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Graphic Design

THE IMPACT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ON GRAPHIC DESIGN

AN ANALYSIS OF ITS BRAND PRESENCE IN THE IMAGOTYPES OF PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN MADRID (2023)

María Dolores Gutiérrez Guerrero¹⁾

Abstract. This study investigates the presence of the concept of Europe in the naming of Spanish companies, examining how the word “Europe” and its derivatives are represented in imagotypes, along with the accompanying graphic elements. The methodology employed is known as content analysis, applied with a quantitative approach. The research corpus sample consists of eighteen elements, which are the brand images of private educational institutions in Madrid for the year 2023, according to the website of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (educacion.gob.es). The results show recurring patterns in the design of brand images through the imagotypes that evoke the idea of Europe, confirming the cultural and business link between Spain and Europe.

Keywords: Advertising, brand image, imagotype, naming, Europe, graphic design.

Resumen. Este estudio investiga la presencia del concepto Europa en la denominación de empresas españolas, examinando cómo en los imagotipos aparece representada la palabra Europa o sus derivados y los elementos gráficos que la acompañan. La metodología usada responde al conocido como análisis de contenido al que se le ha aplicado un enfoque cuantitativo. El corpus que compone la muestra investigada contiene dieciocho elementos que son las imágenes de marca de centros de enseñanza privada de Madrid en el año 2023 según la web del Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, educacion.gob.es. El resultado es la identificación de unos patrones comunes en el diseño de las imágenes de marca a través de los imagotipos que evocan la idea de Europa, esto confirma el vínculo entre España y Europa a nivel cultural y también empresarial.

Palabras clave: Publicidad, imagen de marca, imagotipo, naming, Europa, diseño gráfico.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

The term “Europe” or its derivatives is frequently used in advertising to name brands. Examples such as Europa Press, Colegio Europa, Instituto Europeo de Posgrado, and Eurostar Hotels illustrate this phenomenon. From the perspective of marketing, graphic design, and, of course, European cultural influence, it is relevant to investigate something so pervasive in our environment. This study aims to identify the presence of the concept of Europe in graphic identity. Specifically, it will analyse the imagotypes of private educational centres in Madrid with names that include “Europe” or its derivatives, based on those listed on the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training website (educacion.gob.es) in 2023.

An imagotype is defined as “a combination of a logotype and an isotype presented together, but which can function independently, allowing both the name and the symbol to be recognisable on their own” (García, 2012). Imagotypes play a fundamental role in advertising as they graphically and instantly represent a brand’s identity. According to the American Marketing Association (2021), the use of an imagotype enables a swift connection between brands and consumers, as the visual language allows the receiver to quickly grasp the existence or presence of a brand. Furthermore, an effective imagotype can enhance customer loyalty and help distinguish the brand from its competitors. Airey (2019) adds that an imagotype must succinctly communicate a brand’s values, enabling the audience to immediately understand the differentiating characteristic of the company it represents.

In a saturated and competitive market, some companies have chosen to evoke a European identity in their brand names and logos. This is likely because Europe, and by extension the European Union, is associated with tradition, history, and excellence. A 2014 study by Rad et al. found that brands employing this strategy are perceived by consumers as premium, a key factor in positioning themselves above competitors.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To examine the use of the European concept as an advertising appeal.
- To analyse the presence of European identity in naming and graphic language, using as a

sample the names and imagotypes of private educational centres in Madrid in 2023.

- To determine the inclusion of the word “Europe” or its variants in brand names.
- To study the visual language employed to evoke the notion of Europe.
- To verify whether the graphic elements (colour, typography, shapes, and represented elements) present in these brands align with those of the European Union’s institutional identity.

2. METHODOLOGY

Specifically, this study examines the imagotypes of educational centre brands in Madrid in 2023. For this purpose, the content analysis methodology was applied, which is defined as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” (Krippendorff, 1990).

This analysis is also quantitative, which is highly appropriate for a study like this, as it “uses data collection based on numerical measurement and statistical analysis to establish behaviour patterns and test theories” (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2006). This approach allowed designing a variable table, which included a series of items to capture the aspects we aimed to observe.

Typography: This aspect was categorised into seven font types, ranging from classical types such as Garamond and Bodoni to more contemporary ones. This list includes fonts used by the EU in its corporate messages. According to the guidelines of the Spanish Service for the Internationalisation of Education (sepie.es), “Fonts accompanying the EU emblem can include Arial, Calibri, Garamond, Trebuchet, Tahoma, or Verdana. Italics, underlining, and other effects are not permitted.”

Colour: Chromatic elements can reflect particular cultural sensibilities and deep-rooted artistic traditions. The EU flag contains three colours: white, blue, and yellow. Therefore, brands should incorporate these colours if they intend to evoke a European identity.

Icons and Symbols: These elements communicate concepts and values, refer to historical events, and/or highlight cultural elements. This paper included symbols such as stars in a circle, the map of the continent, the flag, the anthem, and the European motto, as these are the identifiers the EU uses to represent itself (european-union.europa.eu).

2.1. MATRIX OF THE ANALYSIS SHEET

Table 1: Analysis sheet

IMAGE	FONT		COLOUR		ICONOGRAPHY AND SYMBOLISM	
	X	Arial Calibri Garamond Other	Trebuchet Tahoma Verdana	White Yellow	Blue Other	EU Flag Stars

Source: Own elaboration

2.2. CORPUS ANALYSED SAMPLE

The corpus comes from the website of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training,

educacion.gob.es. It consists of the eighteen logos from private schools in Madrid in 2023 that contained the term Europe or its derivatives.

Table 2: Images of private schools in Madrid with names containing the term Europa or its derivatives.

INTERNATIONAL NURSERY SCHOOL@LICEO EUROPEO	
VERMONT ACADEMY AT LICEO EUROPEO (EE.UU.)	
LICEO EUROPEO	
CENTRO PROFESIONAL EUROPEO DE MADRID - ESTUDIOS PROFESIONALES SUPERIORES	No encontrado
VIRGEN DE EUROPA	

COLEGIO EUROPEO ARISTOS	
VERMONT ACADEMY AT LICEO EUROPEO (EE.UU.)	
LICEO EUROPEO	
CENTRO PROFESIONAL EUROPEO DE MADRID – ESTUDIOS PROFESIONALES SUPERIORES	
INSTITUTO EUROPEO DE FORMACIÓN PROFESIONAL	
EUROPA (Mejorada de Madrid, Centro de educación infantil y primaria)	
COLEGIO VILLAEUROPA	
CENTRO EUROPEO DE ESTUDIOS PROFESIONALES	
EUROPAINTERNACIONAL	

EUROPA Instituto de Educación Secundaria MÓSTOLES	
EUROVILLAS	
EUROPA Colegio de educ Infantil y primario Pinto	
EUROPA Instituto de Educación Secundaria Rivas Vacia madrid	
INSTITUTO EUROPEO DE FORMACIÓN PROFESIONAL	

Source: educacion.gob.es

3. RESULTS

Table 3: Fonts

Tipos de letra

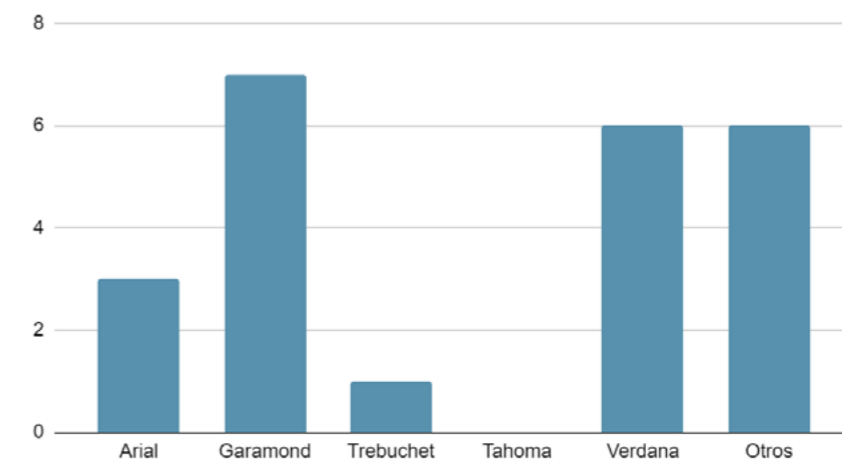


Table 4: Colours

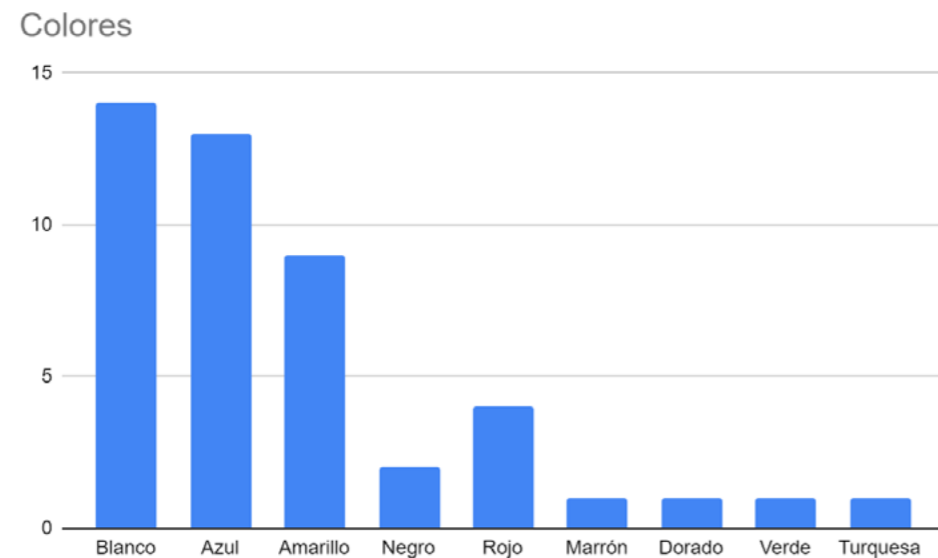


Table 5: Iconography and symbols



Garamond is the most commonly used typeface, characterised by its classical and elegant style, which is often employed to convey seriousness and sophistication—qualities closely associated with Europe and the EU. In second place are Verdana and Arial, which, in contrast to Garamond, are valued for their simplicity and readability. These typefaces are linked to modern, streamlined, and functional design, making them particularly suitable for digital formats. The least used typeface is Trebuchet, possibly due to its distinctive appearance, which diverges from the traditional and historical values typically associated with Europe.

There is a strong presence of white colour, followed by blue and yellow. This combination aligns with the colours representing the European Union. These tones may be present

due to their associations: white conveys neutrality, blue represents stability and trust, and yellow communicates energy and positivity. As these are optimistic and universal values, it is unsurprising that many brands, in addition to using the name “Europe” or its derivatives, incorporate these colours to project an image of confidence and optimism.

The star is by far the most prominent symbol, appearing four times more frequently than any other element. In second place are the shields and other symbols, which, unlike the star, do not immediately appear to be associated with Europe or the corporate identity of the European Union. Other elements identified include the map, tower, key, lion, child, and sun, but their occurrences are sporadic and therefore not given significant emphasis.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The results reveal patterns and trends in the design of brand images that evoke the idea of Europe, thereby confirming the cultural and business connection between Spain and Europe. Specifically, these common features include:

The use of the name “Europe” or its derivatives in the branding of private educational institutions in Madrid.

A prominent presence of the corporate colours associated with the European Union, namely white, blue, and yellow. As previously mentioned, white conveys stability, blue represents trust, and yellow symbolises energy. These three values align with the European image, projecting security and efficiency.

Regarding typography, adherence to EU guidelines is also evident. The typefaces Garamond, Verdana, and Arial are the most commonly used in the analysed logos, and all are recommended for use alongside the EU emblem by the Spanish Service for the Internationalisation of Education (sepie.es).

In terms of symbols, stars and shields are the most frequently featured, which is consistent with their significance in the European Union’s visual identity. Other elements, such as maps, towers, keys, lions, children, and suns, appear less frequently and lack a direct connection to Europe.

In conclusion, the analysed imagotype designs not only evoke Europe through their names but also seek to associate with the values of tradition, trust, and connection represented by the European Union through the visual elements mentioned above.

4.1. CRITICAL APPRAISAL

The selected methodology fulfils the objectives. The analysis conducted has produced results that have enabled the formulation of relevant conclusions. Additionally, this study serves as a preliminary trial for a larger-scale project, which could be expanded to a broader sample and allow for the observation of additional elements.

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