a very different company (Figure 2.31).

![BHP logo](image1)

**Figure 2.30** Designer Unknown, BHP logo, (SeekLogo.com 2008)

![FutureBrand logo](image2)

**Figure 2.31** FutureBrand, BHP Billiton Logo, 2001 (FutureBrand 2009)

First impressions of this livery were not favourable. Kemp (2001, p.1) reported in *The Age*, Melbourne, Australia that the audience at the launch found it difficult to describe the design although it was called a coffee spill, an ink-jet print that went wrong or family of peanuts. Paul Gardiner, Grey Advertising chairman (as cited in Gluyas 2001) said, “Logos are all in the eye of the beholder. But to me it looks like a shirt pocket after your fountain pen has leaked” (p.001). The logo was criticised strongly because it did not clearly depict what BHP Billiton does. It was also noted by Corio (2009) on the forum site *Walking Melbourne*, the new logo was very similar to the old logo belonging to the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) (Figure 2.32).

![GLAAD logo](image3)

**Figure 2.32** Enterprise IG, GLAAD Logo (Underconsideration 2010)
Creator of the logo, Trevor Flett, creative director of Future Brands FHA, justified the design arguing that it symbolised growth, flexibility and strength. The symbols were not meant to look like anything in particular. They were abstract symbols that conveyed a new, forward-looking business. They could be interpreted as symbolizing two companies coming together to form one, or, in an attempt to convince potential investors of BHP Billiton’s social and environmental credential, they could be seen to depict the minimal footprint BHP Billiton would leave on the world (Kemp 2001). The logo was also called soft and youthful representing BHP Billiton’s shedding of its old image for a new image. The explanatory notes released at the time of the logo launch stated “the organic shapes suggest people, their knowledge, intelligence and thought processes” (Smith 2001, p.019). “The movement as the shapes progress reflects our focus on the future and change, evolution and transformation. The rich colours suggest the natural source of our business, as well as our energy and drive” (Smith 2001, p.019).

In defence of the logo, Flett explained that the process of designing a logo such as the BHP Billiton logo was a well researched, scientific process. It was “not about a designer whim or a light bulb going off in the middle of the night or in the shower, that’s an old stereotype” (Ahmed 2001, p.7). In the same article, BHP’s Michael Spencer explained that the old logo was about steel (then BHP’s principal product) and as such was angular, old-fashioned and perhaps authoritarian in its image. The new message was about the future and representing the company as a young, dynamic competitor in the resource industry.

The launch of the BHP Billiton logo created controversy. Criticism was focused around the concept and design, as well as the cost. Tim Riches, Managing Director of FutureBrand, explained that the changes had people talking and questioning BHP Billiton: who they are and where they are going. He argued that was a positive thing rather than a negative contribution to the life of the livery (Hutchison 2004). Unlike the British Airways example, BHP Billiton continued with the campaign and over time the controversy faded. The BHP experience acknowledges the view that, despite having worked hard on developing a message and creating a visual identity program to communicate that message, the final design solution may not be greeted enthusiastically.

Corporate identity programs are considered long-term projects with a gradual build up of applications across all media and customer interaction points. The role of the corporate identity program has changed from being a means of increasing the visibility of a company to one of having a role in communicating the corporate strategy. Trust and confidence is established with familiarity, which is why it is difficult to measure effectiveness. Now seen as broader than
marketing, the corporate communication mix involves formal communication processes with all of the organization’s stakeholders, combined with the multi-faceted way in which an organization communicates.

For this reason, a corporate identity is more than a logo. In the field of marketing, a corporate brand is considered one of the most important strategic assets a business can have. In the short term, it is a vehicle for communicating change and in the long term it is a marketing strategy for building customer trust and familiarity. It must be well managed and viewed as a tool for long term investment. If managed correctly, companies can gain advantages over their competitors and expand as organizations. Great brands are considered to develop “when leaders step out of their comfort zone and show creativity, vision and courage” (Baker 2007, p.59). This can never work perfectly all of the time and, as a result, strategies are employed through a range of methods and avenues to consider and reconsider the role of each of the stakeholders in the life of a brand.

Managing expectations and results from various stakeholder perspectives is a result of a broader understanding of design process and who the process and result impacts and serves. These can be delicate and politically charged relationships that directly alter the design result (Poggenpohl and Winkler 2010, p.130).

The BA and BHP Billiton examples demonstrate that, irrespective of the fact that there was considerable research given to an appropriate strategy, and the direction was endorsed through stringent processes, there was considerable public outcry rejecting the livery. No more so than when the identity being replaced had a strong personal connection with the recipients engaged with the livery. This pattern can also be seen with the recipient’s response to the Australia Unlimited and Sydney 2000 Olympic designs. “With a more complex array of stakeholders, with or without a collaborative team, decision-making becomes something to argue and negotiate based on knowledge and information. Designers have yet to step up to this change in process” (Poggenpohl and Winkler 2010, p.130). With time and careful management, the issues associated with the new design approach subsided, yet there exist additional considerations to manage in cross-cultural visual communication design.
2.3.4 Place branding

The emotional response of the recipient, identified in the examples of British Airways and BHP Billiton, can also be seen within the discipline of place branding. This common denominator is the aspect that will be addressed within the discussion of the literature in the following section. In the field of place branding, the response to visual identity strategies follows distinct patterns. Some of these are only now emerging, while others have been documented strongly through the research in business and marketing studies. It can be seen that both place branding and cross-cultural visual communication involve the consideration of multiple stakeholders, are surrounded by controversy, concern themselves with issues associated with identity and are strongly associated with culture. To begin with, the positioning of place branding in contemporary branding theories will be explained. This will be followed, in the next section, by the response of recipients to industry examples.

Countries require a variety of strategies in order to accommodate the different challenges they face. Countries compete with each other for tourism, investment and aid, buyers of products and services or educated, experienced and talented people. There has been a transformation from the city as a marketplace to the city as a product. “The intersection of tourism and nationalism in particular have begun receiving more attention, which is not surprising given the importance both these forces have assumed in shaping people’s lives across the globe” (Pitchford 2008, p.6). Seen as an exciting, complex and often controversial field, place branding is an umbrella term that encompasses national, regional, city and destination branding. “Place branding, still – but only just – a sub category of branding, is rapidly becoming, at both national and regional levels, a well-known theoretical and methodological field in its own right” (Donald and Gammack 2007, p.169). The complexity of defining place branding and its relationship with other categories of branding will be addressed in this chapter.

Dinnie (2008, pp14-15) offers a range of definitions for the term ‘brand’. Dinnie refers to Doyle (1992) who suggests that “a successful brand is a name, symbol, design, or some combination, which identifies the ‘product’ of a particular organisation as having a sustainable differential advantage” while The American Marketing Association define brand as a “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition” (2008, p.14). Dinnie goes on to explain that brands do not exist without the surrounds of popular culture and trends in society and then refers to Grant who suggests that brand is actually a ‘cluster of
strategic cultural ideas’. On the other hand, nation branding is defined by Dinnie (2008) as “the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences” (p.15). The ownership of the brand does not belong to anyone in particular but to everyone collectively, and pre-existing stereotypes may be entrenched in consumer’s minds leading to a representation that is not accepted. In the realm of national branding, countries require a variety of strategies in order to accommodate the different challenges they face. As previously stated, countries compete with each other for tourism, investment and aid, buyers of products and services and educated, experienced and talented people. While it is the company or organization that determines the essence of the communication, it is the user who forms the mental vision of the brand. “We may be mortal, but the nation is immortal” (Game 1989, p.1).

Nations can be considered to have always branded themselves when you consider a nation’s iconography such as national symbols, currency, national anthems and national flags. The most renowned symbol of place comes from the national symbols such as the national anthem or the national flag. They are used to motivate action, create loyalty and proclaim the national identity for those confined by borders. Flags are portable symbols of choice for belonging. A national flag is the perfect example of what psychologists call ‘symbolic interaction’, cultural symbols that are learned through interaction and then the meaning represented by those symbols controlling the behaviour of the recipient. A flag has meaning because we establish that meaning. That interpretation dictates our behaviour when it is present (Baker 2007).

Even citizens of the USA didn’t immediately grasp the meaning of the nation’s flag, the Stars and Stripes, when it was first introduced. Betsy Ross simply created an interesting design featuring stars on a piece of fabric. It took many more years of tumult and triumphs to build its meaning and relevance in the hearts of Americans. Logos can face similar challenges (Baker 2007, p.138).

In addition to the term nation branding, the term destination branding is commonly evident in literature. Destination branding is defined by Baker (2007, p.26) as the organization of messages and experiences associated with a place to create a distinctive and memorable difference in the heart and mind of the customer. The city, for instance, is not only a city for everyday life, it becomes a destination for fantasy and a focus of aspirations and nostalgia. The value of the destination is created at every point of contact the customer has with that location. Stakeholders become partners at every point of contact positively reinforcing and building the notion of the brand with each customer experience.
Along with destination branding, place branding is the creation of a consistent experience that is memorable and rewarding to those who have contact with the city or place. It is a commitment to a community wide strategy on how to define different places from one another. When considering the challenges of place branding adaptations to the existing branding theories need to occur. These adaptations are considered a fairly new phenomenon, one that is receiving a growing focus considering increased global competition in the promotion of cities or nations. While there is a rapidly growing body of literature in the field of destination branding, “the streams of knowledge embodied within the national identity literature on the one hand and within the country-of-origin literature on the other, have only recently converged” (Dinnie 2008, p.20).

The debate of how place branding is positioned in existing brand theory is yet to be resolved. “In terms of branding work itself, a city is more complex than a corporate brand and harder to control” (Bawden 1997, p.18). A city, nation, destination or place must market itself to a number of stakeholders: investors, tourists and its citizens. The starting point is the development of the brand by defining the brand personality, the brand positioning and the brand reality (Kavaratzis 2005). Andy Levine (2008) states: “On the one hand, it’s terrific to see so much attention assigned to the subject of place marketing. On the other hand, I believe the vast majority of place branding campaigns are off-target, poorly executed, and collectively wasting millions of dollars” (p.5). There are aspects of this debate that are useful in informing visual communicators about the appropriate strategies to take in designing place branding and, by default, cross-cultural visual communication. The following discussion will centre on these theories and their relationship to visual communicators.

Place branding is a field of marketing that draws on multiple disciplines and real world activities, and requires an understanding of wider issues. These may include concerns with national identity, sustainable development and political awareness, brand identity, brand image, brand personality, brand equity and other multi-dimensional facets. Pitchford (2008) explains that “the intersection of tourism and nationalism in particular have begun receiving more attention, which is not surprising given the importance both these forces have assumed in shaping people’s lives across the globe” (p.6). As a result, place branding is often a highly politicised, passionate area of investigation that frequently demonstrates conflicting opinions because of its richer, deeper cultural connection and broader stakeholder interest. Place branding, as with corporate branding, provides insight into the recipient’s relationship with visual communication design. The strong connections between place branding and cross-cultural visual communication have, therefore, influenced the construction of the international cross-cultural design research project.
Participants in the research project were asked to visually represent place and identity for themselves and the other participants through the creation of designs around the topic of sense of community. Further analysis of this will be presented in subsequent chapters.

### 2.3.5 Creating place branding images: Practice

The common denominator each of the areas of branding presented in the previous section is the response of the recipient and it is this aspect that will be addressed within the discussion of the literature in this chapter. In order to demonstrate the patterns that emerge in the recipient’s responses, this section will investigate place branding and how branding strategies have been received once they appear in the market. Specifically, it will examine the place branding of cities.

Nick Maguire of the Maguire Consortium (as cited in Pallister 2008, p.37) explains that in 2004 there was very little re-branding of cities in the UK but that has changed quite quickly over the last few years. Many programs have been developed that have repositioned cities with great success. Yet, there have been previous attempts to promote cities and nations that have not been successful. This will be reviewed in the Scotland, Auckland, Belfast, London, New Zealand and Glasgow branding strategies. There is a common pattern to the way in which campaigns unfold and recipients respond to the design. It becomes apparent that the recipients hold significant power where there is an overwhelming dislike of the design.

In a rare example of an unsuccessful branding exercise that was available in the literature, ‘Scotland The Brand’ was a joint initiative set up in 1996 by Scottish Enterprise, the Scottish Tourist Board, the British Council and commercial interests. The logo for ‘Scotland The Brand’ can be seen below in Figure 2.33. The campaign resulted in the logo, endorsed by the Scottish business community, being placed on Scottish products that met specific quality criteria. The design was the result of a competition held amongst Scottish graphic designers.

![Scotland The Brand logo, 1997](image)

*Figure 2.33 Scotland The Brand logo, 1997 (British Embassy Brussels 2010)*
‘Scotland The Brand’ campaign failed to live up to its promises even with ten million pounds spent on the promotion of the brand. It was felt that major stakeholders (among them politicians responsible for the expenditure), at that time did not understand nation branding or gave it a low priority, resulting in its demise. It became evident from this experience that a “consensus needs to be achieved between citizens’ perceptions of their own country and their customers’ perceptions of the country” (Moilanen and Rainisto 2009, p.51).

The Scots believe that they have a clear identity with civilized, educated, astute and responsible people with a dislike of being “dependent”. However, the Scots do believe that they are searching for an identity in a modern world and although there is a strong feeling of pride it conflicts with their dislike of boasting (Jaffe and Nebenzahl 2006, p.149).

The citizens need to be comfortable with the image of their country that is being conveyed and the guardians of the country’s international image are responsible for ensuring it aligns with the perceptions of all of the stakeholders. This complex, interpersonal web demonstrates the significance of the branding strategy’s relationship with the recipient.

In a more recent example, the city of Auckland in New Zealand, repositioned itself through branding. Juergen Gnoth (2009), a leading member of the Tourism Research & Place Branding Group and an international and cross-cultural researcher from the Department of Marketing, University of Otago, New Zealand explains that Auckland is a major gateway to New Zealand and a city that considers itself one of the most liveable cities in the world. It aimed to present itself as a youthful, charming personality and as one of the largest cities in one of the youngest countries on earth. The City of Auckland made a concerted effort to create a consensus, with the citizens and the customers as joint stakeholders in the branding process.

This is the role and value of a city brand: it tells the stories of the past, of the myths, the realities, and the city’s dream. A brand reminds a place of its values; it highlights what it holds precious and how it came to pass; it holds the promise of all that it is meant to represent for Auckland’s people, the place and their style of life. Over time, a branded city creates its own unique ways of doing things, affecting its look, habits and rites, all from which it draws its strength, its reason for being and its vision for the future (Gnoth 2009, p.15).

The launch of the Auckland brand was strongly supported by a website, <www.brandauckland.com>. The website explained that “this brand plays a pivotal role in telling Auckland’s story, creating recognition, relevance and understanding that this is a place where ideas and new technologies really come to life” and “visually, it speaks volumes about our
many cultures, our vibrancy and our spirited progress—don’t you think?” (AucklandPlus 2009). The website presented the reasons for uniting and supporting the concept and called on all stakeholders to announce loudly and proudly the benefits of Auckland. It explained that the process of creating an identity for Auckland is a journey, a development of a reputation that can be left in the hands of others or created together. It stated clearly on the home page, “brands are not about the technology. They’re about inspiration. It’s about leading and it’s about dreaming big” (AucklandPlus 2009). An example of the logo design and its application can be seen below in Figures 2.34 and Figure 2.35.

![Figure 2.34 M&C Saatchi, City of Auckland logo, 2008 (AucklandPlus 2009)](image1)

![Figure 2.35 M&C Saatchi, Application examples of the City of Auckland logo, 2008 (AucklandPlus 2009)](image2)

Once again, controversy surrounded the launch of Brand Auckland. The logo was variously described as “A.palling”, “laughable rubbish” and like a “pair of disgustingly ragged jean shorts”, while former Auckland City Mayor Dick Hubbard thought the logo “symbolised a city that is frayed at the edges” and predicted it would become the butt of jokes” (Orsman 2008). Yet, since its introduction Auckland has starting to gather positive feedback. AucklandPlus chairman Michael Barnett (Brand Auckland 2009) says the logo has given the city the opportunity to represent Auckland and all of its opportunities under the umbrella of a single coherent, consistent identity.
Although the Auckland website clearly directed recipients to endorse the visual solution as a representation of the many cultures of Auckland from a design perspective, there is not a direct reference to these cultures in the graphic identity. With a lack of visual connection specifically associated with Auckland, the symbol could be easily used in a campaign for America or Argentina. It may have been considered that this design does not include components that could cause controversy or isolate any stakeholders, or there is nothing in the identity that could be deemed offensive. Richard Henderson, founder of one of Melbourne’s leading brand design companies, R-Co., felt the Auckland logo did not “have any sense of, ‘well, go and look at that and feel Auckland’” when “New Zealand has a whole raft of emotional experiences as you arrive in New Zealand, that can be captured” (R. Henderson, personal communication, September 24, 2009). The design has become a generic design solution and an identity that will require stakeholders to support and build the emotional connection with the brand as it is being used through the promotional campaign establishing the identity.

Generic design solutions are commonly appearing in the international arena. Another example can be seen in the City of Belfast brand strategy (see Figures 2.36 and Figure 2.37 below), developed in a bid to provide guidance on sponsorship for the city and other public relations matters. The branding, communicated through a brand book developed to support the livery, was aimed at providing a framework that would influence the way the Belfast community would promote themselves and the city.

Figure 2.36 Lloyd Northover, City of Belfast logo, 2008 (Belfast City Council 2009)

Figure 2.37 Lloyd Northover, City of Belfast logo and application, 2008 (Belfast City Council 2009)
Described as demonstrating that Belfast has a heart, the generic design solution was also criticised. Robert Jones from Wolff Olins brand consultancy questioned the design: "But it’s not clear what this brand is about — what is the Belfast brand meant to stand for? And using a heart symbol, as New York did years ago, lacks confidence — Belfast is unique, and its brand should look unique" ("Feelings mixed over," 2008). The adjectives used to describe Belfast have become common and generic, including the use of words such as ‘dynamic’, ‘vibrant’ and ‘inspiring’. Similar to the situation with Auckland, the logo created for Belfast could be applied to locations other than Belfast, such as Brussels, Broome or even a town in Central Victoria, Australia: Bendigo. Taking a non-confrontational approach, the message has been diluted to a safe, common design.

In essence, the Brand Auckland and Belfast logos are reflective of the general approach to place branding where the design solutions have drawn on symbolic representations that do not effectively inform the recipient of the advantages of visiting each city. They are all remarkably simplistic, attempting to promote a sense of welcome and warmth, without culturally specific references. They are non-intrusive so as to not run the risk of isolating any aspect of the community or the stakeholders. Each logo or symbol could be substituted for another and the impact would not vary. Not only are the images quite generic, the key messages that they present are often commonly used in the promotion of other cities.

In 2004 Singapore, Brisbane and Birmingham all described themselves as ‘dynamic’ and ‘cosmopolitan’ or ‘diverse’. Johannesburg and Manchester both came in with ‘vibrant’. Birmingham, Glasgow and Johannesburg were ‘cultural; Santo Domingo and Brisbane, they claim, were both ‘sophisticated’ (Julier 2005, p.872).

With more and more countries entering into the field of place branding, few country brands actually stand out. FutureBrand explains that as well as having a similar language and tone, many of the supporting brochures and promotional material have a similar design appearance and style. "In fear of narrow-casting or focusing on one core asset, may countries go in the reverse direction and link to sweeping and generic words like ‘truly’ or ‘amazing’" (FutureBrand 2006, p.32). FutureBrand acknowledges that many countries and their rich cultural or geographical assets cannot be represented in one single image or icon. Countries may feel the pressure to minimize risk by avoiding any challenging or potentially disturbing content. As a result, countries default to an abstract image or use of their national flag. Yet, it was noted by FutureBrand, in the 2008 Top Country Brand Rankings, that there is an opportunity for countries to better connect
abstract ideas with the benefits that a country offers a visitor, strengthening the relationship between the communication strategy and the recipient.

Communication, however, is not controlled completely by the company or manager, or in some examples the politicians or civil servants. In the postmodern era, consumers engage with the organization, the product and other consumers with on ongoing interaction that provides mutual benefits and meaning. In other words, consumers are active participants in the creation of meaning for a brand. One of the difficulties is that “citizens are not always the ambassadors of the brand that agencies want” (Pallister 2008, p.37).

An example of consumers being active participants, and not necessarily advocates for the design, can often be seen through the Internet. The Internet allows for the construction of personal narratives that have an impact on perceived meaning of the livery, opening the opportunity for a different theoretical perspective on the development of brand meaning. This results in a “constant ideological struggle at which several interpretations are possible by different audiences” (Berthon, Pitt et al. 2009, p.358). Any changes in the message provided may result in a backlash. More importantly, the possibility arises where consumers may hijack the brand and establish a new meaning. The logo design for Liverpool’s (a city in the north of England) city event, ‘Capital of Culture’, faced its share of disfavour. Liverpool City Council was nominated as the 2008 European Capital of Culture and design company Finch created the ‘08 Liverpool’ logo to promote this event (Figure 2.38). It was intended that the ‘08 Liverpool’ logo would rival other major event identities such as the Olympics, World Cup and Euro 2004. Jason Harborow, Commercial Director of the Liverpool Culture Company stated that the logo, when created, would “[c]oncentrate on Liverpool’s unique appeal and its dynamic creativity” (Northwest Regional Development Agency 2004). The logo was hung from lampposts, sown into flowerbeds and used with a mixture of images and words to ensure visitors would take away a warm and positive feeling about the city. However, this logo was reinterpreted by one family as the ‘Crapital of Culture’ with an image of their own housing commission home in a state of disrepair. The theme of the ‘Crapital of Culture’ was quick to become a common term for criticizing the event (Pallister 2008, p.37).
While clear, precise narratives and generalizations are easy to develop and communicate, the concept must also resonate with the stakeholders to avoid the potential of brand logos being satirised, defaced and referenced poorly through the Internet. “The brand values have to be understood and reiterated by citizens” (Julier 2005, p.872). Internally, the image presented may not reflect or promote the reality of a place, and externally, the image presented may be considered bland and without distinction. Positive and negative images are endlessly represented in popular culture and there is often little control of the external portrayals.

Confronting a negative image can be an arduous challenge. The brand manager has no control over environmental factors that may keep tourists and investors away, such as natural disasters, political turmoil and economic downturns. Even more difficult can be controlling how the media and the press disseminate a country’s problem, often creating or perpetuating stereotypes (Morgan, Pritchard et al. 2004, p.47).

While country images may not be able to reflect reality, historical and stereotypical imagery may obscure present day notions. Negative and outdated views may damage the perceptions of the nation, yet they may also be accurate and a true reflection of the current climate. “Creating romanticized images as a corrective to degrading ones is a very old trap that has been stepped into many times. Yet presenting a culture in unflattering terms is hardly a viable alternative, especially since most minority cultures already have plenty of negative press to live down” (Pitchford 2008, p.104).

Oosthuizen (2004) presents the view that most multicultural design starts with the lowest common denominator and is designed to be easily understood to meet the needs of a diverse range of consumers. ‘Lowest common denominator’ interpretation can also mean avoiding controversial topics, as well as oversimplifying complex issues with a ‘dumbing’ down of cultural...
content. This can be seen to provide a ‘feel-good’ experience that does not challenge or change tourists’ preconceptions (Pitchford 2008, p.173). These comments relate back to those in Chapter 2.1.4 Cultural Appropriation where there are two views on the representation of cultures. The first is the promotion of a culture, educating customers and creating interest in a culture other than their own. The second follows the view presented here where oversimplification and choices in representation take only a small aspect of a culture and can simplify representation.

By now it is a sociological truism that people do not act on the basis of reality per se, but on their perceptions of reality. So when Plato says that society is ruled by those who control stories, he anticipates an insight of symbolic interactionist theory: the tellers of the stories construct reality for everyone else (Pitchford 2008, p.173).

Successful examples of national branding and place branding do exist in the marketplace. A more successful experience is evident in the city of Glasgow’s campaign: ‘Glasgow: Scotland with style’ (Figures 2.39 and Figure 2.40). The Glasgow logo was designed to create unity with the major promotional bodies that had previously traded under separate logos. A consortium designed the 2004 logo, lead by creative agency Atalanta Glasgow, which was used by local businesses, hotels, taxis, shops, restaurants and government agencies to present a consistent image to attract developers.

The style is very modern. The logotype is based on the handwritten text of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. The colon between ‘Glasgow’ and ‘Scotland with style’ is two green leaves – an echo of ‘dear green place’, the literal meaning of ‘Glasgow’. It had to suit different media, including banners and adverts. When we use it with partners it complements their brands. It works extremely well in print out of black, looks good on white, is solid enough to emboss and works well in electronic artwork (Pallister 2008, p.38).

Pallister (2008, p.37) explains that, at the time of debate surrounding the ‘Scotland with style’ design, if one were to undertake a Google search for ‘Scotland with style’, some less than favourable uses of the logo appeared. These included scantily clad ladies in uncomplimentary positions or images of rubbish piles on the side of the road with the words ‘Scotland with style’. However, a connection to the logo emerged, with the general public declaring the design agreeable. The use of symbolic representations taken from the cultural history of Glasgow helped to create a connection for both the people of Glasgow and other stakeholders. This experience reinforces the need for engagement with the recipient and the need for an emotional connection to the symbolic representation.
Continuing this theme and referring back to New Zealand and their development of place branding, the 100% Pure New Zealand brand created in 1999 (Figure 2.41) took an inferred image of the purity and cleanliness of the New Zealand environment and used that as the reality of their brand. Such an approach readily fused the lines between the perception of reality and how the community of New Zealand wished to be seen. “A major factor in the success of the New Zealand nation-branding strategy was that the brand resonated as strongly for the people of New Zealand as it had been seen to motivate its prospective buyers” (Dinnie 2008, p.28). This design infers that the emotional benefits are the factors that make the creative solution appealing to a broad audience and this will be discussed further in Chapter 2.3.6 Creating place branding images: Theory. The experiences of the New Zealand brand demonstrate that a well-received brand can exist. The creative approach adopted by New Zealand in their 100% Pure New Zealand campaign has been documented as a successful campaign and continues to combine the essence of the brand with the emotional benefits (Morgan and Pritchard 2005, p.30).
Finally, referring back to the ‘A’ design for Brand Auckland discussed earlier, it can be seen how the struggle to brand aspects of Auckland continues. In 2011, three years after its launch, it was announced that Brand Auckland was being withdrawn from use (Orsman 2011). In place of the logo, Brand Auckland would become Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development following the newly created Auckland Council design (see Figures 2.42 and 2.43). The need for Auckland Council design came as a result of the amalgamation of a number of city councils in the Auckland region, resulting in the newly established Auckland Council. The Auckland super city logo, also known as the Auckland Council Pohutukawa logo, was chosen from over 1500 entries in a public competition open to all Aucklanders and run by the Auckland Transition Agency. The Waitakere Mayor, Mr Bob Harvey, explains that the final choice came down to being a design “that people can really take pride in nationally and internationally” (Auckland Transition Agency 2010). I refer to this logo, designed by Jim Dean of Manukau in New Zealand, in the context of the presentation of the Brand Auckland logo where I describe the Brand Auckland design as being generic and void of cultural symbolism. The Auckland Council logo, on the other hand and similarly to the 100% Pure New Zealand and the Glasgow place branding designs, is drawn from a strong cultural connection, in this case the pohutukawa tree. The design has been described as compelling, elegant and compact, and an image Aucklanders could relate to, representative of the geography of the region. Yet, more specifically, art consultant, Hamish Keith favoured the design because it was not a stereotype (Zeald 2010).
Criticism ranged from ‘nice and simple’ to ‘super ugly’ (Orsman 2010). More significantly, however, criticism emerged that the design was a copy of the Auckland Regional Council (ARC) Parks logo (Orsman 2010) (Figures 2.44 and 2.45 below). The ARC Parks logo was originally designed in 1985 by ranger Tony Oliver with the help of other ARC staff. A blog attached to the Television New Zealand Limited website One News showed blogger ‘bta’ make the comment: “Plagiarism is a punishable offense. The question is: do we really have no designer capable of designing an original meaningful design, or we have no one to recognise and choose a meaningful original design, or both?” (Television New Zealand Limited 2010).
As with the 100% Pure New Zealand design, the Glasgow design process was considered successful creating an emotional connection between the signal and the recipient. Both designs also shift away from the global design approach, introducing cultural iconography to their designs. Both the New Zealand and Glasgow experiences demonstrate that regardless of the parties involved, the acceptability of the design by the widespread community, the recipients, was achieved with the relevant emotional connection. The emergence of the Auckland Council design and its connection to New Zealand pohutukawa tree, something I would describe as a culturally specific, may result in this design being considered as more acceptable that the abandoned Brand Auckland design. The two designs had been created for different outcomes; however, the connection can be made with these designs and the analysis of a global design approach versus a cultural design approach as presented earlier in Chapter 2.1.3. In this chapter it has been identified that the use of a culturally centred design can be seen to have a more positive reception with those who engage with the livery.

2.3.6 Creating place branding images: Theory

The challenges faced by designers working in cross-cultural visual communication are not without some offer of respite. Research into branding and place branding theories offers new insight into categorizations that can be adapted to suit designers working in cross-cultural visual communication.

To begin with an investigation into brand personality, defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker 1997, p.347), explains that brand personality is often the core identity to a brand, remaining constant as the brand moves to new markets or new products. The concept of brand personality assumes a relationship between the recipient or purchaser and the brand. This relationship can be examined in order to foster recipient acceptance and enthusiasm. These consumer-constructed notions of the brand offer an ascribed persona or image of the brand, forming the brand personality. A strong distinctive brand personality assists in providing emotional connections and meaning to the consumer and cities commonly lend themselves to a human-like identification (Donald and Gammack 2007, p.48).

Product brand personality shares the same identification characteristics as the recipients who interact with the brand, consume or use the brand. Choices in products or packages are an extension of the choices in self-expression and become a means for consumers to convey who
they are and what they like. The development of brand values leads us to the understanding that cultural values are reflected in brands and in the decisions made by consumers.

Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2004) explain “a brand’s personality has both a head and a heart: its head refers to the logical brand features, while its heart refers to its emotional benefits and associations” (p.70). The head speaks of a brand’s rational values while the heart communicates the emotional values. The aim is to develop a brand based on either the head or the heart. To determine the brand personality of a place, Morgan, Pritchard and Pride have created the Destination Brand Benefit Pyramid (Table 2.1 below), a series of questions used to ask consumers to describe the features of a place and what that place means to them.

Table 2.1 Destination Brand Benefit Pyramid (Morgan, Pritchard et al. 2004, p.71)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the essential nature and character of the destination brand?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What does value mean for the typical repeat visitor?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What psychological rewards or emotional benefits do tourists receive by visiting this destination?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the tourist feel?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What benefits to the tourist result from this destination’s features?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the tangible, verifiable, objective measurable characteristics of this destination?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lower level characteristics are based on tangible, physically real and measurable benefits. Higher up the pyramid, the characteristics become more emotionally based and less tangible. Using the outcomes of this research it becomes easier to determine the benefits consumers associate with the place. The results help to define the essence of a place brand’s proposition and help establish it ahead of competitors. A rich and relevant brand personality is considered to possess traits such as being ‘friendly’, ‘natural’ and ‘contemporary’.
Bill Baker (2007, p.109-113) states that people look for a particular emotional state of mind, more than a list of sites and attractions or facilities, when engaging with a place. This demonstrates the importance of addressing the emotions of the recipient, as people want to feel better in some way. Baker created the Brand Benefits Pyramid, similar to the pyramid above, to define the most meaningful and most difficult benefits of a place to deliver. The peak of this pyramid incorporates the most meaningful and most difficult benefits to communicate, the base nominates the most common and least meaningful, easy to copy attributes. Bill Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid can be seen below in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Brand Benefits Pyramid (Baker 2007, p.111)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand Benefits Pyramid</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value and Benefits:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The deep, emotional needs,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social benefits and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>values the place satisfies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Benefits:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the experience makes visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feel and connect with the location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rational Benefits:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture, access, safety, cost, heritage,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Features and Attributes:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural features, streetscape, weather,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>events, architecture, facilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The higher up the pyramid the greater the emotional benefit to the recipient and the more potent the response. “A person’s motivation for visiting the city is closely aligned with their personal values and benefits or because it makes an important social statement about them” (Baker 2007, p.111). The aim is to search for the most relevant and enticing benefit of a place at that particular time and clearly communicate that.

This relates to previous discussion of the difficulty in determining the aspect to use in the visual representation of a country and the distinguishing features of a nation are commonly considered to be its iconography, landscape and culture (see Chapter 2.2.4 Signals for Australia). The iconography is represented by visual symbols such as the national flag, locations, individuals and even products that have developed a status in that culture, along with other representational elements associated with the nation. The landscape includes cities, geographical features and significant visual images that are distinctive and unique. Culture is the music, film, literature, sport,
language, art, and food and drink unique to a nation. These three aspects represent a unique, authentic perspective of national identity. According to Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid (see Table 2.2 on the previous page), these distinguishing features are ranked quite low on the scale of benefits.

From the point of view of a busy consumer halfway across the world, of course, the historical achievements and natural advantages of most countries are of little interest, and seldom add up to anything that could be described as a coherent or powerful brand. On more than one occasion, I have been faced with the tricky task of gently explaining to a very proud and very patriotic minister that the world will not be enthralled by the fact that the world’s first all-metal suspension bridge was invented by a man whose grandfather came from his country, or that over sixty different species of wild grass grow along his eastern coastline (Morgan, Pritchard et al. 2004, p.36).

Architecture, also positioned low on Bill Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid, is often used as a symbolic means of connecting to the cultural attraction of an area. Architectural tourist attractions include museums, libraries, sporting complexes and galleries, entertainment complexes, stadiums, festivals and markets. An example of this can be seen in the design solution for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games (see Figure 2.26 presented in Chapter 2.2) identity program where the Sydney Opera House was represented in the Olympic flame carried by the athlete.

Bill Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid provides words to label those difficult areas and places them in a framework that can be used to assist visual communicators in their creation of place branding designs and the anticipated reception of their design solutions. This structure has been chosen as a central focus for consideration as it offers a significant shift in the way in which we can categorize and debate design solutions. This, in turn, can be used to assist designers with other cross-cultural visual communication projects. The value benefits cited by Baker as the most relevant and enticing are the deep emotional values of a place. These are also the most challenging to visually represent and communicate. When comparing design strategies presented earlier in the literature review, generic designs such as those for Auckland (2009) and Belfast (2008) are difficult to position against Bakers’ structure, whereas cultural designs such as those for Glasgow (2010) and the more recent Auckland pohutukawa design (2010) can be more clearly ranked against the pyramid structure. Many designs, and what appears to be the majority of design solutions, rank quite low on the pyramid while Baker suggests we strive to achieve higher rankings of deep, emotional needs and a strong sense of values. I would argue that the higher the ranking of the design when placed against Baker’s pyramid structure and, to a lesser
degree, that of Morgan and Pritchard’s Destination Brand Benefit Pyramid (2004) the stronger the reception to the design. This position has been strongly supported by the cross-cultural visual communication design research project presented in subsequent chapters where the evidence of cultural iconography, or lack there of, impacted on the reception of the design.

Another approach to creating a lasting and positive impression may be through narrative identity theory. It is agreed that the region’s stories, both old and new, aid in the creation of the relationship between people and the land. Gnoth (2009, p.15) explains that these stories form the content for place branding. This had previously been suggested by Pitchford (2008, p.102) who explains that “some of the best logos are built around nostalgia. Heritage tourism’s emphasis on history and tradition, combined with the entertainment imperative, create a constant temptation to romanticize the past”. Referring back to the Glasgow (2010) logo and the Auckland pohutukawa solution (2010), these designs provide this connection with the recipient. Firstly, the font of the Glasgow design was based on the text of an artist, architect and designer from Glasgow and the two green leaves represent the ‘dear green place’ that is the literal meaning of Glasgow. The image of the pohutukawa tree and the symbolic representation of the seven city and district councils coming to together as one through the design of the stamen, demonstrate a consideration of the history and tradition of Auckland.

As Pitchford (2008) continues to explain, such images are aimed at consumers looking for an ‘authentic’ experience. Yet what constitutes ‘authentic’ is not really clear and tourists may not be in search of the authentic experience it is assumed they are looking for. It may be that tourists would not like the real thing if it were presented to them. Demonstrated in the investigation into the creation of an identity for Australia (see section 2.2.4 Signals for Australia), to sum up the myths, the realities and the cities dreams in a visual representation that is supported by a broad number of stakeholders is a difficult and delicate task. There are many images to choose from and each sends a unique message, identifiable to various segments of the culture. However, there is always pressure to minimize risk and any challenging or potentially controversial imagery should be avoided. Branding is a political process and stakeholders may not agree on what constitutes a fair and true representation of a place. “Traditional forms of culture may play a critical role in terms of external recognition of the nation, but these must not be allowed to position the country as backward-looking as this would act counter to attempts to portray the country as a vibrant modern economy” (Dinnie 2008, p.69).

The images that appear in travel brochures and elsewhere are not necessarily false, but they are necessarily simplified, and often sensationalized, version of a host group’s history and culture.
They constitute a condensed version of identity, and condensation implied a degree of distortion, for two reasons. First, the cultural elements of which the images are composed are selected from a range of alternatives, and those that are most distinctive and attractive to a tourist audience are not necessarily those that are most important to the group itself. Analysis of the images therefore involves two key questions: “Selected by whom?” and “For what purpose?” (Pitchford 2008, pp.103-104).

Place branding can be used to instil respect for a culture and the heritage of a place, and help to define a place, as much as it can be used to change perceptions. “There are tourists who lack the knowledge, motivation, or resources to seek out alternative sources of information, and simply accept the images as reality” (Pitchford 2008, p.100). There is great responsibility placed on the designer to navigate their way through the considerations of the client and align those with the recipients.

Place branding provides an important contribution to this investigation as it draws together many of the issues presented earlier in the literature review. Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid and the topic of place branding can be seen to interconnect with the research of cultural geography where the focus on geographical features is predominant. The material environment provides parameters, both limitations and possibilities, that impact human and social activity and therefore offers a range of representations available to visual communicators (Goodrich and Sampson 2008, p.261). In other words, cultural connections are set within the boundaries of the geography of a place and designers are able to use this in their visual representations. With this in mind, natural features, streetscape, weather, events, architecture and facilities become common visual representations of a place. Yet these aspects are not always seen as ideal when there is a disparity between the image presented and the view of the recipient.

In addition to this, much like earlier analysis in the outsider versus insider debate, strong anger and resentment can emerge when an outsider controls a place (Goodrich and Sampson 2008, p.265), just as when an outsider is seen to control a visual representation. Shared narratives construct and reinforce notions of identity and a sense of community and outsider management is perceived as detrimental to the community based behaviours and practices. When discussions of outsider versus insider enter the debate, so too do colonial and post-colonial practices in representation such as the power one culture group over another culture group with visual representation at the forefront of control.

However, Tyler Cowen, Professor of Economics at George Mason University and whose research extends into political economies, in his investigation of cross-cultural exchanges makes the comment that “on the issue of cultural makers, cross-cultural exchange therefore fights to a
draw” (Cowen 2004, p.148). There is a shift through visual communication that provides neither
definitely an improvement nor definitely a disadvantage. As some stakeholders seek to have
difference and distinction in their representation, the level of distinction will remain debatable, so
again, cross-cultural debates, according to Cowen, reach a draw in their arguments. It is only
post the communication exchange that we are able to assess the full implications of whether it
was a worthwhile exchange. Cowen’s comments are strongly based on the western economic
position of power. A similar perspective may not be evident in the views of individuals who
value their cultural identities and fiercely protect them and those who may come from a
position of minority groups. Such comments also do not help those who create the images
of cultural representation and who endeavour to position their work in the realm of improving
a cultural relationship rather than creating disadvantage. Taking the position of chance does not
inform design practice or result in a clearer understanding of cross-cultural visual communication
design. The remaining chapters in this document will address this difference between theory and
professional practice in cross-cultural visual communication.

2.3.7 Conclusion

Visual communication design, by its name, highlights the necessity to successfully communicate
to the recipient. Ideally designers aim to achieve success in communication while at the same
time achieve a strong aesthetic appeal with their designs. However, the impact of success in
communication when compared with the aesthetic appeal of a design and the relationship of
the two considerations is an aspect that requires further exploration with cross-cultural design.
The emotional connection of the recipient to the communication, gained through the aesthetic
appeal, is one that has not, as yet, been fully explored. The focus of this research is on whether,
ideally, in this difficult context, a balance can be achieved between both success in
communication and aesthetic appeal, and whether patterns can be identified demonstrating
the impact of one aspect over the other. Clarification on this debate can be achieved with
an analysis of the recipient’s view. Although the aim of the designer is to be successful in both
communication and aesthetic appeal, cross-cultural visual communication designers may need
to re-evaluate this balance.

Recipients can be credited with holding a powerful position in the communication process.
The power exerted by the recipient is evident in the analysis of the industry examples of British
Airways and BHP Billiton. In these examples, recipients use the visual communication design as
the means by which they voice their concerns over organizational changes. A similar recipient
response is also evident in place branding literature where there is a high likelihood of the design being considered a failure and creating controversy amongst recipients. As I have demonstrated in the discussion of the place branding strategies of Auckland, Belfast and Scotland, sometimes designers are creating common, safe designs void of culturally specific based connections, perhaps to manage the process or as a result of the response of the recipient. In effect, the correlation between place branding literature and cross-cultural visual communication dictates that cross-cultural design will face a similar response to that experienced in place branding and be largely considered a failure creating controversy amongst recipients. However, the 1999 New Zealand’s 100% Pure campaign and the 2004 Glasgow: Scotland with Style design demonstrates that positive acceptance by recipients can be achieved. Each of these designs has been successful in creating an emotional and social connection between the signal and the recipients. Their visual communication strategies draw from strong cultural connections and demonstrate a link between the recipient and their association to a place. It can also be seen that over time, when supported by marketing campaigns and advocated by stakeholder groups, less acceptable designs can still achieve strong associations between the recipient and the design.

Baker’s (2007) Brand Benefits Pyramid offers insight into the design process to assist with the understanding of the response of the recipient. The structure provided by the Brand Benefits Pyramid indicates that, while the connection the recipient makes to the communication strategy remains at the lower levels of the identifiable benefits, the design will consistently run the risk of controversy in a cross-cultural context. It is easier to design for the bottom levels of Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid and visually represent the natural features, streetscape, weather, events, architecture and facilities, whereas, it is far more difficult and controversial for the designer to visually represent intangible benefits such as values. In other words, the transmitter creates designs using generic imagery, and communicates to the recipient using a common conversation (perhaps in an attempt to satisfy the needs of the broad stakeholder base), while what the recipient seeks is an emotional connection to the design with a visual representation of values. As a result there is a strong propensity for an unsatisfactory experience by the recipient and the potential for rejection of the communication. Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid provides great potential for designers to predetermine the recipient’s response. It can be used as an effective form of categorization of images to guide cross-cultural design practice, enhance the communication to develop a stronger connection between the recipient and the signal, and better manage the recipient’s responses to design solutions. Baker’s recognition of landscape as a visual reference connects strongly to the theories of cultural geography.
2.4 Literature Review Conclusion: Guiding Questions

The structure of the literature review into the transmitter, signal and recipient has allowed for clear presentation of the many aspects impacting on successful cross-cultural visual communication design, and themes can be seen to interconnect throughout the communication process. Undeniably there is a strong relationship linking each of the stages of the communication process to cultural geography, social theories and place branding.

The transmitter chapter bought in issues related to the designer. In particular the culture of the designer and the impact this would have on the generation of the design, the choice of imagery and the recipient’s response. The signal chapter explored issues of representation. Primarily this included the suitability of imagery for clarity in understanding and the resolution of identity creation when no single visual representation would encompass a culture. Impacting on this is the use of stereotypical imagery and the notion of power in the representation of cultural groups. The recipient chapter bought together all of the issues under the umbrella topic of place branding. With a focus on the reception of design, place branding can be seen to connect the considerations of identity through our understanding of place. Within this there lies a debate of who has the power and what are the best aspects to use in representation. Debate will be inevitable with the broad stakeholder base associated with cross-cultural visual communication.

The intersecting components offer clear understanding of why the transmitter and recipient behave as they do and clarity on the role of the signal. The literature leads us to believe that it is commonly considered very difficult to design across cultures. Very little guidance on how it may be made achievable can be identified, yet we strive to design across cultures and the need of designers to work in this area of design continues to increase. The problems that exist in the literature review and investigation into the industry examples have been clustered together into a series of questions that have been used to guide the research study. The cross-cultural design research project that follows undertakes further investigation into each of the guiding questions. The following questions will be closely examined in the next section of this research document.
1. Can the recipient of the communication recognize the culture of the designer and does the culture of the designer impact on the perceptions of the recipient?

2. If stereotypes are inevitable but perceived as undesirable, can designers better manage the use of stereotypes in communication?

3. What is the relationship between success in communication and success in aesthetic appeal in a cross-cultural visual communication environment?

4. Can Bill Baker’s (2007) Brand Benefits Pyramid be used as an effective form of categorization to inform cross-cultural design practice?

5. How can visual communicators use this knowledge to increase the effectiveness with which they manage their communication in a cross-cultural context?
3. International Cross-cultural Design Project Overview
3.1 Introduction

The extensive analysis of the literature review, a substantial component of the research, provides a framework for the construction of the issues associated with cross-cultural visual communication design and demonstrates the lack of clear and concise guidance to designers working in a cross-cultural context. To inform our understanding and assist in providing further explanation of the contradictions, two international cross-cultural design research projects were conducted. These involved nine countries and over three hundred participants. These research projects have been used to test the advice and theories presented in the literature. The focus of this study is on the reception of the images and the patterns present in the responses of the recipient. This study does not discuss external considerations such as the technology used or the choice of medium or materials used in the creation of the imagery.

A two-stage project provided, firstly, the design submissions and, secondly, the review of the design submissions. Evidence was gathered from both stages using a range of sources such as analysis of images, survey results, transcripts, email conversation and direct observation. Outcomes were established by comparing the patterns in the information provided. Participants were anonymous and chosen from Universities who had previously registered their interest with the International Council of Graphic Design Associations International Education Network (ICOGRADA IEN). Design students were chosen as participants due to their interest and ability to contribute to the specific skills required for this investigation.

Stage one of the first research project, the Design Stage, resulted in over 560 design submissions gathered from eight countries. During this stage, students designed a postcard style solution creating an image to represent the ‘sense of community’ of their own country and three other participating countries.

Stage two of the research project, the Review Stage, asked participants to provide their views on the design solutions aimed at their country. Four questions were formulated to guide responses based on the success of the submission in representing a ‘sense of community’, the presence of stereotypical imagery, the culture of the designer, and the aesthetic appeal. The design project was conducted over a two-year time frame. The information gathered provided both qualitative and quantitative data. A second and smaller research project was conducted with participants from one University in Melbourne. Participants in the second
research project were able to communicate with each other and test design ideas whereas those in the first design project were not able to interact in the same way.

The outcomes of the research projects will be presented using the three sections provided by the literature review: transmitter, signal and recipient. Each of these categories will detail the information supplied by the countries from the first research project: Australia, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Turkey, Qatar, United States of America and Zimbabwe. This will be followed by an overview of the outcomes from the second research project conducted with Australian and Norwegian participants. Patterns will be identified in each of the categories.

To begin with, however, I will present the methodology, followed by the limitations of the cross-cultural research project. These limitations were clearly understood in the construction of the project and, based on the understanding that this investigation forms an extensive scoping investigation to identify the intersecting theoretical and practical issues associated with this area of communication design, the limitations were considered integral to the complexities of designing in an international arena. I will then continue with the procedure undertaken, followed by an overview of the participation of each of the countries involved. To reiterate comments made earlier, this document acknowledges that this research has operated as a scoping project, under the paradigm that it provides a structure and framework for further investigation.
3.2 Methodology

Methodology can be defined as the self-imposed rules by which the designer will engage the project to test ideas in order to create an effective result (Noble and Bestley 2005, p.59). Social researchers using visual research employ a number of different methodologies in their investigation and as a result form a distinctive methodology in their own right. Studies of visual culture explain that this relatively new discipline does not have a distinct methodological structure to follow, instead it draws widely on a range of other disciplines (Banks 2007, p.42). “In order to develop tools for the analysis of design objects and artefacts, it is necessary for the designer to become familiar with terminology borrowed from a range of disciplines outside of the traditional role of the graphic designer” (Noble and Bestley 2005, p.92).

Much of the research for the literature analysis in this thesis has been sourced from a range of publications including those in the disciplines of marketing, psychology, business and communication. These include publications as diverse as *International Marketing Review*, the *Journal of International Marketing*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Print Magazine*, *Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, and *Teaching Sociology*. These were sourced from among twenty journals that have published research related to this study.

I undertook a review of cross-cultural visual communication studies conducted from 1988 to 2008. From the twenty-three articles sourced, ten studies were based on the visual documentation and discussion of visual work. Seven of the ten studies had students involved in the research. In these seven studies designs were supplied to the participants and their views of the design were documented. The remaining studies were based on literature reviews or the statistical gathering of evidence through questionnaires or interviews in response to visual stimuli.

It is noted by Banks (2001, p.11) that the message an image communicates is not necessarily the same as the one the image-maker intends to communicate, a concept that is to be further examined in the case study research. In the field of Social Science there are two main strands of visual research: the first is the creation of images by the social researcher and the second is the collection and study of images produced or consumed by the participants (2007, p.6). The international cross-cultural design research project designed for this thesis was unique in that one group of participants was required to create the images and a second group then
evaluated the images. In the literature, no studies were identified where designs of the visual imagery were created and then followed by a review of the images as part of the same project. “Making images as a way of answering a research question is relatively rare in studies of visual culture however. Instead, visual culture critics have concentrated their energies on critically examining the effects of visual images already out there in the world, already part of visual culture” (Rose 2007, p.6).

Design students were sought to participate in this research study. Student sampling is commonly used in cross-cultural research (Tai 2004, p.445). Seeking design students as the student sample group for design research allows for articulation of the images in a design vernacular. Additionally, I anticipated that design students would demonstrate an element of interest in the topic, as it is their chosen profession. In their studies, they are immersed in the process of learning to identify, describe and discuss design characteristics and their responses to those characteristics. Another advantage of using students in this research approach is that within the University environment students have ready access to resources for viewing the designs, such as computers, printers, overhead projectors, and time. The university environment also offers the opportunity for student participants to have access to the same age groups of students from a number of countries, allowing for a range of views from a similar audience base.

Although students may be seen as more cosmopolitan and contemporary than the non-student population, the brief given to the designers was to design for their own age bracket as the target market. If non-student, older or younger members of the population were to view the design solutions, it would be anticipated that a different response would be provided.

Participants in the review process may have come from students and lecturers in the design faculty or other faculties. I considered that experienced lecturers in the visual communication field would have an understanding of this population sample and their responses would not impact negatively on the outcomes. A lecturer’s insight into the complexity of cross-cultural visual communication would instead promote and encourage discussion.

The international cross-cultural design research project was not aimed at reflecting all of the complexities of a real life situation or the process of designing for a real life cross-cultural context. This project was a simplification of the reality, aimed at providing an environment where comparisons of images could be undertaken in a safe and open forum of discussion. The reviews and subsequent response to the images was aimed at stimulating common threads and opinions. Only generalisations of the specific outcomes can be claimed. These serve as
examples to outline analytical considerations for further research and the theoretical considerations for their implications within design practice. This research has operated within the framework of the scoping project, with the idea that a larger, statistically valid research project might be formed on the back of these preliminary findings in the future.

The aim of this cross-cultural design project is to provide clarity on a number of intersecting areas discussed in the literature review. Cross-cultural visual communication is a new area of design research and a case study method provides the framework for all of the considerations to be explored. It allows for a richer understanding of the many and varied factors involved. Yin (2009) introduces his book *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* by explaining that case study research is seen as a poor relation among social science methods as it does not have precision (i.e., quantification), objectivity, or rigor. Yin advises us to conduct case study research knowing the method will be challenged and results may be under appreciated.

The international cross-cultural design research project has stemmed from the theoretical position discovered in the analysis of the literature and review of industry-based examples. A case study research methodology is suitable in this research study as the focus was on contemporary concerns of a broad topic area. Research for this cross-cultural design project involved many participants and presented multiple sources of evidence gathering from a range of sources including: the analysis of the content of the visual images (postcards) designed by visual communication design students, email conversations between the researcher and the lecturers of the participating universities, surveys returned by the students, transcripts from discussion groups and direct observation by the researcher. Each of the participating countries was treated as an individual project making this study a multi case study research project.

The case study method offered an unstructured approach to exploring opinions and encouraged the participants to respond with feelings and emotions (Hooley, Shipley et al. 1988, p.69). Responses were collated and analysed to determine patterns. An extensive evaluation process was employed to critically evaluate and reflect on the outcomes. Statistical analysis of survey responses and audience observation techniques were evaluated. An assembly of email correspondence with direct observation and transcripts from discussion groups will be combined with the statistical findings of survey data.

This case study research methodology also facilitates a variety of country-based issues. I have included in the presentation of the details outlining the project submissions a minor discussion on the factors that caused constraints for each of the participating countries such as Zimbabwe,
whose economic and political environment had an impact on their involvement. Other issues included data that was not clinically collected and each country presented its own unique supply of evidence.

Samples of design solutions, correspondence, notes and memos were documented and a data bank of observations produced patterns in the results. Similarities and differences between the patterns were recorded and are presented in the outcomes. This circulatory approach forced constant consideration and reflection on all aspects of the research process. Generalizations in the outcomes are based on repeated observations or consistency in the evidence supplied.

General techniques for measuring images can be classified as either being structured or unstructured in their approach (Echtner and Ritchie 2003, p.44-45). Structured methodologies focus on the attributes of the imagery and information is gathered on general and common traits provided on a scale. This does not give the opportunity for participants to elaborate or extend the investigation into unique, describable characteristics. Unstructured methodologies are more conducive to measuring holistic components of imagery, allowing respondents the opportunity to verbalize or write individual responses to the imagery. This study is unique in that it contains both structured and unstructured methodologies where patterns in data are statistically evaluated and patterns in verbal and written responses are also considered.

Visual analysis invariably means that images have been categorised and grouped to demonstrate a particular interpretation and discourage others. The researcher was guided by the patterns that emerged as a result of the feedback from the participants. This feedback was provided linguistically in written or spoken words. Visual work must be analysed in relation to its specific vocabulary as interpretations are described in text. An understanding of the verbal constraints to discussing and interpreting design work plays a role in the outcomes of this project. Each of the participating countries provided content analysis that then provided the data for the researcher. Vocabularies drawn from both communication and language theories assist the recipient to describe their response. Design students were chosen as participants because of their ability to articulate their views using a design vocabulary. The recipients viewing the work had conducted the semiotic analysis, or deconstruction of the design artefacts.
3.3 Project Limitations

Participants in this cross-cultural visual communication design project were predominantly University based visual communication design students. I requested that visual communication students from second or third year level participate in designing the postcards. Unless otherwise stated in this thesis, I was unable to determine if the participants were other than the year level requested. Principally, participants comprised both second and third year level students depending on the time of the year and the curriculum requirements of the institute. South Africa, for example, notified me that students and lecturers from other disciplines were involved in the discussion group. The lecturers in each country conducted the process of gathering design participants for the design process, and seeking participants separately for the review process.

The coordination of the research project presented a number of challenges. The cross-cultural design project was embedded into existing curriculum. This resulted in countries completing each of the stages, the Design Stage and the Review Stage, at times that suited their delivery. As a result, the research project was conducted over a two-year period and different interpretations emerged. Although the contribution of all of the participating countries demonstrated valuable insights into the process and outcomes, the information provided was, at times, either incomplete, outside the boundaries of the brief, or may have provided fewer contributions than anticipated. The information gathered from all of the participating groups has been discussed but their results do not contribute equitably to the data bank. The more successful responses, in my opinion, were those gathered from Australia, Brazil and South Africa due to their depth of discussion and larger volume of submissions and correspondence.

Brazil did not submit design solutions for their own country and an explanation was not provided. Mexico was unable to contribute to the review process. Turkey, United States of America, Qatar and Zimbabwe also faced some interesting challenges throughout the project. For instance, the USA submissions did not follow the design brief and some of the design solutions did not apply to those countries they were to be returned to for reviewing. Submissions were designed for countries not involved in the project such as France, Germany and Russia. To prevent confusion, these submissions were removed from the project and those considered by the researcher to be more applicable were included. Every attempt was made to include as many submissions as possible for USA. The design process for each of the countries participating was also varied. The Zimbabwe contingent had experiences that affected their ability to contribute design solutions such as the lack of Internet access, mail access and the
availability of general facilities. The Zimbabwean institute did not have access to a colour printer and external printing facilities are very expensive. Consequently, the ability of the students in Zimbabwe to research and understand their target audiences beyond the stereotypical view they have learnt from external media was greatly restricted. Other variations may have occurred at the level of individual student participation. Students may not have contributed four design solutions, one for each of the participating countries. Some students provided designs for only a selection of participating countries, while some student provided designs for countries that were participating in the other group. In addition, some students chose to collaborate with other students to complete the research project. Turkish participants completed all of the four cards. The Turkish lecturer advised me that most of the participants avoided producing solutions for Turkey. She wrote in email correspondence, “this says a lot about them actually” (Email, Participating Lecturer, Turkey, Mon, 19 February 2007). Similarly, Brazil did not produce solutions for Brazil, nor did they provide any explanation for this decision.

The impact of the lecturers on the students could not be determined. Having said that, the input of the lecturers was recognized as an influential component and the role of the lecturer and their response was not considered to negatively impact on the outcomes. A teaching and learning environment will inevitably result in lecturer input. The interpretation of the signal by the participating lecturer was considered as no less relevant than the response of the participating student as everyone who contributed to the research project were recipients of the cross-cultural visual communication. The opinion of the teaching staff and students have been combined in the discussion as all responses were considered relevant to this analysis, just as all stakeholders are recipients to cross-cultural visual communication.

Finally, it was not the role of the researcher but the role of the recipient to respond to the design, opening a breadth of responses that could not be contained statistically. In an attempt to maintain consistency, four questions were used to guide the review process. Participants were asked to identify the origin of the designer, the success in communication, the aesthetically appeal and those submissions containing stereotypical imagery. Participants were not asked to indicate which designs they felt to be global designs and which designs they felt to be local designs. This question was addressed in the context of the origin of the designer and whether recipients were able to identify the origin of the designer. Participants were also not asked to debate the submissions, instead they were asked if they liked the design and if they thought it were successful in representing their ‘sense of community’. The simplicity of this line of questioning has limited the correspondence from some of the participating countries. Others chose to expand on these discussions and provide commentary that has been used in this
research document. The interpretation of the designs was gathered from the response of the recipients, and much like those demonstrated in the industry examples, these views were varied in their response.

I understand the construction of the design submissions and corresponding review process has not provided objective results from a scientific, quantitative position. Although these limitations have resulted in a research project that cannot be classified as accurate from a scientific perspective, the information gathered from this extensive investigation constructs a clear pattern in responses that is substantial and informative. I do not believe that these identified limitations mitigate the need to complete a project of this structure and depth. Instead, this project allows for an investigation of the design process and subsequent outcomes through the inclusion of all of the broad considerations this encompasses. I reiterate comments earlier that this scoping research recognizes these limitations and yet provides the framework for further consideration based on the extensive investigation it contains.
3.4 Research Procedure

The sample selection or potential participants was obtained through the International Council of Graphic Design Associations (ICOGRADA) Education Network (IEN). The IEN, from their database of interested Universities, was able to provide a list of lecturers who were willing to participate in cross-cultural design exchanges. This database has been established for the purpose of encouraging interaction between Universities and their students. An email requesting expressions of interest was sent to each of the lecturers on the list. Eight countries responded with interest and indicated they would have anywhere from six to forty students able to undertake the brief. Students were requested from second year level or third year level but the researcher was unable to predetermine which year level was able to submit design solutions. Further, the brief may have been altered to suit the needs of the University and the curriculum being delivered.

There were two stages to the design project:

1. **Design stage:** This involved the design of a series of four postcards for each of the participating countries in the group.

2. **Review stage:** This involved the collection of questionnaire responses, email correspondence, discussion group transcripts, and personal notes.

3.4.1 The Design Stage

The design stage was undertaken over approximately an eighteen-month period. Students from different cultural backgrounds were given the same brief to represent their community and the communities of the other cultures in a series of postcards. Students were to design one postcard for each of the participating countries in their group using the theme of ‘sense of community’.

There were two groups of four countries based on when they responded to the call for participation. The first group were the first four countries to respond, followed by the second four countries to respond:

**Group one:** Australia, Brazil, South Africa and Mexico.

**Group two:** Qatar, Turkey, Zimbabwe, United States of America (Arizona).

The topic ‘sense of community’ was chosen to encourage discussion and engage the students in a project they could all relate to. Having taught visual communication design at a range of
educational environments for over fifteen years, it was anticipated that this would be a challenging brief to fulfil. Understanding how difficult it is to represent a nation or city, it was considered equally as difficult to represent a community, therefore drawing out the challenges that may be faced in undertaking such a task. To perform this task in a cross-cultural context where participants were not familiar, or had not had direct contact with those who were to review the designs, added to the complexity of the project.

The design submissions were then returned to the researcher. The researcher collated the designs into each target country. Submissions were designed into a book format in a random order and returned to the target group for consideration. The epistemological stance taken to link the aims and practical methods of collecting data to the methodology makes the following assumptions:

1. The culture of the designer will impact on their design solutions and therefore have an impact on the reception of the design.
2. The culture of the recipient will have an impact on the perception of the design solution.
3. The use of stereotypes in the design solution will impact negatively on the reception and perception of the design solution.
4. Success in communication will be more important to the recipient in a cross-cultural context than aesthetic appeal.
5. The outcomes of this study will be able to be used to guide professional practice.

Submissions were collated into target audiences and returned to each country for review (Figures 3.46 – 3.50). I randomly compiled each of the submissions for each of the countries and placed them in a hand-made book. Sixteen books were created. One book was returned to each of the contributing countries with the postcards that were designed for that country and the remaining eight books were kept in Australia as evidence for the thesis submission. Along with the books, each package contained a small gift with wrapping paper designed using the symbol for that country, a letter thanking participants for their assistance, a CD containing all of the submissions from either Group A or Group B and a response form.
Figure 3.46 Cross-cultural Design Project, Compiling books (Kelly 2006)

Figure 3.47 Cross-cultural Design Project, Completed books (Kelly 2006)

Figure 3.48 Cross-cultural Design Project, Complete set of 16 books (Kelly 2006)
A second sample group was taken from Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. Deakin University students, undertaking the third year of their undergraduate Graphic Design course, were predominantly either Australian or Norwegian. Students were asked to design a postcard representing the ‘sense of community’ for Australia and a second postcard representing the ‘sense of community’ for Norway. These postcards were evaluated in class using the same response forms from the previous research project. Students in this instance were asked to provide their origin for the review process to determine patterns in responses based on the origin of the recipient. The results from the second group have been treated as a support to the initial project. The data obtained from the second sample group of students will be discussed separately comparing the pattern of outcomes with those evident in the larger cross-cultural design project conducted internationally.
3.4.2 The Review Stage

The review stage took approximately twelve months. A book containing the design submissions for each country was sent back to the target country for review. Reviewers were randomly chosen at the discretion of the lecturer co-ordinating the project in each country. In some instance students and lecturers from other faculties and departments were involved in reviewing the work supplied.

Students and lecturers from the target country conducted reviews of the submissions. Design solutions were used in discussion groups and assignments in classes at the Universities. With the aim of prompting group discussion, I suggested a series of questions exploring the use of stereotypes in the imagery and the implications this may have on the effectiveness of the message. A questionnaire was provided and some Universities completed those, others adapted those to suit their own requirements, while others used them to guide the direction of the discussion groups.

Data was collected in the formal, classroom environment in each of the eight participating Universities and returned in written, video and email format, supplied to the researcher in paper format and electronic format. Statistical data was collated and processed using the Excel program in Microsoft Office. Each response was given a single mark in a spreadsheet. Marks were added to give a number and the final number of each response was compared.

A combination of analytical methods were used to critically evaluate the data: collating and statistically representing patterns, citing transcripts and comparatively and reflectively analysing comments in relation to the literature review.

The literature analysis detailed in prior sections of this research informed the questions that were used to guide the research project. Participants were asked to complete a review sheet (Figure 3.50 below) and return with comments to the researcher (A copy of the review form can be seen in the Appendix B). One of the participating universities chose to conduct a discussion group rather than complete the survey and another participating university chose to have the lecturer provide the feedback.
Figure 3.51 Cross-cultural Design Project, Sample of completed review sheets (Kelly 2006)

Students were asked to complete a survey considering the following four points:

1. Can you determine where this postcard was designed?
2. Does this postcard use stereotypes to demonstrate your country’s ‘sense of community’?
3. Is this postcard successful in demonstrating your country’s ‘sense of community’?
4. Please determine the most liked design solutions.

To clarify these points, the first question was looking to determine if there were any obvious signs that indicated to the recipient the nationality of the designer. This was important for a number of reasons: firstly, to determine if the culture of the designer is present in his or her work; and secondly, to determine if any patterns emerged demonstrating a consistency in the choice of the nationality.

The second question addresses the use of stereotypes in communicating the chosen message. The designer often uses stereotypes to tailor a message to a particular audience, yet differences can occur in reasoning behind the choice of stereotypical image and the recipient’s view of that image. Hence, this question was used to determine if there were patterns in the recipient’s views of the images presented.

The third question addresses the success of the communication. The term ‘success’ was directed to the success in communicating the given topic: ‘a sense of community’. This topic was chosen to gain a personal perspective, gauging the recipient’s perception of ‘sense of community’. Again consideration was being given as to whether there were patterns in the views of the recipients based on the clarity of the communication or the aesthetic appeal of the design.
The submissions most liked by the students were also determined. Each of the participating universities chose the best way to determine the top 10 and were given no guidelines or criteria for their decision making process. Participants from some institutes chose to rank each image from one (least liked) to ten (most liked), while others chose to use a numerical system: Number 1 preference - Image 1, Number 2 preference – Image 2, Number 3 preference – Image 3. The views of the recipients were respected regardless of the method or organization of the review process.

In some instances the same students who undertook the brief were involved in the review of the submissions. Each country appears to also have students or teachers who did not participate in the design process but were able to contribute to the review process. There was no consistency in the number of people who contributed to the review process and the method of reviews.

All of the material supplied by the participants has been included in the research results. Participants gave generously of their time and effort and the outcome was a substantial body of data. Not all participants felt comfortable with the project; in particular their response to viewing the postcards, and this may be reflected in the outcomes. For instance, students who were bored and disinterested in viewing the images, but were required to respond as part of the curriculum, demonstrated their disapproval in some of their responses by making notes on the review form. The images they thought appealing or successful did not have negative notes.
3.4.3 Ethical Considerations

At all times the integrity of the participants was respected. All of the postcard designs and the review submissions were anonymous. It was clearly explained that student work must remain anonymous and that there would be no recognition of the student in the research. Participation was on a voluntary basis. Participants were required to label their files with the name of their country and the target country for collation.

Human ethics approval was granted through the Monash University Ethics Committee, application number 2006/847.

Although students could choose to participate in the designing of the postcards, they were under no obligation to submit their design solutions to the researcher. Equally, student who did not wish to participate or submit their review documents were under no obligation to do so. There was no requirement on behalf of the lecturers or students to participate and as a result there are gaps evident in the outcomes. There were also variations in the submissions received. For instance, Brazil chose only to design solutions for the other participating countries and not to design solutions reflecting the sense of community of their own country. Mexico chose to not participate in the review process. Qatar was unable to contribute in the design process, students were unable to contribute to the review process and the lecturer undertook the review.

Participants from the second research project were required to submit their design solutions as part of the curriculum but could choose to have their work presented as part of the research project. Participation in the review process was on a voluntary basis.
3.5 Project Submissions

Lecturers were able to guide the students as they saw appropriate to their curriculum. Some in-depth discussions were undertaken in some countries exploring concepts of adequate research, cultural appropriation, understanding, clichés and stereotypes. Other countries were only able to undertake the brief on a fairly quick turn-around with limited guidance and assistance. The size of the postcards may have been varied by country and the brief may have been interpreted differently by each of the lecturers. This was seen as a natural part of the design process where there is always going to be a collaboration and exploration resulting in a variety of responses.

Inconsistencies likely to be in the outcomes were understood when the project was being established. The uniqueness of the project and the diversity of the participants meant all correspondence was greatly appreciated and taken as it was presented. Very enthusiastic comments were returned from participating countries, such as the following from South Africa and the United States of America:

We are really interested in this proposal. It ties in really comfortably with our course content and is particularly relevant to students of design in South Africa as they have to deal with communicating across cultural barriers on a daily basis (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Fri, 18 August 2006).

I am excited with your proposal and certainly intrigued as to what the outcome of your project may be (Email, Participating Lecturer, United States of America, Thu, 24 August 2006).

Very little correspondence occurred among countries throughout the design process. However, the comment was made by the South African lecturer that it was difficult to source accurate and authentic websites. As a result Brazil, South Africa and Australia exchanged a series of suggested websites to use for reference. Mexico did not respond to requests for their suggestion of websites and the other group of countries did not show interest in participating in such an exchange of information. A more detailed outline of the participation from each country, and project procedures, follows.
i) Australia

Forty Australian students were sourced from two universities located in Melbourne Victoria: Monash University and Swinburne University. The researcher supervised the students from Monash University, whereas another lecturer supervised the students from Swinburne University. A proportion of the students studying at these Universities are students from overseas countries and not born in Australia. The views of these students were found to differ from those of students who were born in Australia. This was determined during the conversations held in class and throughout the conversations during the review process. As Australia is largely a multicultural society, the views of students not born in Australia were given equal weight to those expressed by the participants born in this country. All submissions were anonymous.

An interesting outcome outside of the boundaries of the research project came from the process of how the submissions were provided. To allow the researcher the ability to collate the design solutions, a system of abbreviations was used to recognize the origin of the designer and the country the designs were targeting (Appendix C; Appendix E: Disk Attached). In addition to the set standard of documentation, Australian International students were keen to acknowledge their own cultural identities and not forgo this in lieu of their association with their host country. International students studying in Australia were very diligent to document their work maintaining recognition of the country where they were studying, but also their birth country while still satisfying the requirements of the abbreviation system.

There were 6 or 7 students from each of the two different third year classes at Monash University and approximately 12 – 14 students from one third year class at Swinburne University who undertook the review process. With 113 postcards to consider, the Australian students decided to review all of the postcards but to do it very quickly. Students became impatient with the process of considering each postcard and were very quick to make judgements on what they liked or disliked. Based on that judgement, students considered the content and presentation of the submission. As the process progressed, the speed of judgement became faster but also became more vocal and as a result more controversial. International students did not always agree with the Australian born students and did not voice their views as confidently once opinions were being expressed. They did write their views on the evaluation sheet.
ii) Brazil

Forty-one Brazilian students were able to supply submissions. It was decided by Brazil not to
design a submission aimed at their country and as a result Brazil supplied solutions for Australia,
Mexico and South Africa only.

The majority of Brazilian reviews were presented in Portuguese. I was able to enlist the services
of a translator to ascertain the views being expressed. Every attempt was made to remain true
to the words written.

iii) Mexico

Seventeen Mexican students were able to participate. Communication was limited throughout
the process and Mexico chose not to correspond with the other participants in their group.
Mexico was unable to participate in the review process.

iv) South Africa

South African participants held a forum to discuss their most preferred submissions. The
number of participants could not be determined. The lecturer chose a sample of postcards from
the submissions based on similarities and consistencies.

My concern was that if we went through the postcards individually (all 110 of them) we would
lose focus and it could become a bit of an ordeal. Instead I selected about 50 printouts for
display. I selected them on the basis of avoiding duplicates, (so if 4 made use of wild animals and
the flag, I just displayed 1), finding the more topical, controversial, obvious and clever examples
that were more likely to provoke discussion (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01
August 2007).

General discussion ensued around a range of topic areas and was provided in video format.
Statistical data was not provided. The South African experience was considered a successful
contribution:

I’m quite chuffed with what the students have achieved considering that it is only their second
year of study so they are relative babies at this game. Lots of cultural assumptions ended up
being made and discussions around stereotyping, clichés and cultural bias abounded. This alone made the exercise worthwhile. We also had them collaborating on this exercise which resulted in some mini ‘sense of community’ crises erupting as the groups battled to get consensus on where the project should go. The Internet as a resource (My Space particularly) for research also opened up channels of debate around the global community and how indistinct boundaries and geographical distance become in cyberspace. We have approximately 50 sets of postcards, not all complete (some students only did 1 or 2 of the 4 countries) (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Mon, 19 March 2007).

v) Turkey

The lecturer from Turkey gave significant consideration to the project and the ramifications of the various directions for delivering the brief.

How much should we get involved in the conceptual side of the cards? How much should we warn them?

Here I am basically saying: I can have a class environment where there is good research and good discussion. For example I can bring in lecturers who would discuss serious concepts like "representation", "orientalism", "otherness" etc... I can make them aware of traps so the cards would be let’s say less offending. (I can only say that because I believe there is no such a thing as successful cross-cultural design). Or I can a have class environment where all the biased point-of views and all the stereotypical thoughts or all the prejudices of students would manifest in the cards and therefore would have a bigger potential of offence (Email, Participating Lecturer, Turkey, Tue, 8 August 2006).

Further to this, issues were raised as follows:

Would you prefer a critical approach or a so called PR work. This is also connected to the above point. This would be also a warning for the instructors. Because if I would tell my students to design a postcard to promote Turkey or Australia the outcome would be something. If I would tell them to be critical the outcome would be something else. But both something and something else can be very representational. "To represent a culture" is not open enough for me. Because although I believe it is an impossible task I must accept the fact that is worth trying. But there is zillion ways of representation and zillion kinds of intention. What are our exact objectives here? (Email, Participating Lecturer, Turkey, Tue, 8 August 2006).
My response to these issues was as follows:

Please run this brief with as much input and enthusiasm you can muster. You are an important part of the process and your style, leadership and team work will only produce a better result. In industry, nothing is isolated. I expect this brief to be thrown around and challenged, and I hope it promotes a wonderful dialogue between students and countries. Your background and beliefs are an integral part of who you are and how you teach, as it should be, and with the wonderful response you have given me, I am sure that will rub off on your students. I think it is great!

If I were delivering the brief I would discuss the issues of offensiveness and compassion and attempt to make the process a positive learning experience avoiding the prejudices and stereotypes. What I would like to see is if communication is still rejected by the recipients because somehow, despite our attempts, I think that will still come through (Email, Ms M Kelly, Thu, 10 August 2006).

This correspondence continued with the following comment:

I have chosen the topic ‘Sense of community’ for the breadth of the topic. You could have a critical approach from Turkey to Australia from a Turkish perspective, but Australians don’t understand it, or you could have a critical point from Australia to Turkey and the Turkish think it is funny. This is the unknown and interesting part. I am happy if it does not take the safe PR option but I was never intending it to be an opportunity to visually condemn one country over another (Email, Participating Lecturer, Turkey, Thu, 10 August 2006).

As the project progressed, an email was sent from a student in Turkey who was interested in using proverbs as a typographical means of representing ‘sense of community’. This concept was very enthusiastically received by the Zimbabwe lecturer who attempted to convert a number of the proverbs from Shona, the main language in Zimbabwe, into English, without loss of their original meaning. The suggested proverbs were as follows:

1. The strength of a fish is in the water
2. The monkey does not see his own hind parts; he sees his neighbours’.
3. A roaring lion kills no game
4. A word uttered cannot be taken back
5. A single stick may smoke, but it will not burn

Qatar found the process of translating proverbs from their native language into English difficult. They were therefore unable to suggest suitable proverbs in time, and the United States of America was unable to assist. Consequently the concept was eventually changed.
Approximately 28 students supplied submissions from Turkey to the United States of America, Qatar, Zimbabwe and Turkey. Although they were predominantly typographically based, images were also included.

Turkish students were only able to undertake the review process on the final day of term prior to the start of their summer break and this was considered by the teacher to have some impact on the outcome of the reviews. Views were based on very fast judgements rather than opinions generated from class discussion. Forty-nine Turkish students reviewed the material submitted to Turkey. Turkish students designed 28 of the 30 submissions and 2 were designed by Zimbabwean students. USA and Qatar were unable to submit solutions to Turkey.

**vi) Qatar**

Qatar students were unable to contribute to the design process. The lecturer who was interested in undertaking the project was able to review the work designed for Qatar. The opinions generated were those of this individual alone. Hence, Qatar students were unable to contribute to the project.

**vii) The United States of America**

The United States of America were very enthusiastic and began the research project prior to the final brief being supplied. As a result some of their submissions were aimed at countries that were not in the final list of participating groups and were not considered applicable. Decisions were made to present the submissions aimed at the countries involved rather than other countries such as England, Russia and Tokyo amongst others. Twenty students were able to contribute submissions.

Senior students were quite abrupt in their reviews. Many expressed their dislike of filling out the questionnaire with comments such as: “I really enjoyed looking at the different postcards, but this survey was a bit painful” and “This project had no content or point besides looking good for the other classes. Wasting my time” Yet the participating lecturer enthusiastically endorsed the process.
The results are absolutely amazing and fascinating (even if I say so myself!). My two groups of students and I have had a blast working with you and your material. The objective of study for my class lends itself ideally with your parameters. I hope you had a blast as well... (Email, Participating Lecturer, United States of America, Sun, 30 Sep 2007).

Thank you for your enthusiasm for my student’s work. I have an amazing group of students who comprehend the importance of making qualitative and quantitative analysis visible, accessible, readable, and legible. I know that all solutions are not equally successful. However, I agree with you, it would be wonderful if it all came together as one project. It is amazing how a spark of idea at one corner of the world (Australia) can take another shape and form at another corner of the world (USA). Thanks for an amazing experience... (Email, Participating Lecturer, United States of America, Mon, 12 Nov 2007).

viii) Zimbabwe

At the time of this project, the Zimbabwean Institute of Vitgital Arts (ZIVA) were facing a great deal of political unrest. They were able to contribute despite the adversity and uncertainty of a country in turmoil. ZIVA, during the time of this project, did not own a colour printer, had only dial up Internet access, which was denied during times of this project, and had a very small student base of only 6 students able to contribute. The enthusiasm of the participants from ZIVA allowed for wonderful conversation during a particularly difficult time in the history of the country. At various stages throughout the process of this project it was suggested to ZIVA Institute withdraw from participating.

This project is not important when it comes to the wellbeing of your students and families. Please tell me at any stage if this gets too difficult to undertake (Email, Participating Lecturer, Zimbabwe, Wed, 28 March 2007).

The response was always passionately against such a thought:

We want to finish the project and be a part of it! imagine, if every time there’s trouble we retreat, there would be no Ziva to speak of today! besides we want to be part of the global design community of which this project is, this is extremely important to us, lest we feel completely isolated! (Email, Participating Lecturer, Zimbabwe, Sun, 1 April 2007).

Zimbabwe students worked together to review the submissions. One review form was completed representing the views of the group.
3.6 Second Research Project: Deakin University

Three third year visual communication classes at Deakin University were asked to design a visual solution for the sense of community for both Australia and Norway. These classes contained Australian students, Norwegian students and a small number of students from other international locations. The design approach, research approach and design outcomes were discussed among participating students as the project was completed. The final design solutions were presented to each of the three design classes for review.

Thirty-eight postcards were presented representing the ‘sense of community’ for Australia and 39 postcards were presented representing the ‘sense of community’ for Norway. An Australian, a Norwegian or a student from another International location such as China or Japan, may have designed the postcards. Responses were gathered and collated exploring the four categories presented in the previous cross-cultural design project.

The outcomes of this control group were expected to vary from the outcomes of the initial cross-cultural design research project. Students in this context had the ability to discuss and test design options and contribute to the design process of students external to their own culture. This relationship resulted in students having the ability to identify the origin of the designer and this will impact on the results of this aspect of the study.

The number of participants contributing to the control group was quite small in comparison to the initial design project. Eleven Australian participants and 9 Norwegian participants reviewed 38 Australian design solutions and 39 Norwegian design solutions.
Chapter 4.
Cross-Cultural Design Research Project Results
4.1 Outcomes Overview

There were three main organizing categories investigated in the literature review: transmitter, signal and recipient. This chapter will present the outcomes from the research project and its association with each of the three categories. This will be strongly informed by the response of the recipient. These results are based on fifty percent or more of the participants citing the same response along with evidence gathered from email correspondence and discussion groups. The outcomes have been presented in graph form for comparison and will be combined with commentary from transcripts and examples from the submissions. The review will cover the first cross-cultural design project involving eight countries: Australia, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Turkey, Qatar, USA and Zimbabwe, and supply reference to the second cross-cultural design project involving Australian and Norwegian participants.

The order of this discussion will follow the same structure as the literature review. The first section will discuss the role of the transmitter and the impact the origin of the designer has on the reception of a design. The second section will discuss the signal and those cited as aesthetically appealing, and will investigate the balance between aesthetic appeal and stereotypical imagery. Included in this are the impacts stereotypes have on the reception of the design solution. Following this, the final section will analyse the recipient and discuss the patterns that emerged in the design solutions that were cited by the participants as successful in communicating a sense of community.

The research project demonstrated that the origin of the designer was not identifiable in the submission and the recipient made assumptions as to who designed the work. Only a small percentage of assessments as to the origin of the designer were correct. The fewer the choices the recipients were required to make, the more successful the process of identification. The use of stereotypical imagery was critical in the reception of the design and an absence of stereotypical imagery affected the aesthetic appeal of the submission. Very few submissions were considered successful in communication and even fewer submissions were considered both successful in communication and aesthetically appealing.

Commonalities were present in the behaviour of both the designers and that of the recipient. These consistencies were present regardless of the culture. Understanding and recognizing these patterns is beneficial to understanding how to communicate when there is a mix of diverse cultures and markets.
Specific points will be drawn from the literature and industry examples to clarify the issues surrounding the complexity of cross-cultural visual communication. This results in the identification of distinct patterns that challenge common practices in visual communication design and some theoretical positions in the literature review.
4.2 Transmitter

The review process asked participants to identify the origin of the designer in each of the submissions they evaluated. The results were based on over 50% of participants indicating the same response. The summary of results in the Table 4.3 below demonstrates the percentage of participants who were able to correctly identify the origin of the designer.

Table 4.3 Correctly identified origin of the designer

Two main areas of discussion emerged from the research project in regards to the transmitter’s role in cross-cultural communication, each of which comes from the analysis of the identification of the origin of the designer. The first is the responses demonstrated that consistently participants were unable to correctly identify the origin of the designer and many participants chose to cite ‘unsure’ rather than make an attempt. Only a small percentage of submissions were correctly identified and many of the recipients were uncommitted in their response. The second was that the results were affected based on the number of options to identify the origin of the designer. The fewer the number of options, the greater the success rate in correct identification. Recipients were unable to identify the origin of the designer and instead assumptions are made. It emerged that each of the designers, regardless of their origin, had an equal chance of designing a solution the recipients found appealing and successful in communication. These findings, discussed in more detail in this chapter, provide insight into clarifying the role of the transmitter and challenge the views presented in the literature.
4.2.1 Identification of the origin of the designer

(i) Submissions for Australia

The first pattern in the feedback provided by participants demonstrated that consistently participants were unable to correctly identify the origin of the designers. For example, referring to the results for Australia, 3% of the design solutions (equating to four submissions) had participants correctly identify the origin of the designer (based on the images being correctly identified by 50%, or more than 50%, of the participants). As seen in Table 4.4 below, seven of the top ten aesthetically appealing design solutions were thought to be designed by Australian designers. Only one of the top ten submissions, Image 66 shown below, was correctly identified as being designed by an Australian designer by more than 50% of participants. None of the bottom ten aesthetically appealing design solutions were thought to be designed by Australian designers and none were.

Table 4.4 Australian participant results identifying the origin of the designer in the top ten aesthetically appealing design solutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Ten Aesthetically Appealing</th>
<th>Image Number</th>
<th>Percentage of correct indications</th>
<th>Presumed Country of Origin</th>
<th>Actual Country of Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Australia/Unsure</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Australia/Unsure</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Australia/Unsure</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Brazil/Unsure</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Image 66 had 85% of participants correctly identify the origin of the designer as Australian. The three other design solutions had 50 – 55 percent correctly identify the origin of the designer, also as Australian.

**Image 66** Australian submission for Australia.
85% of participants correctly identified the origin of the designer as Australian.

**Image 60** Australian submission for Australia.
55% of participants correctly identified the origin of the designer as Australian.

**Image 74** Australian submission for Australia.
50% of participants correctly identified the origin of the designer as Australian.
50% of participants correctly identified the origin of the designer as Australian.

Many of the images correctly identified as designed by an Australian designer demonstrated an insight into the local culture. The local beer, the local festivals and the local beaches are representations exhibiting a level of local knowledge. Images 60, 74 and 4, while identified as being designed by an Australian designer, did not rate in the top ten aesthetically appealing design submissions.
(ii) Submissions for Brazil

Although Brazilian participants chose not to create design solutions for their own country, the results in the findings from Brazil demonstrated participants were uncommitted in their attempt to identify the origin of the designer. The pattern of Brazilian participants was to cite ‘unsure’ in response to indicating the origin of the designer as demonstrated in Table 4.5 below. There were not any instances where 50% or more of the participants were able to correctly identify the origin of the designer.

Table 4.5 Brazilian participant results identifying the origin of the designer in the top ten aesthetically appealing design solutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Ten Aesthetically Appealing</th>
<th>Image Number</th>
<th>Percentage of correct indications</th>
<th>Presumed Country of Origin</th>
<th>Actual Country of Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The two design solutions with the highest number of correct citations, Images 17 and 22 seen below, also demonstrated a preference for a local theme in their content. Neither rated in the top ten aesthetically appealing design submissions.

**Image 17** South African submission for Brazil.
35% of participants correctly identified the origin of the designer as South African.

**Image 22** Australian submission for Brazil.
33% of participants correctly identified the origin of the designer as Australian.

(iii) Varying degrees of commitment identifying the origin of the designer

Brazilian participants cited ‘unsure’ rather than making an attempt to identify the origin of the designer in the submissions they reviewed, demonstrating a varying degree of commitment to this aspect of the review process. The results of the cross-cultural design project found that Brazil was not alone in citing ‘unsure’. All of the participants chose to indicate ‘unsure’ at some stage in their evaluations rather than making an attempt at identification. Participants indicated they were unsure as to the origin of the designer for nearly all of the design solutions that were less highly considered and in particular those that comprised the bottom ten design submissions. Recipients did not attempt to determine the origin of the designer in the design solutions they did not like or did not understand.

A simple explanation for the lack of attempt in identifying the origin of the designer could be participants’ sense of fairness and the demonstration of courteous behaviour to the other participants. It may be that there was an effort to minimise offending a country based on presumptions about the quality of the design work from that country. Therefore, no response or a response of ‘unsure’ as to the origin of the designer was considered better than a random guess or an outright criticism of those design solutions considered less successful or less appealing.

This raised an interesting question as to the process of evaluation by the recipients. Was the design considered poorly based on the fact that it was thought to be designed externally, or was it considered poorly and then justification was given that an external designer must have designed the solution? To explain this more clearly, it could be considered that the recipient’s view was: “I think this is a solution created by a designer from my country and therefore I like it”, or it could be considered: “I like this solution and therefore I think it was created by a designer from my country”.

Answers to these questions can be gathered from observations of the review process in Australia with participants from Monash University and Swinburne University. When presented with each of the postcards, recipients gave an immediate and instinctive response. This may have been a sigh, a laugh, a question such as: “What is that?” or “Why would you put that there?” or a positive response such as: “I like that.” or “That is clever”. Once the immediate response had been determined, the second step was to attempt to identify the origin of the designer. When the recipients did not like a design solution or did not understand a design
solution the response was more commonly: “I do not like this solution. I think it was designed by someone else”. The transcript from the South African participants’ discussion demonstrates that the participants take a similar process of evaluation. It can be seen that participants identify an image, evaluate that image, and then attempt to identify the origin of the designer. The initial concern was to consider if the solution was liked or not liked and then the origin of the designer was attributed to the design based on this overall view. The origin of the designer was not a consideration until it was asked. The extract from the transcript of the South African review process discussing Image 95, shown below, demonstrates how presumptions were made quickly.

Male: what is that colonised and colonisator doesn’t sounds very peaceful and together, it’s sort of divided, they have sort of split it up, it doesn’t really speak community in that way at all.

Lecturer: Where do you think this one was designed?
Female: Australia (Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07).

Image 95 Brazilian submission for South Africa.
(iv) Shift in opinion

There were opportunities to later supply the country of origin of the designer to the recipients. This was not requested by all of the participating countries and moved outside the scope of this study. However, when the origin of the designer was identified, and it was different to the assessment made, participants were required to adjust their thinking, challenging their opinions. For instance, the comment was made from the South African lecturer that she was “quite shocked that the football postcard didn't come from Brazil and the cricket one didn’t come from Australia” (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Thur, 02 August 2007) referring to Image 33 and Image 50 respectively, seen below. The shift in opinion was met with resistance, indicated by mumuring and a questioning conversation, evident in the transcript from the South African participants and the experiences I had in conducting two review processes. The perception of the recipient, in this instance, demonstrates a preconceived stereotypical expectation as to the origin of the designer influencing their evaluation.

![Image 33 Australian submission for South Africa.](image33.png)

![Image 50 Brazilian submission for South Africa.](image50.png)
4.2.2 The number of options influenced results

(i) Turkish outcomes
The findings from the Turkish participants highlighted an additional factor regarding the impact of the origin of the designer. There were only two participating countries able to contribute to the design solutions for the Turkish recipients, Turkey and Zimbabwe, and therefore there were only two options available to the Turkish participants to identify the origin of the designer. Responses demonstrated that Turkish participants believed all ten of the top ten aesthetically appealing submissions were designed by Turkish designers, as demonstrated in Table 4.6 below, and nine out of the bottom ten submissions were designed by Zimbabwean designers. Nineteen from the 30 submissions (63%) had more than 50% of participants correctly identify the origin of the designer. Evident in these results is that the fewer the number of options to identify the origin of the designer, the higher the percentage of correct identifications.

Table 4.6 Turkish participant results identifying the origin of the designer in the top ten aesthetically appealing design solutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Ten Aesthetically Appealing</th>
<th>Image Number</th>
<th>Percentage of correct indications</th>
<th>Presumed Country of Origin</th>
<th>Actual Country of Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Turkish results demonstrate that when there were fewer options to choose from to identify the origin of the designer, participants who liked, or thought a solution was successful in communication, attributed the origin of the designer to the same country as themselves. When they did not like the solution, or thought a solution was less successful in communication, they attributed the origin of the designer to the country different from themselves. The greater
the number of options as to the origin of the designer, the more likely the participant indicated 'unsure'.

The results from the Turkish participants strongly indicated a preference for the design work from the Turkish designers. It may be that the participants reviewing the design work were also the designers and their work was easily identifiable, or it may be that they were able to identify a difference in the design work submitted from each of the participating countries. Either way, the preference to favour design work from Turkish designers, and associate the design work from the other country with being less aesthetically pleasing or less successful in communication, was distinctly obvious in the statistics gathered.

(ii) United State of America outcomes

The USA responses also demonstrated the presumption that the majority of the top ten aesthetically pleasing design solutions were created by designers from their own country. Eight of the top ten solutions were cited as being designed by USA participants. This is illustrated in Table 4.7 below. Half of the top ten submissions had 50% or more of the participants correctly identify the origin of the designer. In the case of the USA submission, visual cues provided assistance for ease of connection to the host country. To suit the USA curriculum, students were required to design factual comparisons between countries providing a visual design approach with a distinct design style that could be easily identified. Thirteen from 50 design submissions (26%) had more than 50% of participants correctly identify the origin of the designer.
Table 4.7 USA participant results identifying the origin of the designer in the top ten aesthetically appealing design solutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Ten Aesthetically Appealing</th>
<th>Image Number</th>
<th>Percentage of correct indications</th>
<th>Presumed Country of Origin</th>
<th>Actual Country of Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Unsure/USA</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>USA/Zimbabwe/Unsure</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(iii) Second research project outcomes

The results of the control group, the second research project conducted, with Australian and Norwegian participants, also demonstrated that the recipients were able to correctly identify a higher proportion of submissions compared with the initial research project. Norwegian recipients sustained a strong consistency to identifying the origin of the designer (39% correct of the Australian submissions and 46% correct identification of the Norwegian submissions). I understood that the results of this project were likely to demonstrate a high proportion of correctly identified submissions because of the close proximity of students and the discussions that were conducted during the design process. A large proportion of Australian participants identified the Australian designs in both the Australian submissions and the Norwegian submissions. The Norwegian participants identified the Norwegian designs in both the Norwegian submissions and the Australian submissions. Very few of the bottom ten submissions were cited as designed by designers from the same culture as the recipients, and in most cases this was correct.

A greater percentage of Australian participants identified Australian design submissions over those from other locations just as the Norwegian participants identified Norwegian design submissions over those from other locations. In particular, a higher number of Norwegian participants were able to identify the Norwegian design submissions for Australia supporting the view that these participants may have recognized the design work from their compatriots.
These results demonstrate participants’ strong preference for choosing the design submissions from their own country over choosing those from other countries. Similar to the results demonstrated with the Turkish outcomes where only two options were available, there was less likelihood for participants to cite ‘unsure’ and a higher percentage of correct identifications were made. Recipients were less likely to attempt to determine the origin of the designer in the design solutions they did not like or did not understand. The preference for the design work from those participants from the same country as the recipient was strongly evident.

(iv) Internet influences
Unlike designers working in industry or participants from the second research project, the designers for the first research project were unable to visit the cultural environment of the recipients. Participants were only able to design their solution remotely using primarily the Internet as their source of inspiration. The Internet presents designers with another form of culture and an interesting variable in the visual communication process. One South African student used the social network Myspace to source information to assist in creating her design solution. The following extract was taken from a discussion group in South Africa.

Lecturer: I think ‘F’, when you did a lot of your research you were on Myspace.
Female: Yeah. Because we were doing lingo we had to get the actual language that children or people our age spoke so we had to speak to those people.
Lecturer: And then you find there is a uniformity? Commonality as opposed to difference, which makes it more difficult to get a sense of community because we are, like, all the same.
(Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07).

A number of approaches were taken presenting aspects of the local ‘lingo’. Examples of a Lingo Theme are presented below in Images 44, Image 29, Image 21 and Image 38 seen below.
Lingo Theme Image 44 South African submission for Australia.

Lingo Theme Image 29 South Africa submission for South Africa.

Lingo Theme Image 21 South Africa submission for South Africa.
This conversation leads us into a topic area that moves beyond the confines of this study; youth involved in this project are enthusiastic members of a generic global identity in addition to their local or nationally defined group. It can be assumed that participants are encouraged to understand and interact with the global design community and would therefore have a broad understanding of cross-cultural design. The impact of a global identity with a local or national identity cannot be defined. The social influences on the participants involved in this project were not monitored and can therefore not be determined. As youth were the target audience for the international cross-cultural design research project, general themes of youth culture were evident in the submissions. These were identifiable in the submissions from each of the countries participating in the research.
4.2.3 Misrepresentations

(i) Influence of misrepresented images
Other visual signs can be seen to provide guidance to participants to help identify the origin of the designer. Factual evidence present in the design such as the use of English, an error in the choice of imagery, or misrepresentations or other ‘obvious errors’ in the design, were additional cues to identify the designer as one that was not local. These factors became identifying aspects of the design, rather than identification drawn from the design theme, the imagery used or the production values of the submission.

The example from the South African transcript highlighted that some design solutions were identified as created by a designer in a country external to the recipient’s country because of language difference. There were a number of design submissions that demonstrated linguistic limitations, spelling errors, typographical errors or an odd use of what would be considered a common word, providing easy signals that someone from another country, who may not share the same language, completed the design. An example of this can be seen with a design solution (Image 22) below from Brazil for South Africa using the term África Do Sul. “What is Africa Do Sul? I don’t even get that” (Student, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07).

Image 22 Brazilian submission for South Africa.

Discussions indicated that participants were making assumptions based on information gathered from the design solution that was unrelated to the design concept or the production values.

Lecturer: Where do you think this was done?
Male: Australia.
Lecturer: Why Australia?
Male: They’re English. (Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07).

(ii) Ndebele patterning
Incorrect use of imagery was evident in the submissions for South African participants leading to recognition that the origin of the designer was outside of their community. Ndebele patterning and the use of patterns in general was strongly criticised by the South African recipients. “The Ndebele patterning doesn’t look like that. It’s a lot more complex and the colours have a lot more meaning and every pattern has a certain meaning. It’s sort of like a language for them” (Male Student, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07). The comments from the South African participants demonstrate that not just any pattern is suitable, but the correct Ndebele patterning in the correct context is required, providing a depth of understanding to make the visual image acceptable. Incorrect use of a cultural icon is strongly criticised and deemed unacceptable. Image 53 and Image 72, seen below, were identified as submissions containing an incorrect reference to Ndebele patterning.

Images including Ndebele patterning.

**Image 53** Brazilian submission for South Africa.

**Image 72** Australian submission for South Africa.
(iii) Nelson Mandela

The comments from the South African participants regarding the use of Ndebele patterning in the design submissions leads to considerations of cultural appropriation. Issues of cultural appropriation were not cited in any of the submissions but can be raised in the discussion on the use of images such as Nelson Mandela. South African participants categorized the origin of the designer as external to their community based on the use of his image. Participants cite the use of the image of Mandela as inappropriate and unacceptable when used by someone external to the community. Correspondence provided explained:

"The use of Mandela (Image 19, Image 31) elicited a strange response; it is seen as stereotypical (or rather, easy) and yet recognised as a hugely positive and linking device. Also, students felt incredibly possessive over him and almost didn’t like ‘outsiders’ making use of his image. Very Strange (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007)."

Recipients from South Africa were conflicting in their own understanding of the use of an image of Mandela and therefore not comfortable with anyone else using Mandela in their submission. Submissions from South African designers did not contain any reference to Mandela. Image 19 and Image 31, referred to in the above extract, can be seen below.

![Image 19](Brazilian submission for South Africa.)
These images highlight the issues surrounding cultural ownership and who has the right to use an image. The example of the recipients’ responses to the use of an image of Mandela demonstrates a level in the argument that is not present in the literature. Although Mandela was not visually represented in a negative way, falsely, or as a caricature, a protective ownership of Mandela was cited as the reason for the image to be deemed unacceptable to use to demonstrate the South African ‘sense of community’. This is supported by Furnham and Bochner (1986) who explain that there are systematic cultural differences in the way in which people send and receive information resulting in beliefs, attitudes and values impacting on the perception of the design. Underlying value systems and unspoken rules result in a response that could not have been predicted prior to submission demonstrating that an offensive solution can be created without intent.
4.2.4 Contribution to the field of knowledge

The result of this analysis establishes that a substantial contribution can be made to the debate on the role of the transmitter in the communication process when applied to cross-cultural visual communication. Revisiting the literature review, Rowden (2004) states that the culture of the designer will be visible in their work, taking the position that you cannot escape your culture. McCoy (1997), on the other hand, stated that the designer’s role should be neutral in the communication process, that is, a visual communication designer should work in a controlled environment that is accountable and justifiable. In support of this, Lull (2001) explains that the visual communication strategy should work irrespective of nationality, religion and culture.

This research project demonstrates that the position of Rowden (2004) is not correct. Participants are unable to determine the culture of the designer and designers from all over the world follow an international standard of visual communication resulting in a high standard of conceptualisation and completion irrespective of origin. The outcomes support the view that the designer is a neutral transmitter of the message (Fiske 1990, Gudykunst 1994, Barnard 2005, McCoy 2006), as recipients were unable to define any impact the origin of the designer had in the communication process. The culture of the designer has minimal influence on the designer’s outcomes and any impact culture has on the design decision-making process is not evident in the final design solutions. Each postcard was evaluated on face value, and although assumptions were made as to the origin of the designer, these assumptions were often incorrect with a strong bias present in the presumption that if a design solution was liked, it was designed in the country of the recipient and if a design solutions was not considered as highly, it was cited as designed by a participant from a country different to that of the recipient. The designer is in fact neutral in the communication process and visual communication strategies more commonly work irrespective of nationality, religion and culture.

Mills (1963), Nixon (1997), Haslem (2009) and Soar (2004) refer to the role of the designer as a cultural intermediary, absorbing and repackaging aspects of the cultural environment to suit a broader audience, thus contributing to the creation of our social worlds. Designers aim to push cultural boundaries as they visually communicate to other members of their culture. The designer, in absorbing and repackaging aspects of a cultural environment, may source interesting imagery to use in their design. This imagery can move beyond the boundaries of acceptability and be considered inappropriate to use, such as the use of Nelson Mandela or the Ndebele Patterning. In these instances, even I was surprised at the concerns expressed by the recipients. Other examples, submissions that demonstrate a blatant misuse of image or total
misrepresentation, demonstrate either a lazy approach to the project or a lack of understanding and warrant rejection by the recipient.

Kennedy states that designers can “often see their adopted country with fresh eyes and adventurous enthusiasm” (, p.10) giving them a fresh insight to creating visual solutions for that country, and Henderson (personal communication, September 24, 2009) explains that it is an advantage to be a designer from outside a cultural group looking into a cultural group, creating new, fresh insight into design options. This research project demonstrates that the theory of ‘outsider’ versus ‘insider’ does not hold claim. A designer working from outside a cultural group looking in does not provide any advantage over the designer who creates solutions from within the cultural group. Design submissions from all of the cultural groups were considered highly and were positioned in the top ten submissions. Assumptions were made as to the origin of the designer, yet these assumptions were often incorrect. Postcards created by designers in the same country as the recipient were just as successful or unsuccessful as those created by designers externally to the recipient. Being a part of the ‘inside’ group did not guarantee success just as being part of the ‘outside’ group did not mean there would be failure. Much like the issue surrounding the new ‘M’ logo for the City of Melbourne, the role of the designer became a consideration in the reception of the design as the recipient used this to articulate why a design was not considered highly. Recipients often indicated that they were unsure as to the origin of the designer unless they liked the design or thought it successful and then the recipients were happy to adopt that solution as one from their own cultural area.

Tajfel and Turner’s (1986) social identity theory provides great insight into understanding the patterns in the findings. Social identity theory explains that recipients have a positive group distinction with their own culture and therefore remain loyal to the membership of that group. Recipients wish to identify with the positive design solutions, those thought to be aesthetically pleasing and successful in communication, as being created by a member of their own cultural group. This is evident in the results where recipients commonly identified designers from their own country as having designed the top ten submissions and designers from outside their country as having designed the bottom ten submissions. The response of the Turkish students, who had only two options to consider in determining the origin of the designer, overwhelmingly believed that Turkish students designed all of the top ten submissions and Zimbabwean students designed nine out of ten of the bottom ten submissions. These results highlight the finding that the fewer the number of options to identify the origin of the designer, the stronger the correct identification and assumptions.
Applying social psychology theories, an ‘outgroup’ member will not be attributed the same recognition as an ‘ingroup’ member resulting in it being more difficult for an outsider to design for a different cultural group. When an ‘outgroup’ member does design something that is perceived as not acceptable, the prejudiced perceiver is more likely to attribute the action to internal, genetically determined factors than when the same act is committed by an ‘ingroup’ member. When the prejudiced perceiver views a positive action from the ‘outgroup’ member, they will most likely attribute it to luck, exceptional effort, or the exceptional case (Nelson 2006). The recipients in this international cross-cultural design research project demonstrated that if they felt the visual representation was not in line with their own view of themselves, someone who was outside of their cultural group must have created the image.

The South African recipients offered an insight into their view of this topic when discussing whether they could determine the design solutions designed by the South African designers.

Lecturer: Can you pick out the ones that come to you from us?
Male: Yeah.
Lecturer: See how you can feel? And what is it about those that, besides that you recognise that your neighbour did it, is it kind of really taking on a different level and what level is that?
Female: It's more honest I think.
Female: More understanding.
Lecturer: So because you live it, it's easier to communicate it, when you don't live it it's totally foreign and it's quite difficult.
(Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07).
4.3 Signal

As was argued in the literature review, the signal, constructed by the transmitter, can only be determined as effective when the recipient has received it and understands the intended message (Berthon, Pitt et al. 2009, p.357). To determine how the role of the transmitter has impacted on the signal we must analyse the creation of the signal by the transmitter and consider the evaluation of the signal by the recipient. There were two main considerations to emerge from this investigation. The first is the designer’s approach and the choice of images used by the designer where there was a tendency of the designer to follow a theme, commonly stereotypical, in resolving the design submissions. Although the images were similar in content and design, the responses of the countries differed to all but a few themes. The second consideration was the use of stereotypical imagery and the images cited as stereotypical by the recipients from each of the participating countries. The international cross-cultural design research project demonstrated that stereotypical imagery was important for understanding and appeal to the recipient. Broad imagery, void of stereotypical references, was commonly less understood and cited as poor in both communication and aesthetic appeal.

It must be stipulated at this stage that an important consideration in the construction of the research project was the review process granting the recipients the opportunity to discuss and respond to the submissions. It was my intention to make no assumption about the images, neither those that were considered successful in communication and aesthetically appealing nor those that were considered to contain stereotypical imagery. Each country presented its own evaluation specific to that country and the information presented in this analysis reflects the feedback provided.
4.3.1 Designer’s approach

All but a small number of the participants used a series of related images to resolve their design submissions rather than treat each country individually. To do this, designers used the same theme for each of their submissions with only slight adaptations to suit each of the target countries. Images followed themes such as festival celebrations, sporting events, native wildlife or images symbolically representing unity or peace. The themes changed slightly to reflect a closer alliance with the recipient’s culture.

The design strategy of resolving the postcards as a series was not suggested or recommended. The students took this approach on their own initiative and the majority of students from the participating countries used this strategy. The effectiveness of taking this design approach will be discussed through the results gathered in the analysis of the aesthetic appeal.

Aesthetic appeal was determined through the review process by a ranking system provided by the recipients who were asked to identify the top ten submissions and provide commentary as to why they were chosen. Some of the participants chose to rank each image out of ten allowing for a statistical comparison to create the top ten submissions. Other participants chose to cite those they liked and may not have cited ten. Commentary from the recipients, taken from the review forms, has been included in this analysis.

The following pages review the responses received. Firstly, I will identify the images that were commonly cited by more than one country identifying the themes that were seen to be aesthetically appealing. This will lead into the discussion of images that were viewed differently by each of the participating countries. There is a strong link between those images cited as aesthetically appealing and those with stereotypical imagery identified as present in the submission. This will lead to an analysis of the submissions cited as stereotypical and the common themes evident in those that were identified as positive stereotypes and those identified as negative stereotypes. The order in which they are presented is centred upon the general strength of the response received in each of the sections. For convenience I have nominated a title for each of the groups of images as a theme. For example, the Pantone Swatch Theme and the Blood Running in Veins Theme; these were my nomenclature nominations and not a formal response from the recipients.
(i) Pantone Swatch Theme.

Responses cited by the recipients as aesthetically appealing provide insight into the effectiveness of the themes and issues associated with taking this path. Looking firstly at a concept created by an Australian participant for Australia, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa, the Pantone Swatch Theme (Australia Image 10, Brazil Image 10 and South Africa Image 7), was considered highly by each of the three countries able to respond to the submission.

Pantone Swatch Theme. Image 10 Australian submission for Australia.

Pantone Swatch Theme. Image 10 Australian submission for Brazil.
Pantone Swatch Theme. *Image 7* Australian submission for South Africa

This design, presenting Pantone swatches in the colours of the national flags, was cited as a clever concept, perfect for the target audience who were other design students. South African participants described this design approach as simple and concise (Email, Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007). Brazilian participants explained on their review forms, that the minimalist form was appealing and the utilization of an image related to the world of design combined with the colours related to the country was clever. One comment stated that this design did not demonstrate a Brazilian sense of community but it was smart to relate the idea of flags with pantone colour swatches, and they had wished they had thought of the idea themselves.
(ii) Blood Running in Veins Theme.

In a similar concept demonstrating a visual representation of patriotism, the submission using the colours of a country’s flag running in the veins of a person was commonly cited as a nice idea. South African participants commented that Image 25, which plays on the colours of community or nation flowing through your blood “felt like a valid, non-stereotypical concept”. (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Thur, 02 August 2007). Brazilian participants made comments on their review forms such as “green and yellow blood, nice concept”, “it pictures our love for this country, without the use of any stereotyped icon, and reminding us how “movement” and “music” are important”, “Brazilian sensuality, Brazil in the veins is strong” and “though the woman doesn’t seem Brazilian, the blood idea was pretty good. This stands out from the mass of cards”.

Blood Running in Veins Theme. Image 2 South African submission for Brazil

Blood Running in Veins Theme. Image 63 South African submission for Australia

Variations in response did occur. This concept did not rank quite as highly for the Australian participants. Australian participants were less inclined to favour images of patriotism or nationalism flowing through the veins when compared to the feedback provided by Brazilian and South African participants.
(iii) Footwear Theme.

Differences in the response to the theme by the recipient can be seen in the response to the Footwear design. Australian participants did not respond in the same manner as the other participants with the designs using footwear as the interrelated theme. These designs featured sandals for South Africa, flippers for Australia, football (soccer) boots for Brazil and sandals for Mexico. The South African response was "we thought the Aussie flipper was excellent and all ‘got it’ immediately! Funny. Remember as potential tourists we often get the Barrier reef fed to us so our perception is coloured by that.” (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Thur, 02 August 2007). The Australian recipients, on the other hand, found it difficult to determine the relevance of a swimming flipper to their sense of community and initially rejected the concept. Once the series was viewed, the Australian recipients commented that the sandal design used for South Africa was more appropriate for them as well and saw the football (soccer) boot as representative of Australian Rules football, also more appropriate in a visual representation of Australia to a Victorian based audience where Australian Rules football is a dominant sport. The flipper was not seen as an image Australians commonly celebrate, resulting in the image not being seen as relevant to an Australian audience.

Footwear Theme. Image 65 Mexican submission for South Africa.
Footwear Theme. **Image 48** Mexican submission for Australia.

Footwear Theme. **Image 46** Mexican submission for Brazil.

Footwear Theme. **Image 81** Mexican submission for Mexico.
(iv) Multiple Image Theme.

In a similar result, three of the four participating countries: Turkey, Qatar, USA and Zimbabwe, cited the submission piecing together many components of a country, that I have titled the Multiple Image Theme (Turkey Image 25, Qatar Image 33 and Zimbabwe Image 26) as well resolved. This design gave the recipient a variety of interpretations of the community allowing identification and connection to be celebrated in a range of ways. Although each individual image on the postcard was difficult to identify, the essence of the idea, many pieces making up a community, combined with recognizable map shapes, created an overall appeal, resulting in this design being cited by participants from more than one country.
Multiple Image Theme. **Image 33** Turkish submission for Qatar

Multiple Image Theme. **Image 26** Turkish submission for Zimbabwe
(v) ‘Take a look is there heaven’ Theme.

Two countries cited the submission, ‘Take a look is there heaven’ Theme (Image 34 and Image 45) as well regarded. This image takes the view of a community with a focus on the unique aspects of the landscape framed in an aeroplane window.

'Take a look is there heaven’ Theme. **Image 34** Turkish submission for Qatar

'Take a look is there heaven’ Theme. **Image 45** Turkish submission for USA

The USA participants’ comments included “I like the idea of people coming to the US and comparing it to heaven”, “graphic layout is interesting and creative”, and “the postcard was positive, and did not take cheap shots towards the US. The postcard was informative, and showed an admiration towards AZ”.
(vi) **Collage Theme.**

The Australian and Norwegian participants in the second research project favoured similar themes. Both countries cited the design with a collage of items found locally in Australia followed by a collage of items found locally in Norway, shown below and titled Collage Theme, as aesthetically appealing design submissions. Similar to those images discussed earlier in this chapter, many interpretations of the community can be identified in this design, granting participants the opportunity to create their own connection with the representation.
(vii) Variations in response to the same theme.

Highlighted previously in the discussion of the Footwear Theme of postcards, participants from different countries do not always respond in the same manner to the same postcard theme. Country differences lead to differences in the interpretation of the submission, with not all of the countries responding positively to the theme presented. This was also evident in the discussion regarding the design solution containing the Zola Budd (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Thur, 02 August 2007), commonly known in Australia as the combie van. I have titled this theme the Van Theme. This example, designed by a South African participant for Australian, Brazilian, Mexican and South African recipients, highlights the differences in the interpretations of images by each of the participating countries.

The term ‘Combie Vans’ is used in Australia to describe the vans surf enthusiasts live out of as they travel up and down the coast looking for the perfect wave. Often these vans are very old, wind and salt beaten and have surf boards tied to the top. They are associated with a ‘hippie’ culture of the transient, free spirited individual. It can be also generalized that people on welfare who, favourably or unfavourably, lead an enviable lifestyle without a care in the world live out of the vans. The South African view of the same vehicle is quite different.

‘The van’ as you put it has a fascinating history and is hugely integral to contemporary South African society. In the 80’s, when there was a lot of violence, strikes and mass action, public transport (buses) almost vanished. These (and trains) were the main source of transport for the black community in urban areas. What replaced them were mini-bus taxis (the vans) which were independently owned and run. The taxi industry is hugely competitive and can be very violent as taxi owners try to get and maintain control of lucrative routes. Drivers are not the owners and are pressured to cover as much territory and get as many fares as possible to make themselves a profit. This often results in massive overloading of vehicles, terrifying unroadworthiness (too costly to keep vehicles in good running order), total ignoring of the rules of the road by taxis and a huge general antagonism between normal South Africans and taxi drivers. Most people hate them and they are a law unto themselves. Even passengers hate them but have no alternative to making use of them. Government often threatens to take them in hand, to start implementing controlling measures and enforcing laws and then the taxis threaten to strike. If they don’t operate, the workforce is stranded and the economy comes to a halt! So we have a situation where the rule breakers are making the rules and it affects all of our lives because of their general arrogance and lack of respect for anyone on the road. They are known as ‘Zola Budds’ - from a famous
long distance runner a few decades ago - all a bit odd as she was white and Afrikaans!
So there is a potted history of the 'vans'! (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Thur, 02 August 2007).

Van Theme. **Image 98** South African submission for South Africa

Van Theme. **Image 48** South African submission for Brazil
The Brazilian participants made comments such as “loved the fact the person made such a deep search to find out about Volkswagen Kombi. Very strong Brazilian image”, “it (the postcard) has an icon for Brazilians, that represented Brazil some time ago and still exists here nowadays”, “no sense of community here, but this one made several people laugh for reasons only known in Brazil. They were not laughing at the card, but at the idea of seeing one of those vehicles there. I do enjoy a nice laugh. I think it’s very important nowadays, and that’s why this card is one of my top ten’ and ‘liked it a lot. Creative layout. Taken something everyday and made it interesting. 90% of cars are Kombi. Adapted something stereotypical”.

(Left) Van Theme. Image 95 South African submission for Australia and
(Right) Van Theme. Image 70 South African submission for Mexico
(viii) Perceptions change with further information.

In a similar example, the image of the ‘Potjie’, Image 91, was another series of images that was viewed differently by each of the participating countries. I have titled this theme the ‘Beer Pots Theme’. This image was originally accepted and thought of quite highly by the South African participants. However, after viewing the series, this submission was subsequently rejected, demonstrating that opinions can change with further information.

![Image 91 Australian submission for South Africa](image)

Beer Pots Theme. Image 91 Australian submission for South Africa

“Image 91 was particularly astute but we weren’t sure whether the total relevance of the pot was understood. Just to fill you in (sorry if you know this), the ‘potjie’ is used in many South African cultures as an outdoor cooking pot - blacks and whites. In Afrikaans culture, the stew that is cooked in the pot is a mixture of all sorts of ingredients that get thrown in together and then the cooks and guests all sit around the fire waiting for the stew to be ready. These pots are also used to brew beer, African beer, and there is some sitting around in groups waiting for fermenting to occur. This it is an incredibly rich and relevant metaphor for community. I’d be interested to find out if the designer knew the story behind the pots. If, however, this postcard is linked to others in the series that feature branded beers - then it misses the point and could be judged to be rather patronising. If it is trying to say that whilst Brazilians, Mexicans and Australians all drink branded beer in bottles and South Africans drink beer made in a pot, they are sorely mistaken and a repeated representation of Castle Lager bottles would have been closer to the mark” (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007).

The remaining images from the series were all bottled beers: Corona for Mexico, Victoria Bitter for Australia and Brahma for Brazil. After viewing the rest of the series of postcards, opinions changed and the South African participants were quite offended by the design for their community. Postcards, when viewed on an individual basis, may not be seen as clever or correct in representation, but when viewed as a series, opinions could change as to whether the
concept was considered astute and innovative. This was mentioned in correspondence with the South African lecturer: “I think viewing the set of postcards did have an impact, often seeing all of them gave more clarity as to what the designer was intending - not always easy to pick up in one example” (Email, Participating Lecturer; South Africa, Thur, 02 August 2007). In opposition to this, as the Beer Pot Theme example shows, opinions could change and the submission can be subsequently rejected.

Beer Pots Theme. **Image 66** Australian submission for Australia

Beer Pots Theme. **Image 106** Australian submission for Mexico

Beer Pots Theme. **Image 35** Australian submission for Brazil
(ix) **Lingo Theme.**

Individual differences were evident in other themes. Image 21 was well received because it was considered visually appealing in its use of typographic elements and 'lingo' (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Thur, 02 August 2007).

![Image 21](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Lingo Theme. Image 21** South African submission for South Africa.

The Zimbabwean recipients cited the submission along the same theme as successful in communication whereas participants from other countries did not cite this theme in their feedback.

![Image 5](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Lingo Theme. Image 5** Turkish submission for Zimbabwe.
(x) Isolated Images

Other images cited as aesthetically appealing to a particular country were not generally noted as such in other countries. Two examples can be seen below. Image 70 was cited to have lovely visual resolution (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007), while Image 90, also seen below, was seen to be a clever use of typography using local vernacular to create an image (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007).

Image 70 Australian submission for South Africa.

Image 90 Brazilian submission for South Africa.
4.3.2 Use of stereotypical imagery

All of the recipients were provided with a questionnaire to assist the submission of responses. The questionnaire included the opportunity to indicate whether stereotypical imagery was evident in the submissions being reviewed. No definition was provided as to what constitutes a stereotype. It was left to the participating groups to identify and indicate in their response what they thought was a stereotypical image based on their own cultural connections.

The South African discussion provided insight into the debate surrounding stereotypical imagery. The lecturer from South Africa explained that, “even within a group as small as the one we had, there was always debate or disagreement as to whether representations or ideas were fresh or stereotypical” (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007). Participants were asked the question: “Who was it easiest to be stereotypical about in terms of the countries that you were focusing on?” (Lecturer Student, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07). The initial response of the participants was stating ‘ourselves’ yet with further discussion it was thought to be easier with the countries that designers are not too familiar with, such as Mexico. “If you didn’t know the country that well then the only thing was to go the stereotypes” (Female Student, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07). It was thought by the South African participants that stereotypical representations were signs that the designer “couldn’t be bothered to dig deeper” (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007).

The results in the graph below (Table 4.8) demonstrate that 50% or more of the Australian and Brazilian participants indicated there were stereotypes present in over 50% of their design submissions. Australian and Brazilian participants cited a higher percentage of stereotypes present compared with the other participating countries. The design submissions for Australia, in the initial international cross-cultural design research project, resulted in 52% of all submissions considered to contain stereotypical imagery. These included reference to Australia’s Indigenous community, Australia’s native animals, use of the Opera House, use of the shape of the Australian coastline or reference to the Australian flag. Sixteen percent of submissions contained images of Australian native animals and 14% of submissions contained indigenous imagery. Zimbabwe, USA, Qatar and Turkey cited less than 50% of their submissions contained stereotypical imagery. South Africa did not provide statistical information. Instead a commentary was provided through a discussion group and will be drawn into the analysis throughout the chapter.
Table 4.8 Stereotypes present in submissions

The table of stereotypes present in submissions for Australia, demonstrated in Table 4.9 below, indicates that designers from each of the countries had a similar number of stereotypes present in their submissions. There was a slight reduction in the number of submissions containing stereotypes from the participants based in Australia and designing for their own country. Images reflecting Indigenous culture were the most predominant stereotypical images, followed closely by images of kangaroos and the Sydney Opera House.

Table 4.9 Table of stereotypes present in submissions for Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>South Africa</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Images</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangaroo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opera House</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Flag</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koala</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Culture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape of Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prawns</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&gt;0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>19 from 39 submissions</td>
<td>24 from 41 submissions</td>
<td>7 from 12 submissions</td>
<td>9 from 17 submissions</td>
<td>59 from 113 submissions</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(i) *Native Animal Submissions for Australia.*

Kangaroos, koalas and other native Australian animals were present in approximately 16% of submissions to Australia.

![Image 15 Brazilian submission for Australia.](image)

86% of Australian participants indicated Image 15 contained stereotypical imagery.

![Image 57 Australian submission for Australia.](image)

85% of Australian participants indicated Image 57 contained stereotypical imagery.
Image 36 Brazilian submission for Australia.
85% of Australian participants indicated Image 36 contained stereotypical imagery.

Image 85 Australian submission for Australia.
70% of Australian participants indicated Image 85 contained stereotypical imagery.
(ii) *Humorous Submissions for Australia.*

Humorous submissions containing stereotypical images and native animals, those that provoked a chuckle in the recipient’s response, rated highly. This is evidence of how the reception of a stereotype changes depending on the context in which it is presented.

**Image 15** Brazilian submission for Australia.

85% of Australian participants indicated Image 15 contained stereotypical imagery.

**Image 9** Brazilian submission for Australia.

80% of Australian participants indicated Image 9 contained stereotypical imagery.
(iii) **Iconic Structures for Australia.**
The Opera House or Sydney Harbour Bridge were common iconic structures present in design solutions.

**Image 18** Brazilian submission for Australia.
85% of Australian participants indicated Image 18 contained stereotypical imagery

**Image 93** South African submission for Australia.
85% of Australian participants indicated Image 93 contained stereotypical imagery
(iv) Indigenous Themed Submissions for Australia.

Below are examples of the design submissions containing Indigenous related imagery. Submissions varied and included designs using traditional Indigenous art techniques reflecting on the relationship of Indigenous people with non-indigenous people or using Indigenous icons such as the boomerang in their designs. This raises again the issue of cultural appropriation. Australia’s indigenous community were not part of this research project and were unable to offer insight into the submissions that could be considered culturally inappropriate. However, the large number of submissions containing Indigenous related imagery demonstrates how many designers did not see it as inappropriate to draw on this resource. These images were cited as stereotypical demonstrating how common they have become in the Australian community.

**Image 112** Brazilian submission for Australia.

100% of Australian participants indicated Image 112 contained stereotypical imagery

**Image 5** Mexican submission for Australia.

85% of Australian participants indicated Image 5 contained stereotypical imagery
(v) Patriotic Themed Submissions for Australia.
Patriotic images containing the Australian flag commonly appeared, as did cultural references to the Australian lifestyle such as bringing people together with a barbecue or a beer, surfing, celebrating and aspects commonly associated with youth culture. Each of these categories was cited as stereotypical Australian images.

**Image 60** Australian submission for Australia.
85% of Australian participants indicated Image 60 contained stereotypical imagery

**Image 66** Australian submission for Australia.
85% of Australian participants indicated Image 66 contained stereotypical imagery
(vi) **Brazilian Submissions cited as Stereotypical.**

There were a greater variety of images cited as being stereotypical by the Australian participants when compared to those cited by the Brazilian participants. Submissions for Brazil, for instance, demonstrated strong themes of football, carnivals and Cristo Redentor. Twenty-three percent of images referred to football, 12% carnivals, with a further 12% using images of Cristo Redentor, the Statue of Christ the Redeemer. These results have been presented in Table 4.10 below. This resulted in 47% percent of submissions having representations of one of these themes. The common colour palette appearing consistently with the postcard themes in the Brazilian submissions, green, yellow and blue, can be seen to reflect the colours of the Brazilian flag.

**Table 4.10** Content of postcard imagery cited as stereotypical by Brazilian recipients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Zimbabwe</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>South Africa</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soccer/Football</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cristo Redentor, Statue</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnivale</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>21 from 38 submissions</td>
<td>3 from 5 submissions</td>
<td>6 from 16 submissions</td>
<td>5 from 14 submissions</td>
<td>35 from 73 sub</td>
<td><strong>62%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It must be noted that the Brazilian participants did not design postcard solutions for their own country and chose to design only for countries external to themselves. This can be seen reflected in the findings and in the reduced variety of images present in the solutions. Common themes of football, carnivals and Cristo Redentor display a tourist’s perspective to the images. Not having the opportunity to travel to Brazil to engage with the country prior to completing the project, participants had only the Internet to use as their primary form of research. The themes seen in the Brazilian submissions are those that are more commonly accessible through the Internet.
Image 46  Mexican submission for Brazil.
100% of Brazilian participants indicated Image 46 contained stereotypical imagery

Image 56  Australian submission for Brazil.
100% of Brazilian participants indicated Image 56 contained stereotypical imagery

Image 72  Australian submission for Brazil.
100% of Brazilian participants indicated Image 72 contained stereotypical imagery
Image 61  Australian submission for Brazil.
100% of Brazilian participants indicated Image 61 contained stereotypical imagery.

Image 34  Mexican submission for Brazil.
90.5% of Brazilian participants indicated Image 34 contained stereotypical imagery.
(vii) Other Country Submissions cited as Stereotypical.

Responses to the submissions for other countries also indicated that a high percentage of designs were considered to contain stereotypical imagery. Indigenous images, native animal images or coastline themes were not largely represented. Instead the images were based around landscape, buildings or representations of the national flag in the submissions for USA, Turkey and Zimbabwe. There was not, for instance, a reference to native animals present in the design solutions for Qatar and only two images from the 32 solutions for Zimbabwe contained references to animals.

Image 1  Zimbabwean submission for USA.

92% of Turkish participants indicated Image 1 contained stereotypical imagery.

Image 32  Turkish submission for USA.

56% of Turkish participants indicated Image 32 contained stereotypical imagery.
Image 11 Turkish submission for Zimbabwe.
The Zimbabwean participants collectively indicated Image 11 contained stereotypical imagery.

Turkish designers were directed to complete the submissions typographically and this resulted in the majority of Qatar and Zimbabwean designs using a greater typographical component. Some of these submissions were still considered by the recipient to contain stereotypical images by the recipients with landscape and architecture featuring strongly.

Image 10 Turkish submission for Turkey.
84% of Turkish participants indicated Image 10 contained stereotypical imagery.

Image 34 Turkish submission for Qatar.
The Qatar representative indicated Image 34 contained stereotypical imagery.
(viii) Incorrect Stereotypes.
Postcards that were less understood or contained images that were considered incorrect in representing the recipient did not rate well. Comments made by the recipients on their response forms indicated errors in the detail such as identifying the figure in the design as a person from a different culture to their own (Papua New Guinean man rather than Australian Aboriginal man or incorrect South African tribal reference), patterns and colours that were not correct (Indonesian looking pattern for Brazil) or the reference was ill conceived (incorrect footwear reference). These errors were strongly criticised and seen as designers conducting little research, being incorrectly informed by the research or demonstrating a poor attempt at stereotypical representation.

Image 17 Mexican submission for Australia.

Postcard submissions that did not contain stereotypes were commonly rejected by all of the participants irrespective of country. Images that did not contain stereotypes were cited as obscure and indecipherable and did not resonate any connection with the recipient (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007). The emotional connection of the signal to the recipient will be addressed further in the next section discussing the recipient, however, examples of these can be seen below.

Image 16 Australian submission for South Africa.
Image 9 Brazilian submission for South Africa.

Image 1 Australian submission for Australia.
(ix) Second Research Project Stereotypes.

The second research project, with participants from Australia and Norway, demonstrated results that were consistent with the first research project. In this instance, both the Australian participants and the Norwegian participants viewed all of the design submissions, not just those aimed at their own culture. Both the Australian participants and the Norwegian participants cited similar images as containing stereotypical imagery. Seven of the top ten Australian submissions and seven of the top ten Norwegian submissions were cited by both of the participating groups as containing stereotypical imagery. These submissions contained a range of images that were iconic representations of the countries. For instance, Image 22 below for Australia was cited by both of the participating groups as it contains four symbols of Australia; bushman’s hat, the prawn, the football and the Australian flag.

![Image 22 Australian submission for Australia](image22)

The same design theme for Norway, Image 20 below, with images of a Viking hat, sausages, skis and the Norwegian flag was also cited as containing stereotypical imagery by both countries.

![Image 20 Australian submission for Norway](image20)
These submissions are resolved using basic symbols to communicate aspects of the culture. The submissions representing each country as a collage takes a similar approach where the combination of symbols provides an immediate connection to the culture. This approach relates to the discussion provided by Crowe (2003) where the design solution satisfies the need to read and understand signs quickly, taking a focus on legibility and communication. The submissions representing the sense of community of each country using the collage technique draws on a combination of identifiable symbols to provide an immediate connection to the recipient.

Collage Theme. **Image 1** Norwegian submission for Australia

Collage Theme. **Image 1** Norwegian submission for Norway
As can be identified with earlier examples, obscure, non-stereotypical images were cited by the second research group as being difficult to understand and therefore not successful in communication. It can be deduced that when images do not contain visual associations identifiable by the recipient, there is an issue with identification and group inclusion. Recipients find they cannot make a connection with the visual communication and cite, as a result, that the image does not visually represent who they are. Two examples of this can be seen below with Image 3 and Image 11, both designed by Norwegian participants for Norwegian recipients.

**TYPICAL NORWEGIAN**

![Image 3](Norwegian submission for Norway)

![Image 11](Norwegian submission for Norway)
(x) Negative Stereotypes

The transcript from the South African participants provided a depth of discussion and debate that guided the analyses of the images. According to the transcript, an overwhelming number of submissions were seen to contain negative stereotypes. The South African lecturer made the statement “I would suggest that people you don’t know a lot about, you can tend to come through and do the stereotypical thing. The more you know the more inherent the culture is to you, the less easy it is to be stereotypical because you know the range, you know the diversity and all of those kinds of things” (Lecturer, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07). It was explained that “obvious and overt South African stereotypes were rejected and actually seen as insulting by all students; black and white” (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007). Although obvious and overt stereotypes were rejected, the comment was made that “stereotypes are usually based on some kind of truth” (Lecturer, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07).

The South African lecturer explained it in email correspondence that “South Africans are incredibly sensitive to representation. Coming from a history of colonialism, Apartheid and pre-occupation with ‘the other’, means that images often have far more significance and weight than would be imagined” (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007). The lecturer commented that she had “become aware of the big chips South Africans have on their shoulders, like we have to prove ourselves all the time. Maybe we take offence too quickly and therefore these interpretations of images that weren’t meant to be belittling are taken too much to heart” (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Thur, 02 August 2007). As a result, images that include tribal Africa, wildlife, African Masks, interpretations of the South African flag and Ndebele patterning were rejected and stereotypes were cited as the means by which the decision was based.

Images of Zulu warriors were seen as a negative stereotype. The use of Zulus to represent South Africans was considered “a bit primitive”, as issues of tribalism were thought to be old fashioned and representational of being African as opposed to being South African (Female Student, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07). “Huge mistrust between tribes seems to have replaced racial tension (and this still exists as well), thus the use of an image that is Zulu - or anything that is identifiable as tribal specific will have huge negative associations for those people. Anything that represents people from North of our borders is also negative because of the widely held belief (particularly among blacks) that these people are solely responsible for the crime wave in the country. With the flood of impoverished and jobless people coming from Zimbabwe and Nigerian drug lords, as is the case with many stereotypical representations -
there is a kernel of truth behind it” (Email, Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007). Examples of images containing Zulu or tribal references can be seen below.

**Image 5** Australian submission for South Africa.

**Image 96** Brazilian submission for South Africa
The South African lecturer had noticed changes in the perceptions of students over her time as a teacher: “Modern young South Africans do not identify with anything that reflects on the past (and this goes for black and white students)” even though national or community culture is often founded in history (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007). There was a “rejection of anything which had historical reference points,” (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007). “This rejection not only leaves us with an incredibly shallow and shaky foundation but with incredibly few visual reference points as South African communicators” (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007).

Participants of the discussion group explained, “we don’t want to focus on the past” (Male Student, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07). “Everybody goes heritage because that’s what they think we are” (Female Student, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07). Yet, a further comment from the lecturer explains that history is an important component to culture. “You, as the new South Africans, almost don’t want to acknowledge history. You kind of want ‘we’re fresh, we’re new, we want to kind of look at things from a different perspective’, whereas if you see other countries, they’re response to getting in touch with community would be (like) how they understand their community is, which is granted” (Lecturer, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07). An example of a submission with an historical reference can be seen below with Image 54.

Image 54 Australian submission for South Africa.

Similar to earlier analysis of images cited as aesthetically appealing, some of the submissions were criticised and cited as being incorrect in their use of stereotypical imagery. “The use of Diamonds was strange to us (Images 6, 30, 100) - maybe because we are very rich in terms of
mineral resource, the choice of one felt odd and as gold is a much bigger industry and resource” (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007). An example of a submission using the reference of diamond follows.

![Image 100 Mexican submission for South Africa.](image)

The use of the South African flag was seen as a negative stereotype. Although the design may be interpreted as a blending of different races to create a community, one student commented: “As a rule you don’t mess up anyone’s flag, distort it or make it look like a hurricane” (Male Student, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07), as seen in the example below.

![Image 4 Australian submission for South Africa.](image)
Stereotypes were articulated as the reason behind some designs being rejected yet other designs containing the same stereotypes were considered more highly. For instance, “I think the concept behind the peace sign and the South African flag is really strong, I’m not necessarily saying the design is great but I think the concept is really good”. (Male Student, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07). “My rule, that I kind of told you, is to be careful of shapes of Africa and the South African flag because it is not things that you mess with. But the fact that somebody from outside has come in and said hey you’ve got a peace sign in there really is quite a significant thing” (Lecturer, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07).

There were aspects of the ‘peaceful nation’ design that were considered negative. One participant reflected on “the black” background of the submission (Female Student, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07). “We’re getting the peace symbol but then the very black background kind of negates it, right?” (Lecturer, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07). This debate demonstrates different views amongst the broad stakeholder base, an issue common to cross-cultural visual communication.

This contradiction, rejecting a submission based on the presence of a stereotype and accepting another using the same stereotype, was evident in other correspondence with the participants from South Africa. It was claimed by the lecturer “the work that was seen as non-stereotypical was usually more insightful and got under the skin of what links us” (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Wed, 01 August 2007). Yet most of the submissions cited as aesthetically appealing were also cited to contain stereotypical imagery. While the stereotype was the means by which the submission was rejected, stereotypes were not discussed in submissions that were accepted. The context of the imagery changed the perceptions of the stereotypical representation.
(xi) Second Research Project outcomes

Similar issues of association were raised when debate between Australian and Norwegian participants occurred with a number of submissions in the second research project. The Norwegian participants, when presenting visual representations of their country and explaining their lifestyle and opportunities in Norway, found the most common imagery on the Internet was landscape based. They did not believe the tourist representations of Norway, as seen on the Internet, were an accurate depiction of their lifestyle and community. This created disappointment and disagreement amongst the Norwegian participants on the image presented to a broader community and how the world was able to view Norway. Regardless of this discussion during class time, Australian participants commonly incorporated images of landscape in their final submissions, as seen with the two examples below.

![Image 4](image-4.png)  
**Image 4** Australian submission for Norway.

![Image 6](image-6.png)  
**Image 6** Australian submission for Norway.
Images of landscape combined with other cultural iconic symbols were well received such as Image 17 below. Participating students reviewing the submissions considered this image “clever” and “humorous”.

![Image 17](image17.jpg)

**Image 17** Australian submission for Norway.

Patterns associated with Norway and evident on traditional knitwear were also common on postcard submissions. This pattern is seen as a form of national symbol and participants were happy to have visual representation of this stereotype used in submissions.

![Image 2](image2.jpg)

**Image 2** Norwegian submission for Norway.
4.3.3 Contribution to the field of knowledge

Enormous responsibility is placed on the designer to choose images that create a connection between the transmitter and the recipient in the communication process. The literature analysing the role of the signal argues, as Furnham and Bochner (1986) explain, that there are systematic cultural differences in the way people send and receive information and the two must align for success in communication to occur. Any message that is received and deemed different to one that is sent is seen as a failure in the communication process and as the fault of the transmitter who formulated the message (1990). Incorrect choices in imagery can be detrimental to cultural groups, or potentially dangerous, influencing the relationship between majority and minority groups (Buck-Coleman 2010, p.191).

The literature review analysis of images for Australia demonstrates the many options that are available to a designer. To solve the problem of designing for more than one country, participants chose to create a themed approach that could translate to each country, such as the Pantone Swatch Theme and the Footwear Theme. Designers started by looking at the similarities between countries and then pinpointed cultural differences and variations of the theme. The topic area was readjusted to suit each of the different cultural groups. Some of the overall themes such as patriotism and representations of diversity were cited highly by more than one country. Yet some results highlighted cultural differences between the recipients as submissions were favoured by one country and not another.

As discussed in the literature review, Chapter 2.2.3 Cultural Stereotypes, the strong link between culture and communication leads us to hold and use stereotypes in communication. The development of stereotypes is a natural part in the process of communication (Nelson 2006). Inevitably, stereotypes are an unavoidable factor to be considered in a cross-cultural visual communication process. The information gathered in the cross-cultural research project challenges the views presented by Lee, Jussim et al. (1995) that all stereotypes should be avoided. The cross-cultural design research project demonstrated stereotypical imagery is important for understanding and appeal, and context is important. These findings support Heller’s position by demonstrating that if the stereotype is placed in a negative context it will be rejected, but if the same stereotypical image is placed in a positive context, the views of the recipient will be different. Participants demonstrated a strong preference for submissions consistent with how they view themselves or would like to be viewed.
Crowe (2003) identifies that some designs require immediate understanding and tend to use obvious signs with a simple structure and order. Other designs attempt to engage the recipient in a more ‘open work’ manner, as defined by Eco (1989). The level of engagement required to understand the communication impacted on the recipient’s views of the submission. This research study demonstrated that the more open the work the less it was understood by the recipient. Without common signs or symbols, and in particular without stereotypical imagery, meaning was not clear and the communication failed. Stereotypical imagery was critical to create a connection with the recipient. “That’s the thing about stereotypes, if you use it well then it could work” (Lecturer, Discussion group, South Africa, 27/07/07). Participants used the content of the imagery and its connection to cultural stereotypes as means by which they articulated their support or rejection of a submission.

The final significant finding from the analysis of the signal was demonstrated in the second research project where participants were able to review the submissions for both their country and the other participating country. Essentially, participants were more critical of the representations aimed at themselves and less concerned with the representation of those external to their own cultural group. These findings correlate to the recipient’s sense of identity and loyalty as presented in the literature review analysing place branding (Baker 2007) where the creation of a sense of identity and emotional attachment is required to engage the recipient. By introducing the perspective of the recipient, and connecting this with the design process of the designer, I was able to provide insight into the cross-cultural visual communication exchange and new understanding of the way the transmitter and recipient engage with the signal. This will be expanded further with discussion on the role of the recipient in the communication process in the next chapter, 4.4 Recipient.
4.4 Recipient

The role of the recipient is crucial in the creation of successful communication (Peuersson 1989). To expand on this further, the following chapter will discuss three main developments in our understanding of the role of the recipient in cross-cultural visual communication as evidenced by the cross-cultural design research project. Firstly, there were strong cultural differences in the number of submissions cited as successful in communication by participants. For instance, Australia and Brazil cited well less than ten percent of submissions as successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’ whereas Qatar cited over thirty percent of submissions successful in communicating the given topic. It is noted that although there were cultural differences, the majority of participants, regardless of culture, cited the same few designs as successful. Secondly, there was a strong relationship between those images cited as successful in communication with those cited as having aesthetic appeal or containing stereotypical imagery. It was difficult to achieve well in all categories and few submissions were seen as doing so. When a design was cited as both aesthetically appealing and successful in communication there was a consensus of high regard for that submission. Finally, the introduction and overlay of Bill Baker’s Brand Benefit Pyramid (2007) to the analysis of cross-cultural visual communication design provides a structure that can be used to assist designers in achieving a higher understanding of how their design work will be received in a cross-cultural context. In the following section not only will these developments be presented, the discourse will also highlight the entwining nature of the investigation.
4.4.1 Success in Communication

As was argued in the literature review, the recipient has a significant impact on the perceived success of communication (Bruinsma 2002, Peuersson 2004), perhaps more so in a cross-cultural context. To analyse the role of the recipient in cross-cultural visual communication, participants completed a survey on each of the images and offered an opinion as to how successful they felt the postcard was in communicating the given topic 'sense of community'. Consistently, only a small number of design solutions were thought to be successful. The following graph (Table 4.11 below) demonstrates the number of responses where 50% or more of the recipients felt the design solutions were successful in communication.

Table 4.11 Percentage of images cited as successful in communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage of submissions cited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feedback from all of the participating countries demonstrates that the majority of design solutions were not considered to be successful in communicating the topic 'sense of community'. Australia and Brazil recorded the highest level of dissatisfaction where 94% and 93% of the submissions, respectively, were not considered successful. Qatar had only the lecturer review the work and indicated the greatest percentage of design solutions cited. Evident in the results were underlying patterns in response while at the same time significant cultural differences. While the majority of submissions were cited as not successful, a few general themes were highly regarded irrespective of nationality.
Firstly, I will present an overview of the results for Australia and Brazil, followed by an analysis of the other countries participating in the first research project.

(i) Australian submissions cited as successful in communication.

Australian participants cited only six from 113 images as successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’ by more than 50% of the participants, equating to only 5% of submissions. The six submissions cited are presented below. A further eight designs were considered successful in communicating a sense of community by exactly 50% of Australian respondents. These submissions have not been shown.

Image 66 Australian submission for Australia.

70% of Australian participants cited Image 66, strongly representational of the youth culture, as demonstrating an Australian ‘sense of community’.

Image 32 Australian submission for Australia.

65% of Australian participants cited Image 32, demonstrating Australia’s sporting culture, as representing an Australian ‘sense of community’.
Image 60  Australian submission for Australia.

65% of Australian participants cited Image 60, demonstrating patriotism, as representing an Australian ‘sense of community’.

Image 9  Brazilian submission for Australia.

60% of Australian participants cited Image 9 below demonstrating a fun culture reflected through acrobatic koalas.
Image 54 Brazilian submission for Australia.

60% of Australian participants cited Image 54 as representing a ‘sense of community’ based on the collage of photographs reflecting many aspects of the Australian culture.

Image 4 Australian submission for Australia.

55% of Australian participants cited Image 4 as representing a ‘sense of community’ based on the theme of festivals.
(ii) Brazilian submissions cited as successful in communication.

Two submissions (equating to only 2%) from 73 images supplied to Brazil were considered by more than 50% of the respondents to successfully communicate the given topic. Image 9, seen below, was cited by 62.5% of participants as representative of the Brazilian cultural events that bring the community together. Image 70, seen below, following the theme of Festivals, was cited by 57.1% of participants as successful in communicating a Brazilian sense of community.

Image 9  Australian submission for Brazil.

Festival Theme. Image 70  Australian submission for Brazil.
South African participants cited images representing their country as peaceful, such as Image 69 below, were successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’. Images reflective of these themes were not evident in the submissions for Australia and Brazil.

![Image 69](image69.jpg)

*Image 69* Brazilian submission for South Africa.

**(iii) Other country submissions cited as successful in communication.**

A higher percentage of recipients from Turkey, Qatar, USA and Zimbabwe cited images successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’. There was a higher degree of cultural difference evident in the comparison of submissions for these countries. An analysis of the images demonstrates a strong use of landscape and architecture in the submissions for Turkey and Qatar, and a strong representation of social issues in those submissions cited as successful for Zimbabwe. The USA design submissions cited as successful in communication contained factual information as predetermined by the brief given to USA designers.

To begin with, 65% of Turkish participants cited Image 10, below, as successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’. 
The Qatar representative cited Image 7, below, as successful in communicating a 'sense of community'.

Image 7 Turkish submission for Qatar.
40% of USA participants cited Image 17, below, as successful in communicating a 'sense of community'.

Image 17 United States of America submission for USA.
Zimbabwean representatives cited Image 11, below, as successful in communicating a 'sense of community'.

Image 11  Turkish submission for Zimbabwe.

The very low percentage of images cited as successful in communication by the participants, in particular the Australian and Brazilian participants, was surprising. Apart from the response from Qatar, who had only the lecturer review the submissions, less than a quarter of the submissions from other countries were deemed successful in communicating the given topic. For designers whose role it is to primarily communicate, the failure rate evident in these statistics supports the literature describing cross-cultural visual communication as a difficult task, subject to conflicting views and controversial responses. Recipients were not comfortable with the visual representation of themselves and their communities, disengaging with the submissions and citing them as unsuccessful.
Themes were considered successful by more than one country. The following are examples where an image was seen as successful by one country and a similar image or theme was seen as successful by another country.

(iv) **Blood Running in Veins Theme.**
Both South African participants and Brazilian participants cited the Blood Running in Veins Theme as successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’.


This design was also considered to communicate a ‘sense of community’ for the Brazilian participants with 45.8% of participants citing the image as successful.

(v) Unity Theme.
South African participants cited Image 48, the Mexican submission for South Africa seen below, as demonstrating a ‘sense of community’ by visually representing unity. The image demonstrating unity with a handshake, Image 13, Mexican submission for Brazil also seen below, was cited by 45.8% of the Brazilian participants as successful in communication.

Unity Theme. **Image 48** Mexican submission for South Africa.

Unity Theme. **Image 13** Mexican submission for Brazil.
(vi) Face Flag Theme.

Also cited by more than one country as successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’ was the image representing patriotism with the colours of the national flag painted on a face, which I have titled the Face Flag Theme, seen below. Sixty-five percent of Australian participants cited this image as successful and the image was considered highly by South African recipients.
(v) Festival Theme.

Fifty percent of Australian participants cited Image 4, seen below, as successful in communicating a sense of community. This image was also considered highly by the Brazilian participants as 57.1% of Brazilian participants cited the same theme as demonstrating a ‘sense of community’.

Festival Theme. Image 4 Australian submission for Australia.
Festival Theme. Image 70 Australian submission for Brazil.
(vi) Sports Theme.
Similarly, images representing sporting activities were cited by the Australian and South African participants as successful in representing a ‘sense of community’. Image 32 below was cited by 65% of Australian participants as demonstrating a ‘sense of community’.

Sports Theme. Image 32 Australian submission for Australia.

Sports Theme. Image 50 Brazilian submission for South Africa.
(vii) **Singular recognition of success in communication.**

Although a number of themes were cited by more than one country, demonstrating similarities in the submissions representing a ‘sense of community’, country differences were evident in the responses of the participants. South African respondents considered themes such as Image 20, seen below, titled the Mask Theme, to be successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’ as it can be considered open to interpretation, suiting many definitions. “Strangely enough on this one, I don’t think that the inspiration was South African, I think that the idea was inspired by the masks worn by those in the Brazilian parades (Rio carnival)” (Email, Participating Lecturer, South Africa, Thur, 02 August 2007).

![Mask Theme](image20)

Mask Theme. **Image 20** South African submission for South Africa.
Australia participants, when compared with the results indicated by Brazilian and South African participants, were less inclined to favour images with an open interpretation such as the concept of the mask. In a similar vein, Australian participants were less inclined to favour images representing their country as a blank canvas, also implying ‘open to interpretation’, such as Image 58 below.

Image 58 Mexican submission for Australia.
(viii) Second research project submissions cited as successful in communication.

The results of the second research project conducted with Australian and Norwegian participants demonstrated a higher rate of submissions cited as successful in communication. Australian participants indicated that 55% of Australian design submissions were successful and 68% of the Norwegian design submissions were successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’. Norwegian participants indicated that 58% of the Australian design submissions were successful and 60% of the Norwegian design submissions were successful. These results are higher than those achieved in the initial cross-cultural design project where the highest success rate was cited by Qatar at 33%.

Table 4.12 Percentage of images cited as successful in communication (Australia and Norway)

Unlike the initial design project, the students in the second control group had the ability to discuss concepts and solutions to gauge responses. Participants were commonly in the same room and working together. The Norwegian participants had lived in Australia for a number of months and friendships had developed over this time. It is my view that the change in relationship between the participants of the first group, who did not have any contact with the recipients viewing their design work, to the participants of the second group who all worked and socialized together, resulted in the difference in outcomes. These results demonstrate the importance of developing a relationship between the transmitter and the recipient to create a successful communication environment. The stronger the working relationship and the understanding of the acceptable options to create success in communication, the more likely a higher success in reception will be achieved. However, in a cross-cultural context, the recipient is not always able to participate in a relationship with the designer, taking the role of reception only, and this is the area of focus in this study. Other results will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter.
Looking firstly at the Australian submissions designed by both the Australian and Norwegian participants, 100% of the Australian participants cited three Australian submissions as successful (Image 21, Image 28 and Image 22) whereas the 100% Norwegian participants cited five Australian submissions as successful (Image 30, Image 14, Image 18, Image 22 and Image 5). The only Australian submission jointly cited as successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’ by Australian and Norwegian participants was Image 22 seen below.

**Image 22** Australian submission for Australia

100% of Australian and Norwegian participants cited as successful in communication.

Looking next at the Norwegian submissions designed by both the Australian and Norwegian participants, 100% of the Australian participants cited three Norwegian submissions as successful (Image 1, Image 26 and Image 34) whereas 100% of the Norwegian participants cited six submissions as successful (Image 1, Image 27, Image 2, Image 20, Image 34 and Image 17). The only Norwegian submission jointly cited as successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’ by Australian and Norwegian participants was Image 34 seen below.
Image 34  Australian submission for Norway

100% of Australian and Norwegian participants cited as successful in communication.

Each of the design solutions chosen to be successful by all of the participants for Australia and Norway used a series of iconic, stereotypical images to represent the country. This particular design approach consistently rated highly as a preferred communication solution. This provides a solution to the difficulties presented in the analysis of Australian visual representations. Creating a single image to represent a culture is an extremely difficult task whereas using multiple images appears to create a broader appeal.

Commonalities also occurred with the design approach of Image 1, the Norwegian submission for Australia and Image 1, the Norwegian submission for Norway (seen on the following page). This Collage Theme design solution, containing many objects specifically targeted to the youth market was well received by all of the participants for each of the countries.
(ix) Cultural interpretations

Some areas of contention were raised throughout the design process and considerable debate occurred with a number of ideas. For example, the Norwegian participants noted in their observations that they thought it amusing that Australian’s put an egg on everything they eat (see Image 4 below) while the Australian participants did not agree with the reference. Although the Australian participants understood the concept once explained, they did not believe it to be significant enough to use to identify a community or reference on a postcard. This insight can be related to previous discussions on ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ perceptions. In this instance, the ‘outsider’ group had embraced observations that were not reflected within the ‘insider’ group, resulting in a misaligned interpretation of the image.
Statistics demonstrated that the two groups of participating countries, Australia and Norway, were more critical of the designs aimed at their own country than the designs aimed at the external country. Thus, Australian respondents cited the submissions for Norway as more successful in representing a ‘sense of community’ for Norway than the representations for their own country and the Norwegian respondents indicated that the submissions for Australia were more successful in representing a ‘sense of community’ for Australian than those representing Norway. This was a significant finding only uncovered by the second research project where participants were able to review the submissions for both their country and the other participating country. Essentially, participants were more critical of the representations aimed at themselves and less concerned with the representation of those external to their own cultural group. Their sense of identity in the visual representation remained loyal to their own cultural group.
4.2.2 Interrelationship between the results

A number of areas of investigation have been analysed in the international cross-cultural design research project: success in communication, the aesthetic appeal and the presence of stereotypical imagery. The interrelationship among these areas of investigation provides further information that can be used to inform cross-cultural visual communication design. This analysis will centre firstly on the relationship between the submissions cited as successful in communication and those containing stereotypical imagery. Following this discussion will be an analysis of submissions successful in communication and those cited as aesthetically appealing. The interplay of images cited as aesthetically appealing and those cited as containing stereotypes has been discussed in the previous chapter during the analysis of the Signal.

(i) Success in communication and stereotypical imagery.

There is a strong relationship between the success in communicating a ‘sense of community’ and presence of stereotypical imagery (Table 4.13 below). Notably, Australian and Brazilian participants cited fewer than 10% of submissions as successfully communicating the topic, while it was cited that a very large percentage of stereotypes were present in the submissions. Results from Turkey, Qatar, USA and Zimbabwe were less dramatic in the difference between the two categories. Turkey, USA and Zimbabwe cited a closer percentage of images containing stereotypes compared to those cited as successful in communication.

Table 4.13 Comparison of statistics for success in communication and stereotypes present
Two considerations can be deduced from these statistics. The first of these relates to the choice of imagery used by the designer. A high percentage of submissions for Australia and Brazil contained a tourist perspective of the country. Submissions contained images such as the Opera House, indigenous themes or native animals for Australia or Carnivale, football (soccer) and the statue of Christ the Redeemer for Brazil. Each of these countries cited a high number of stereotypes corresponding to these images. Participants from the other contributing countries did not have as strong an emphasis on a tourist’s perspective, demonstrated with an indication of less stereotypical imagery cited in the designs.

Secondly, the tolerance of the recipients to stereotypical imagery varies between countries. It can be deduced that Australian and Brazilian recipients were far less tolerant of the presence of stereotypical images than recipients from other countries. The greater the discrepancy between the percentage of participants citing submissions as successful in communication and those cited as containing stereotypical imagery demonstrates the degree to which each of these countries relates stereotypical images to unsuccessful communication. Other participating countries cited fewer images as containing stereotypical imagery and a greater percentage of images as successful in communication. This demonstrates more tolerance of the imagery used and a greater degree of acceptability.
(ii) Aesthetic appeal and success in communication.

When comparing the aesthetically appealing design solutions that were also considered successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’, it is apparent that a small number of submissions were considered both aesthetically appealing and successful in communication. Table 4.14 below demonstrates the number of submissions rated in both categories by each of the participating countries.

Table 4.14 The number of submissions rated in both categories: Success in communication and Aesthetic appeal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Aesthetically Appealing</th>
<th>Success in Communicating</th>
<th>Number of submissions in both areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The images following are those that achieved well in both categories for Australia and Brazil. These have been presented to demonstrate the variety of themes evident in the submissions that were considered both successful in communication and aesthetically appealing. The diverse nature of the images highlights the broad range of topic areas that could be considered when visually representing a sense of community.
(iii) **Australia**

The Australian submissions resulted in two designs able to achieve a high position in both success in communicating the topic and aesthetic appeal.

![Image 66](image66.png) 
**Image 66** Australian submission for Australia.

![Image 9](image9.png) 
**Image 9** Brazilian submission for Australia.
(iv) Brazil

The Brazilian submissions resulted in four designs able to achieve a high position in both success in communicating the topic and aesthetic appeal.

Image 2 South African submission for Brazil

Image 9 Australian submission for Brazil
Taking the opposing view on the results demonstrated in Table 4.14, submissions cited as aesthetically pleasing were not always cited as successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’. The focus of the response where the submission was considered aesthetically pleasing but not successful in communication demonstrates that the recipient based their opinion on the visual resolution of the design. Participants supported their citation with comments including “I wish I had thought about that”, “this stands out from the mass of cards”, “liked it a lot. Creative layout”, “graphic style is interesting”, “visually intriguing”, “interesting layout and legibility is intact” or “I love the type setting and the use of negative/positive space”. These comments refer to the graphical quality of the design submission. However, the positive feeling was insufficient to have the submission rated as also successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’.

Below is an example of this, where USA participants included written comments with their review (Image 39) stating “Awesome! Favourite image! Creative and neat to look at. Eye catching with contrast”, “graphic style is interesting”, and “visually intriguing”. This image was not cited as successful in communication.

Image 39 Turkish submission for USA
In a similar vein, USA participants included written comments with their review of the submission below from Turkey (Image 31) such as “clever”, “there isn’t a lot on the postcard - only the essentials”, and “the treatment of the text connotes the neat withering word of greeting. This is entertaining”. Again, this submission was not cited as successful in communication.

![Image 31 Turkish submission for USA](Image 31)

Commonalities can be identified when comparing the second research project with the first research project. Analysing the results of the second research project revealed a greater number of submissions cited as successful in communicating the topic ‘sense of community’ and those also cited as aesthetically appealing. The Australian recipients cited the same themes in their review of the Australia and Norway design solutions and Norwegian recipients cited the same themes in their review of Australia and Norway design solutions. It must be made clear that anonymity between participants was not assured and this impact may be evident in the outcomes.

![Image 1 Norwegian submission for Australia](Left) ![Image 1 Norwegian submission for Norway](Right)

(Left) **Image 1** Norwegian submission for Australia
(Right) **Image 1** Norwegian submission for Norway
4.4.3 Bill Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid

A small number of submissions were cited as both successful in communication and aesthetically appealing. These images were well received by the recipients. Although Butler (1989) claims tools have not been developed for audience evaluation or participation in graphic design, Bill Baker’s (2007) Brand Benefits Pyramid offers guidance to assist transmitters in cross-cultural visual communication to understand how images may be received. Categories in this pyramid: primary features and attributes, rational benefits, emotional benefits and value and benefits, can be used to evaluate images to determine whether the recipient may consider them to be successful in communication, aesthetically appealing, contain stereotypical imagery or reflect a combination thereof. As I have argued, an adaptation of Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid provides the opportunity for development of an audience evaluation structure beneficial to the designer.

I evaluated the design submissions for Australia, Brazil and South Africa using the categorizations of Bill Baker’s (2007) Brand Benefits Pyramid. These countries were chosen as recipients provided comprehensive feedback assisting my judgment of where the submissions should be placed in the pyramid. The design work cited as the most liked by the recipients, forming the top ten aesthetically appealing submissions, were tabulated using the four tiers of the Brand Benefits Pyramid. Similarly, the design work cited as the bottom ten aesthetically appealing submissions were tabulated using the four tiers of the Brand Benefits Pyramid. Comparing these results demonstrates the additional benefits achieved in the top ten submissions. This highlights the recipients’ need for the emotional benefits and values in the visual communication, achieved through aesthetic appeal and success in communication. To clarify further how these results were determined, it must be explained that participants were not asked to categorize images based on Bill Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid. I have made the classifications based on the feedback provided in the data gathered through questionnaires and discussion groups.
Table 4.15 Images positioned on Bill Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Bill Baker’s Brand Benefits Tiers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unable to Categorize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Bill Baker’s Brand Benefits Tiers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unable to Categorize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although it may appear to be difficult to position images based on the structure of the pyramid as more than one image was present in the submission and some images suited more than one category, closer consideration allows for a fairly accurate positioning. For example, Image 15 for Australia, seen below, contains the image of a kangaroo shopping with a Joey in her pouch. This submission could be positioned in the bottom category of primary features and attributes with the kangaroo present in the design, or on the second tier having rational benefits with a friendly representation. I believe that the use of the character placed in a humorous context provides the recipient with a higher level of emotional engagement than the basic representation of a kangaroo not engaging in any activity. As a result, this image can be positioned on the third tier of the Brand Benefits Pyramid representing the emotional benefits of a community. The submission shows how much fun it is to shop and the joy that can be experienced in this activity.
The majority of themes in the postcard designs for the research project followed the bottom two categorizations evident in Bill Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid: natural features, architecture, events, streetscapes, native animals, historical contexts, party themes and heritage. These images were commonly cited by the recipients as being stereotypical images. I positioned these on the bottom level of the pyramid because these representations presented the stereotype without placing the image in any specific context or association. These images were not cited as successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’. Images of Australia commonly included images of koalas, kangaroos, indigenous imagery or iconic buildings. Images of Brazil commonly included the theme of festivals and carnivals. These images can be defined as common tourist attractions and were not cited as appealing to the recipients.

Stereotypical images that were placed with other associations and were successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’ form the second tier of the pyramid. These submissions used images placed in an interesting context, or association, to improve the communication. Designs that were considered as generally a ‘great idea’ or ‘very clever’ and demonstrated positive aspects of a country were also found to be aesthetically pleasing. These could be located on the third tier of the pyramid. Many of the images cited in the Australian top ten aesthetically appealing submissions contained stereotypical images of koalas, kangaroos, Victoria Bitter beer or images of surfers; yet, when the designs created a positive and amusing connection, the response would be more favourable.

The top tier of the Brand Benefits Pyramid represents the social benefits and values of a place, and created the strongest connection with the recipient. Often these solutions can be seen to represent intangible qualities such as ‘a community is a peaceful and welcoming place’ or follow themes demonstrating elusive qualities such as ‘a country is in your blood’ or ‘patriotism’. The images that could not be categorized were those cited as not having stereotypical imagery present in the design solution or those, such as the image below, that did not make sense to the

Image 15 Brazilian submission for Australia.
recipient. It would appear that stereotypical imagery was needed to interpret the image successfully. A number of submissions fell into this category.

(Left) **Image 7** Brazilian submission for Australia.
(Right) **Image 9** Brazilian submission for South Africa.

**Image 27** Brazilian submission for South Africa
Image 52 Australian submission for South Africa

Image 50 Mexican submission for Australia.
The table below (Table 4.16) represents an adjustment of Baker’s Brand Benefit’s Pyramid to suit an approach by cross-cultural visual communicators. A simple comparison validates how this structure can be adjusted to suit visual communicators and increase their understanding of the reception of cross-cultural visual communication. Starting from the bottom of the table, images that contain natural features, streetscape, weather, events, architecture and facilities are strongly identified as stereotypical images. Images that contain reference to culture, access, safety, cost, heritage and friendliness are images that are stereotypical and provide success in communication. Images that focus on how the experience makes the visitors feel are those that contain stereotypical imagery and aesthetic appeal. Finally, images that connect with the recipient’s deep, emotional needs and demonstrate the social benefits and values of a place are those that contain stereotypical imagery, success in communication and provide aesthetic appeal.

Table 4.16 Cross-cultural visual communication approach based on Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid</th>
<th>Cross-cultural Visual Communication Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value and Benefits:</strong> The deep, emotional needs, social benefits and values the place satisfies.</td>
<td><strong>Emotional Connection:</strong> Images that contain: the deep, emotional needs, social benefits and values the place satisfies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Benefits:</strong> How the experience makes visitors feel and connect with the location</td>
<td><strong>Emotional Response:</strong> Images that contain: how the experience makes visitors feel and connect with the location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rational Benefits:</strong> Culture, access, safety, cost, heritage, friendly</td>
<td><strong>Rational Benefits:</strong> Image that contain: culture, access, safety, cost, heritage, friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Features and Attributes:</strong> Natural features, streetscape, weather, events, architecture, facilities</td>
<td><strong>Primary Features and Benefits:</strong> Images that contain: natural features, streetscape, weather, events, architecture, facilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.4 Contribution to field of knowledge

The results of these findings demonstrate two concerns: Firstly, cultural differences were evident in the response to how successful the submissions were in communication. Very few design solutions were considered in the same manner by all of the participating countries. Different countries were attracted to different images or ways of representing their community. Secondly, there was a strong interplay within the different categories investigated. Comparisons in the relationship among success in communication, aesthetic appeal and the presence of stereotypical imagery demonstrate the entwined nature of the analyses. Important to the discussion is the need of designers to aspire to design aesthetically appealing solutions while at the same time being successful in finding a way to communicate across cultures. Necessary for achieving success in communication is the addition of a stereotypical term of reference.

The interplay of these considerations can be linked back to the literature. Tibor Kalman and Joe Duffy (cited in Heller 1990) raise the ethical considerations designers face in choosing to work for clients who allow them to do ‘good’ work but may not pay, and others who will pay but designers do not resolve to do the same quality of work. Duffy states that “we don’t do work we are not proud of; we do not work for people who won’t allow us to do good work” (cited in Heller 1990, p.69). Matt Soar (2006) adds that rarely is the discourse on good versus bad advertisements discussed in the terms of whether the advertisement was effective, instead, for creative people it is discussed under the terms of how clever the concept was and how original the idea. Peuersson (1989) explains that “the goal of communication-oriented design of messages should always be clarity of communication” (p.2) and the process is not complete until the receiver has received and understood the intended message. Peuersson also asserts that innovative design will win out. Everyone wants to see something new and imagery that is new is more appealing.

The international cross-cultural design research project can assist in this debate. Success in communication was cited as critical to the concerns of cross-cultural recipients yet equally critical for successful reception were concerns with the concepts and originality, namely the aesthetic appeal. Results from both of the design projects demonstrate that it is difficult to achieve well in both categories. Recipients were more critical in their evaluations of how successful a submission was in communicating than they were in how appealing the solution was. When a design was cited as both aesthetically pleasing and successful in communication it was highly regarded. Only a small number of the submissions were cited as strong in both areas.
Assistance can be provided when considering Bill Baker’s (2007) Brand Benefits Pyramid (see Table 2.2). The structure the pyramid provides aligns with the evidence provided by the international cross-cultural design research project. Placing the responses of the participants on the scale of the four tiers confirms the need for engagement at an emotional level. This was achieved with the submissions that were considered successful in communication, contained stereotypical imagery and were cited as aesthetically appealing. While recipients consider highly designs that demonstrate a balance of both aesthetically appealing designs and success in communication, evidence from the research indicates that very few designs are able to achieve this level of engagement. Consistently, only those submissions that presented the community in a positive light and how the recipient would like to perceive him or herself, or present him or herself to an external audience, were those that were cited as acceptable.

Submissions able to achieve well in both categories were evident in the research. When a balance is achieved between the informational design (clearly demonstrating success in communicating a ‘sense of community’) and transformational design (aesthetic appeal) the design is highly regarded. Design solutions that used a generic approach, and used stereotypical components, demonstrated an informational communication style. Design solutions that incorporated transformational design components, where the mood and experiences were evident, were considered aesthetically appealing.

An example of a submission able to achieve well in both success in communication and aesthetic appeal can be seen with the Pantone Swatch Theme (referred to in Chapter 4.3 Signal). This design cleverly combines informational design concepts (the flag) with transformational design (popular tools in the design industry). In addition to the Pantone Swatch Theme, the designs reflecting on an ‘open interpretation’ to the sense of community also demonstrate a combination of informational design (imagery of stereotypical community members) with transformational design (a blank page to position yourself how you want in this framework). Similarly, the design demonstrating the colours of the flag in the community’s blood where the flag is informational and the dancing figure is transformational, creating a mood and experience with positive associations.
Chapter 5
Conclusion and Implications
5.1 Conclusion

This study on cross-cultural visual communication design began with a review of the available literature informing designers on how to increase their opportunities for successful communication in a cross-cultural context. Designing across cultural divides is a new field of study for visual communicators and is currently limited in the information it provides to designers. The literature review and unique structure provided in this research forms a significant contribution to cross-cultural visual communication and an understanding of the diversity of issues associated with this field of study.

The literature review revealed an inadequate explanation of the complexity of designing in a cross-cultural context. Literature has been drawn from a range of disciplines including business, marketing, psychology, advertising and cultural studies. In particular, there are differing viewpoints about the understanding of the role of the designer in the communication process, the role of imagery in the signal, and the role of the recipient in the reception of the communication. I argue that while studies of the visual communication process have a strong emphasis on the message, and the skills and techniques used by designers to create that message as McCoy (2006) explains, designers need to understand each stage of the communication process from the perspective of the recipient. Reception is not confined to the latter stages of the communication process and the recipient’s perception also impacts the role of the transmitter and the creation of the signal. I have drawn on aspects of other disciplines to piece together a framework for designers to consider the reception of the design, structuring our understanding into three key areas of focus: the transmitter, the signal and the recipient.

To inform the initial scoping research, an investigation of the reception of cross-cultural design was conducted using industry examples. I identified studies in the marketing and positioning of destination branding and cultural branding that align with visual communication strategies in a cross-cultural context. Industry based examples can be seen in design solutions for large, high profile businesses, international sporting events and in the emerging field of place branding. Highlighted in this investigation are the increased numbers of stakeholders involved and the higher propensity for failure of the visual strategy, as communication is often required to occur across cultural groups. Systematic analysis of industry examples exhibits patterns in the stages of communication that enlighten our understanding of designing across cultures. In particular, a review of the patterns in responses to industry based visual communication strategies demonstrates the centrality of the recipient. In the research findings, recipients often challenge
design solutions citing the transmitter or the signal as the area of concern and the design of the logo becomes the means by which to voice concern or disapproval.

From this literary and industry investigation, a cross-cultural design research project was established to gain further insight into our understanding of cross-cultural design. In other words, a foundation upon which greater knowledge of this pressing area can be developed. The results of this study demonstrated three major contributions to the discipline of cross-cultural visual communication, one from each of the sections presented: transmitter, signal and recipient.

To begin with, the major contribution to the role of the transmitter is that the origin of the designer does not make any substantial difference to the reception of the design and provides no advantage or disadvantage to the design process. There was a strong bias present in the assumptions of the origin of the designer that was made by the recipient, who, if they concerned themselves with this issue, demonstrates a preference for design solutions created by designers from their own cultural background. Participants from both of the research projects reviewing the design solutions commonly indicated that the designer was from their own culture in the submissions they thought to be successful in communicating a ‘sense of community’ and those solutions they thought were aesthetically appealing.

Two connections regarding this point can be made to the literature. Firstly, the results from this investigation into the transmitter support the comments of Caban (2004, p.8), who explains that technology has created a global design culture and it is difficult to source visual communication that has not been influenced by international design approaches. Indeed, a global design style is evident in the design solutions submitted for the research project and recipients were unable to identify the culture of the transmitter in the submissions. Secondly, the response of the recipient supports the view of Nelson (2006, p.35) who states that belonging to a cultural group is very important, creating a sense of ‘ingroup’ and ‘outgroup’. Recipients demonstrated their support of their cultural group in their response to the origin of the designer. The designer was considered an ‘outgroup’ member when he or she was from a different cultural background to the recipient, and this placement altered the perceptions of the design. Contradicting the views of Kennedy (2007) and Usunier (1996) who states there is an advantage to being an ‘outsider’ looking in, the results of this study show there is no advantage, or disadvantage, to being an ‘outsider’ looking into a community. Instead, recipients of the design prefer the work to be created by an ‘inside’ rather than an ‘outgroup’ member when a culturally based visual representation is required.
The major contribution to the second area of investigation, the signal, demonstrates that both the designer and the recipient use stereotypical imagery to assist them in the communication process. In the international cross-cultural design research project the majority of submissions demonstrated that the designers started with a core theme, such as shoes or festivals, and then used cultural stereotypes to create variations to suit the recipients for each of the participating countries. Designers did not look at each individual country and design to suit each of these participants specifically; instead they chose to start with a broad brushstroke and within that sourced unique and stereotypical differences between the participating countries. Interestingly, in the response to submissions, very few submissions were commonly cited as liked by all of the participating recipients regardless of country and cultural differences. Positive representations were cited highly by all of the participants. These findings support the position of Tajfel and Turner (1986) and social identity theory. Recipients seek a positive group connection with their own cultural group and want to identify with positive representations within their group. This connection occurs through the use of stereotypical imagery. In regards to the recipient, stereotypical imagery has been evidenced as critical for effective communication. Without stereotypical imagery, the recipient is unable to engage with the visual communication and instead, commonly rejected the design as not representational of them. This supports the view of Nelson (2006) who explains that stereotypical imagery is a natural part of the communication process and allows for quick evaluations of situations and circumstances in order for the recipient to manage the world around them.

The major contribution to the third, and final area of investigation, the recipient, demonstrates that generally recipients are not going to respond positively to design submissions aimed at large cultural groups or design that is required to work across cultures. This is reflected in the low number of submissions from the international cross-cultural design research project cited as both communicating a ‘sense of community’ and being aesthetically appealing. Those that achieved this position were highly regarded by participants. Interestingly, these submissions also contained stereotypical imagery.

On the other hand, recipients used the design of the livery and the presence of stereotypes or the origin of the designer as the means by which they articulated their concerns. These responses demonstrate an entry of the recipient into the political arena of identity representation. Using the choice of imagery and the origin of the designer as the means by which they express their views, recipients enter into the debate of post-colonial discourse and who controls their visual representation. Giving a voice to the negotiation of cultural assets,
the recipient and their cultural group play a role in the challenging environment of identity creation and maintenance.

The following section will address the guiding questions used to structure the international cross-cultural design research project. The contributions to knowledge outlined in this chapter have been expanded further to provide answers to each of the questions. Questions will be answered with reference to the literature review and the international cross-cultural design research project. The intertwining nature of this investigation will be demonstrated in the response to the questions.
5.2 Guiding Questions

The previous Chapter (5.1 Conclusions) identified three key contributions to knowledge drawn from each of the areas of the communication process: the transmitter, the signal and the recipient. This chapter, however, will refer directly to the guiding questions used to structure the international cross-cultural design research project and reflect on the information gathered. The patterns that have presented themselves in the design process undertaken by the designers, and in the responses given by the recipients for each of the research projects, offer insight into answers to the guiding questions. These questions are listed below.

1. Can the recipient of the communication recognize the culture of the designer and does the culture of the designer impact on the perceptions of the recipient?

2. If stereotypes are inevitable but perceived as undesirable, can designers better manage the use of stereotypes in communication?

3. What is the relationship between success in communication and success in aesthetic appeal in a cross-cultural visual communication environment?

4. Can Bill Baker’s (2007) Brand Benefits Pyramid be used as an effective form of categorization to inform cross-cultural design practice?

5. How can visual communicators use this knowledge to increase the effectiveness with which they manage their communication in a cross-cultural context?
1. Can the recipient of the communication recognize the culture of the designer and does the culture of the designer impact on the perceptions of the recipient?

Two aspects of culture and the designer were considered in this study. The first is the impact of the culture of the designer on the design work created by the designer and the second is the subsequent impact this would have on the recipient. It has previously been accepted that culture is an integral part of every person and the culture of a designer will inevitably come through in his or her design work. Bruinsma (2002) explains that although designers are trained in formal practices, their cultural preferences will be evident in the final design solution. As a result, Bruinsma suggests that the culture of the designer will play a role in the reception of the design solution. The differences between the two cultural groups (designer and recipient) may be evident in the design work and be the catalyst to the misunderstanding of the message.

Some researchers have argued that ‘outsiders’ have a unique opportunity because in place branding they can create a new perception of a place (Kennedy 2007, Woolcock 2007, Usunier 1996). It may be an advantage to be external to the culture you are designing for, giving you the ability to see someone or something in a way that members of the culture you are designing for cannot, therefore offering a new insight into aspects to visually represent (Kennedy 2007).

However, the results of the cross-cultural design study demonstrate that the culture of the designer is not clearly evident in a visual communication strategy. The recipients were not able to consistently ascertain the origin of the designer and made assumptions as to who designed each submission. The outcomes indicated that ‘outsiders’ were just as capable of designing a solution that is considered as effective as an ‘insider’ may design. In discussion, it was only when asked that recipients used the topic of the origin of the designer as a means to articulate and justify their views about a design solution. If a design was not liked or was considered unsuccessful, then the recipient was able to use the perceived or assumed origin of the designer as a means to explain how the designer ‘did not understand us’ and therefore could not visually represent their community. If a design was liked or was seen as successful then it was assumed that it must have been created by a person ‘who understands us’ and most likely internal to their community. Unless the recipient was advised, the recipient was only able to make assumptions as to the origin of the designer.

The outcome of this research offers a different perspective to the discussions raised with the launch of the ‘M’ logo for the City of Melbourne after it was revealed that the designer was from the Sydney based firm of Landor Associates, a design firm originating in United States of America. Although it is common for criticism to emerge when a new design is launched for a
destination, in this instance, criticism was based on the appointment of a designer external to Melbourne. Emerging from the debate was the belief that a Melbourne design company would not only have just as much ability as an external design company to produce an appropriate submission, but would offer better insight because they were part of the Melbourne culture. My research demonstrates that the culture of the designer does not have an obvious impact on design strategies. The origin of the designer cannot be easily identified and the culture of the designer is not evident in the design work. Yet, when the culture of the designer is disclosed, it does have an impact on the perception of the final design. The power designated to the designer in sourcing an appropriate visual representation is a role carefully analysed by the recipient. The recipients’ use cultural differences as a means of articulating their view of the design work and who they believe has the right to visually represent them. In most cases they presume that should be a designer from inside their own cultural group, perhaps because the ‘failed’ design reinforces a belief that ‘outsiders’ do not understand them. The City of Melbourne experience draws on the political implication of appointing a designer, highlighting a new and challenging factor that will impact on the reception of the design. With a need to consider how recipients perceive and articulate their views on visual communication strategies, there comes an additional complexity to negotiate when designing across cultures.

2. If stereotypes are inevitable but perceived as undesirable, can designers better manage the use of stereotypes in communication?

Mike Staniford (2010) explains that it is not possible to create a design to visually represent the diversity of stakeholders involved in a cultural group. By taking one aspect as a focal point the designer ignores the many other interest areas that could also be used as a representation. One option is to use a generic or global design solution. Global design solutions do not contain obvious cultural aspects of the place being represented in an attempt to not cause offence. Taking this design approach requires the development of a successful campaign to support the identity. Used as a base template, these designs are the foundations upon which the visual communication strategy is built.

Alternative to this is the use of culturally specific imagery in the design solution. Analysis of this design approach shows commonalities exist in the choice of imagery, such as the use of representations of the sun, landscape, hearts or using typographical representations. The language used to support the campaign is also common including words such as diverse, exciting, multicultural and ambitious.
Analysis of the literature review found that stereotypical imagery was considered inevitable, but also not acceptable. However, the outcomes of this international cross-cultural design research project indicate that stereotypical imagery can be considered an acceptable and necessary component to achieve success in communication. Stereotypical imagery alone is not acceptable, yet stereotypical imagery combined with other emotional benefits and representations of the values of a community, linking in with Baker’s Brand Benefits Pyramid (2007), are more highly considered. The patterns in the responses articulated in this research indicated that without stereotypes the visual design solution was considered abstract and did not communicate. The addition of stereotypical imagery in a submission helped to create a connection between the recipients and the communication. Without that connection, recipients did not engage with the visual communication presented to them. Images in the communication should be presented in a new and interesting way, representational of how the recipient wishes to be seen, and also contain stereotypical imagery.

This result highlights conflicting views between the theorists of cross-cultural communication, the information place branding studies provide and the response of the recipients in the international cross-cultural design research projects. Place branding designers are choosing to take the path of creating generic designs as the foundation of their communication strategy whereas the recipients in the international cross-cultural design research project are engaging with designs that contain imagery they believe positively represents themselves and with which they can develop an association. These designs usually contain imagery considered to be familiar to the culture to which they belong. The presence of stereotypical imagery became the means by which the recipient was able to articulate their views of the visual communication strategy. If a submission was considered unsuccessful, the presence of stereotypes was described as the reason why that submission was not liked. If a design submission was considered successful, the presence of stereotypes was not discussed. The same stereotypical images appeared in the design submissions that were cited by the majority of participants as ‘liked’ or ‘not liked’ submissions. In a similar way, a review of the reception of place branding design demonstrates that much of the concern raised by the recipient of place branding is voiced through the design. Although it is understood by marketing and advertising companies, as well as researchers of these disciplines, that a logo is only a small aspect of an extensive long-term communication strategy (Baker 2007), the logo is the means by which recipients is able to voice their concerns and articulate their views on how they are being represented.
The investigation in this research highlights the need to reconsider the theories of stereotypes, in particular those offered by Lee, Jussim et al. (1995) who suggest we should avoid stereotypes. My view is that culture and cultural assets should not be eliminated from the design process in an attempt to keep all of the stakeholders agreeable. As I have demonstrated in the discussion of place branding and logo design (Baker 2007, Hatch and Schultz 2008, Orsman 2008, Pitchford 2008, Poggenpohl and Winkler 2010), controversy will exist when the topic of communication must appeal to a broad range of vocal recipients. With patience and time, clear communication and participation from all stakeholders, cultural aspects of a community can and should be enjoyed in cross-cultural visual communication strategies.

I take the position that designing with cultural iconography helps to promote a culture, unite a community and assist in developing external appeal. The familiarity, recognition, interpretability and connection that can be developed with visual stereotypes assist in creating that emotional connection with the recipient. It becomes the role of the designer to negotiate the existing attachment people have to their cultural icons and develop a new and interesting relationship to successfully communicate to their chosen audience. Rather than avoiding stereotypes and assuming that all stereotypes are ‘bad’, designers need to use the differences and diversities of the recipient to enrich the message by repackaging stereotypical imagery and providing a positive association for the recipient.

3. What is the relationship between success in communication and success in aesthetic appeal in a cross-cultural visual communication environment?

This area of investigation was brought out in the literature review in relation to a designer’s ability to work with two standards: competing quality work or completing work that is paid and may not achieve the same quality (Heller 1990). In other words, designers are able to focus on success in communication rather than aesthetic appeal to earn money, or may choose to design for aesthetic appeal and forgo success in communication. Perhaps this statement is applicable to this project where students are capable of working with two standards: quality work for their folio and prospective employers and work that must be completed as required by their lecturer. Duffy’s position (cited in Heller, 1990) is that designers aim for the same high standards irrespective of the client base and the income potential, as he believes all designers have a passion in the process of design work and won’t do work they are not proud of. They strive to achieve the highest standard in both communication and aesthetic appeal. Peurersson (2004) on the other hand claims that the goal of communication-orientated design is to communicate and therefore the primary goal of a visual communicator is to achieve success in communication.
over aesthetic appeal. The results of this study demonstrated there were considerable differences in the views of the recipients towards these two factors. Those images considered successful in communication were not the same as those considered aesthetically appealing. My research was able to contribute positively to this debate. It demonstrated that the design solutions highly regarded in both categories were commonly cited by all of the recipients regardless of culture. Also highlighted was the difficulty in achieving well in both categories, as few designs in the research study were cited as doing so. In consideration of this, stereotypes were also present in these cited solutions.

The outcomes of the second research project, conducted with Australian and Norwegian participants, demonstrated an improvement in the results. Stronger cultural understanding and interaction between the transmitter and the recipient increased the opportunity for participants to test and explore design options. The improved interaction impacted on the number of submissions cited as both successful in communication and aesthetically appealing. Recipients outside of the design community, who are unable to contribute to the design process or engage with the designers until after the completion of a design project, would not experience the same sense of contribution and interaction, impacting on the reception of the design. This, one can assume, supports in principle the theories of participatory and co-design.

4. Can Baker’s (2007) Brand Benefits Pyramid be used as an effective form of categorization to inform cross-cultural design practice?

Baker’s (2007) Brand Benefits Pyramid provides an additional tool to assist with our understanding of cross-cultural visual communication. Baker’s assessment that recipients are striving for a higher emotional connection with the communication of place branding reflects the responses of recipients who strove for a strong representation of values in the postcard submissions. The pyramid structure, constructed by Baker (2007), assists in understanding how to interpret the results of the international cross-cultural design research project and provides a language to categorize images with an appreciation of how the recipient will respond to the design. To explain to a transmitter that the work they create must be aesthetically appealing, successful in communication and contain reference to stereotypical imagery from a community for it to be highly regarded does not provide practical guidance for a designer. To explain to a transmitter they must design a visual image that creates an emotional connection to the community and must address the values of the recipient provides a language and understanding that considers the higher tier of Baker’s pyramid. The design will then connect more strongly
with the benefits a recipient seeks. Applying Baker’s pyramid structure to the designer’s role creates a form of categorization that will increase the success rate of visual communication in a cross-cultural context.

5. How can visual communicators use this knowledge to increase the effectiveness with which they manage their communication in a cross-cultural context?

The aim of this research was to provide additional information to designers in their endeavour to communicate across cultures. This research was able to structure the existing information and classify areas requiring clarification through the formation of a comprehensive scoping exercise. This has lead to the identification of tensions and patterns in the behaviour of both the designer and the recipient that are common regardless of culture. The patterns that have been outlined challenge conventional views in a number of topic areas common to visual communication design. Understanding and recognizing these patterns is beneficial to understanding how to communicate when there is a mix of diverse cultures and markets. The presence and use of stereotypical imagery, the impact of the designer, the impact of the recipient and the relationship between success in communication and success in aesthetic appeal have all been analysed.

The outcomes challenge commonly held practices and introduce new considerations in designing in this complex environment. This can be used to inform designers of what to expect, how to manage the design process and how to make informed decisions about their professional practice. As designers develop a clearer understanding of the reception of design in cross-cultural visual communication, their design process will need to be renegotiated. This study has demonstrated the importance of this area of investigation and has led to the researcher identifying areas for further investigation. This important first step in analysing cross-cultural visual communication design and the implications for professional practice will be addressed in the next Chapter 5.3 Implications for Practice.
5.3 Implications for Practice

The outcomes of this international cross-cultural design research project, combined with the literature review of design theories and practices of the scoping research, offered new insight into cross-cultural visual communication design. Firstly, I will discuss the implications for professional practice and those aspects of the research that can be immediately employed by cross-cultural visual communicators. Secondly, areas of further investigation and the considerations that require further research to provide guidance to cross-cultural visual communicators will follow.

To begin with, it has become evident that the risk associated with the reception of a design solution increases as the number of potential stakeholders increases. It also becomes inevitable that the level of stakeholder involvement increases when the communication is required to work in a cross-cultural context. In a global context the number of stakeholders involved in the outcomes of the design increases and a stronger emphasis on cultural consideration emerges. A larger stakeholder body, greater connection to government organizations, less product association, and more external contributors, can result in a higher likelihood of criticism and debate. This can be demonstrated graphically as shown below.

Table 5.17 Design Risk Table
In conjunction with this, it becomes critical that the balance between aesthetic appeal and effective communication be clearly identified when designing for a cross-cultural context. For instance, if the design solution must be responsible for clear communication then the aesthetic qualities have less impact on the reception of the design. If the design solution must be aesthetically appealing then communication will have less impact on the reception of the design. The literature debates both considerations and idealistically suggests that designers should achieve well in both communication and aesthetic appeal. The outcomes of the international cross-cultural design research project demonstrate that to achieve well in both aspects is a challenging endeavour, but not one that is impossible. However, very few of the participants were able to achieve both highly successful communication and highly regarded aesthetic appeal.

Consistently evident in the international cross-cultural design research project, designs that used stereotypical imagery in the design solution were cited as achieving effective communication. Designs were more likely to be cited as having aesthetic appeal when stereotypes were placed in a new and interesting context. When stereotypical imagery was eliminated from the design solution, the submission did not achieve well in either category: success in communication or aesthetic appeal. The presence of stereotypical imagery was the means by which recipients voiced their negative views of the design submission and gave recipients the opportunity to articulate their views. When the same stereotypical imagery was present in design solutions that were able to communicate strongly and were cited as aesthetically appealing, the use of the stereotype was not discussed. Instead, the idea or the concept was indicated to be the reason for the approval. All of the design solutions discussed in this thesis, and the relationship of each of these categories, can be demonstrated in the following diagram: Table 5.18. The structure outlined offers clarification of how a design submission can be received and allows for preparation and explanation appropriate to the anticipated response.
As a result of this study, it is the researcher’s opinion that visual communicators need to re-evaluate their views on the use of stereotypical imagery. It has been demonstrated that generic design solutions are currently being created to visually communicate to cultural groups, whereas the outcomes of this research identify a need to change this trend to one that should consider the use of stereotypical imagery in the solution of design strategies. Understanding and respecting the options in the choice of imagery becomes the role of the designer and must be carefully considered, yet with this consideration, designers will be able to negotiate the use of stereotypical imagery in design work to promote cultural differences. As a result, the management of the design process will become a broader role for the visual communicator in a cross-cultural environment as they negotiate the use of iconic and stereotypical images. Designers may need to ensure the process of creativity is as transparent as possible, even though there are views in industry that the creative process is one that is still indefinable. Along with this, designers need to be aware that there will probably still be conflict as only a small number of submissions in this study achieved success in communication and were considered aesthetically appealing by recipients.

Finally, an important and exciting aspect to emerge from the research is an area to be considered for further investigation. Identifying this area for further investigation offers a significant contribution to the professional practice of cross-cultural visual communication design.
Highlighted in the research was the importance of the relationship between the transmitter and the recipient. In the second research project involving Norwegian and Australian participants, students were able to engage with each other and discuss their ideas and their designs. Interaction between these students provided the framework to test assumptions and develop their submissions. The impact the recipient has on the design process when they are able to participate is commonly investigated in areas of user-centered design, participatory design and co-design methodologies. However, recipients external to the design process are not in the same position to engage with the creative thinking and provide input into the outcomes. As with place branding, cross-cultural design embarks on designing for a broad stakeholder base and many recipients who are only able to respond to the design upon completion. Further research is required in the context of this research project, where the recipient is not a participant in the design process, to continue to maximise the positive results of the exchange. In particular, research is required into the way in which designers articulate their designs to the recipient. It was identified that adjectives used in place branding are becoming increasingly similar as evidenced by Julier (2005) who confirms the common use of the words ‘dynamic’, ‘vibrant’ and ‘diverse’, amongst others, in design solutions. Questions can be asked if these adjectives were used in the briefing process, in broader discussion or emerged as a result of these discussions. A review of both the verbal and written briefing process of the client to the designer, and the launching of the design to the recipient, requires investigation with commonalities documented. It would be beneficial to determine if a change in the language used to define the parameters of the design process would alter the design outcomes and in effect alter the reception of the design. The briefing process could be reconsidered to determine if a new form of dialogue could be developed to guide the design process resulting in less generic design solutions. A study of the dialogue and rhetoric used in discussions would determine the impact this aspect of the design process has on the outcomes and therefore it would be beneficial to focus an investigation on the linguistic implication of professional design practice.
Reference List


Poggenpohl, S. and D. R. Winkler (2010). "What have we learned from communication design failure?" Visible Language 44(1): 127-139.


Appendix A

Human Ethics Approval

1. Monash University Approval 2006/847

Dear [Name of Monash University official],

Thank you for the information provided in relation to the above project. The items requiring attention have been resolved in the submission of the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERRH). Accordingly, the research project is approved to proceed.

Terms of Approval:
1. This project is approved for three years from the date of this letter and this approval is only valid while you hold a position at Monash University.
2. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all information that is pending (such as permission letters from organizations) is forwarded to SCERRH. If not done already, Research cannot begin at any institution until all relevant notifications are made.
3. You will receive a letter from SCERRH confirming that you have received a letter from each organization.
4. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigations are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines.
5.SHOULD THE PROJECT COMPLACENCY PROCEED, THE UNIVERSITY REPORTS ON THE PROGRESS AND THE UNIVERSITY REPORTS ON THE PROJECT.
6. Amendments to the approved project: Changes to any aspect of the project require the submission of a Proposal for Amendment to SCERRH and must not occur without written approval from SCERRH. Substantive changes may require a new application.
7. Future correspondence: Please quote the project number and project title in any future correspondence.
8. Annual Report: An Annual Report is required at the end of each year. The report should be submitted within six months of the end of the financial year. The submission should provide a summary of the progress of the project and should include a description of the methods used, the results obtained, and any conclusions drawn.
9. Project Director: The Project Director is responsible for the storage and retrieval of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

We wish you well with your research.

[Name]

Monash University

[Date]

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/c/v/human-ethics/1046f9f6f9/t/h9y4j2l92...
2. Monash University Request an Amendment Approval 2006/847
Consent Form – Interview

Title: Place Branding and Cross-Cultural Visual Communication
How do the theories and practices of Place Branding inform our understanding of Cross-Cultural Visual Communication Design?

(Former title: How cultural stereotypes influence Graphic Designers, their message and the perception of the communication.)

Student:
Meghan Kelly
Monash University, Caulfield.
Student number: 20147287

Supervisor:
Dr Karen Burns

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records

I agree to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I understand that agreeing to take part means that I agree to be interviewed by the researcher and I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped and notes to be taken. I understand that I can request a transcript of the interview at any stage.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview will be used in the thesis, reports or published findings and may contain my name as an Industry Specialist.

Participant’s name: Richard Henderson
R-Co. Brand Identity
L3 141 Flinders Lane Melbourne 3000 Victoria Australia

Signature: [signature]

Date: 28th September 2009
Hi Meghan,

It's so nice to hear from you! I wondered how you went with your Masters, and great to hear it's finishing up as a PhD.

Yes, back from Germany and still unpacking boxes 3 years on!

I would be very happy for you to include this quotation in your paper. The email has since been closed down, so if you need it to have an actual contactable person at the end of it - you can put this email down, but either way, no problem for you to use it.

I have had to put my Masters on hold half way through. The move back to Australia with a 6 month old baby and going back to work immediately was just a bit too much to juggle - but it's withdrawn in good standing, so I'd love to pick it up again soon. I see that Russell Kennedy has moved on to Swinburne, bit of my old stomping ground. I was in there recently to promote a poster competition I was organising through one of my German clients. And great to see you're at Deakin! How is the course there? I didn't know they had Design through Deakin. I hope your family is doing well, now that mine are 5 and 3 I can see the time is starting to go by twice as fast as baby time.

Good luck on you thesis, and would love to see your final visualisation or paper at the end - I loved your research topic and your aesthetic is beautiful.

Wonderful to hear from you, and I'll keep your details filed away for a coffee one day!

Kind regards, Natalie

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On 28/09/11 4:32 PM, Meghan Kelly wrote:

Hi Natalie, (I hope I have the right Natalie)
I gather you are back from Germany.
Appendix B

Australia Review Sheet Sample

The following countries participated in designing postcards for an Australian audience:
Australian students, Brazilian students, Mexican students, South African students, and American students.
Please review each postcard and complete the questionnaire below:

| Image Number | Can you determine where the postcard was designed? Australia, Brazil, Mexico, USA, South Africa, USSR | How did you determine that it was designed in a particular country? Colour, Image, Layout, Graphic Style, Success of communication | What aspect of this design indicates to you that it is designed for an Australian audience? Colour, Image, Layout, Graphic Style, Success of communication | Does this postcard use stereotypes to demonstrate an Australian sense of community? Yes | No | What are they? | In this postcard successful in demonstrating an Australian sense of community? Yes | No | Why? |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Image 1      |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                  |                  |                |                                   |                    |                  |                 |
| Image 2      |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                  |                  |                |                                   |                    |                  |                 |
| Image 3      |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                  |                  |                |                                   |                    |                  |                 |
| Image 4      |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                  |                  |                |                                   |                    |                  |                 |
| Image 5      |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                  |                  |                |                                   |                    |                  |                 |
| Image 6      |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                  |                  |                |                                   |                    |                  |                 |
| Image 7      |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                  |                  |                |                                   |                    |                  |                 |
| Image 8      |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                  |                  |                |                                   |                    |                  |                 |
| Image 9      |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                  |                  |                |                                   |                    |                  |                 |
| Image 10     |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                  |                  |                |                                   |                    |                  |                 |
| Image 11     |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                  |                  |                |                                   |                    |                  |                 |
| Image 12     |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                  |                  |                |                                   |                    |                  |                 |
| Image 13     |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                  |                  |                |                                   |                    |                  |                 |
| Image 14     |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                  |                  |                |                                   |                    |                  |                 |
| Image 15     |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                  |                  |                |                                   |                    |                  |                 |
Please choose your favourite 10 solutions for Australia and explain briefly why you like them.

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Appendix C
Sample Design Brief

Explanatory Statement – Students from Monash University, Australia.

Wednesday March 7th, 2007.

Masters Title: How cultural stereotypes influence graphic designers, their message and the perception of the communication.

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Dear Student,

My name is Megan Kelly and I am conducting a research project with Mr. Russell Kennedy a senior lecturer in the Department of Art and Design towards a MA at Monash University. This means that I will be writing a thesis which is the equivalent of a 159 page book, curating an exhibition and potentially writing magazine articles on the topic listed above.

I am seeking participation in a cross-cultural design brief and the details of your teacher, Ms Ruth Koizel, have been obtained through the ICOGRADE Education Network as person interested in the exchange and collaboration of graphic design across countries.

The aim/purpose of the research

The aim of this study is to look at the use of stereotypes in cross-cultural communication. I am conducting this research to find out if work designed for a country can be designed by someone outside that country and will be accepted and understood by the target audience.

To explain further, humans have a strong ability to generalise information and develop stereotypes in an attempt to process the constant influx of information presented to them on a daily basis. Graphic designers also employ stereotypes in an attempt to simplify information and assist with the communication process. Using stereotypes may present information that becomes a generalisation, which may not be accepted or understood by the recipient. The perceptions of the recipient could mean that this communication is then considered as incorrect or ineffective.

The use of stereotypes is more predominant when designing a solution for another culture. Stereotypes are often employed in an attempt to help the communication process, and the perceptions and understanding of the recipient may mean the stereotypes employed make the communication incorrect or ineffective. Even with the best of intentions, the communication process can break down. With a better understanding, Graphic Designers can achieve greater success in the international design arena.

In an expanding international arena, cross-cultural design is a growing field. It is my intention to review the use of stereotypes in a cross-cultural context and attempt to determine the perceptions of the recipients to better understand the effectiveness of the communication.

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Web: www.artdes.monash.edu.au
ABN 12 317 914 012 CRICOS provider number 00608C.
What does the research involve?
The study involves 2 stages: the design process and the review process. You may be asked to participate in either or both of the stages.

The design process
Graphic Design students are required to create four postcards. The topic for each postcard is ‘Sense of Community’. One postcard is to be designed representing the ‘Sense of Community’ of your own country, and each of the other postcards are to be designed representing the ‘Sense of Community’ of the other participating countries. The target market is students 18 - 25.

The postcards do not need to form a series as each postcard will be sent to the various countries for review and not kept together. The country name does not need to appear on the postcard, but all files should be clearly labelled so they can be collated accordingly.

To manage completed design solutions, files need to be supplied in pdf format via email or CD. Pdf files need to be clearly labelled as follows: Student’s country, dash, Target Country. For example: Aus_SilAfrica
Aus_Canada.
No personal identifying features are to appear on the submission. Please provide a hard copy proof with your final designs.

It is presumed that the project would be undertaken as part of your curriculum taking approximately 12 hours of class time.

The review process
The design solutions will be collated and sent to the country they were designed for.
A CD version and a hard copy printout of the postcards will be supplied for review, along with a series of questions to be used to promote discussion. The Australian students will review all of the Australian postcards, the South African students will review all of the South African postcards, and so on.

It is presumed that the review process would be undertaken over a one hour period.

Student Participation
Student work must remain anonymous and there will be no recognition of the student in the research.
Participation is on a voluntary basis. Although students may participate in the designing of the postcards they are under no obligation to submit their design solutions to the researcher.

Inconvenience/discomfort
There is a very minimal risk of participants being identified by their design solutions or suffering any discomfort while undertaking this project.

Payment
There will be no payment for your participation in the project. Work published for the thesis will not gain any financial reward. Designs will not be used for any financial gain.

Can I withdraw from the research?
Being in this study is voluntary. Students participating in the designing of the postcards are under no obligation to submit their design solutions to the researcher. However, if you do consent to participate, you may only withdraw prior to the submission of your final review and prior to my thesis submission.
Confidentiality
Participation indicates you consent to design work being shown in an exhibition and design work being compiled in a booklet and distributed to other participants without recognition of the designer. Design work may also be used at a later date in further research or exhibitions with our recognition of the designer. Recognition will be given to all participating educational institutes but not to individual designers. All work will remain anonymous.

Storage of data
Storage of the data collected will adhere to the University regulations and kept on University premises in a locked cupboard until the cabinet for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication with examples of student work shown, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. The work supplied by students will be used in the final submission of my thesis but student submissions will remain anonymous. Recognition will be given to the participating educational institutes.

Use of data for other purposes
Anonymous design solutions may be used in further research at a later date, and because it is anonymous data, nobody will be named and the designer will not be identified in any way. Please keep in mind that it is sometimes impossible to make an absolute guarantee of confidentiality/ anonymity but I will endeavour to do so.

Results
If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings, please contact Meghan Kelly on fax number: +61 3 9903 1440 or email meghan.kelly@student.monash.edu.au. The findings are accessible for a period of 12 months upon completion of the thesis.

If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator: Mr Russell Kennedy.

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Thank you.

Meghan Kelly

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ABN 12 227 914 212 ORGAS provider number 00008C.
Appendix D

Conference Presentation

Appendix E

Disk Attached

Part A   First Research Project: Eight contributing countries
         Design Submissions
         Email Correspondence
         Sample Review Forms
         Spread Sheet Data of Research Outcomes

Part B   Second Research Project: Australia and Norway
         Design Submissions
         Sample Review Forms
         Spread Sheet Data of Research Outcomes