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CROSS-CULTURAL RHETORIC IN VISUAL INFORMATION DESIGN

Abstract:

Visual means of communication, including pictorial images and layout, are commonly assumed to be transparent and universally understood. This research study challenges this assumption by comparing Japanese and English examples of traffic notices and product consumer manuals — message genres that are designed to convey guidance, warnings and instruction. In the Japanese cultural setting, images and other graphical devices provide key information and are used far more frequently than in corresponding messages seen in English speaking cultures. The results of this study demonstrate how cultural sensibilities and social needs inform visual meanings in information design. The common use of images in Japanese informational messages furnish distinctive semantic possibilities that work to activate interactional dimensions of meaning and convey a sense of shared understanding with the intention of encouraging behavioral compliance.

Keywords:

Visual Communication; Design; Culture; Consumer information