

EXPLORING BRAND IDENTITY
STORYTELLING THROUGH THE USE OF EMOTIONAL BRANDING
FOR THE INSTITUTE FOR FUEL CELL INNOVATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis project investigates branding strategies, such as “emotional branding” to tell the story of National Research Council’s Institute for Fuel Cell Innovation. There are three aspects to the visual component: signage design, a process book and an animation. Each of these elements acts as the narrator of the story. The book includes a documentation of visual process and synthesizes this information into a section of brand guidelines. It showcases the brand identity and the evolution of visual process in the medium of print, while the animation illustrates the brand through motion graphics and provides an example of how the visual elements that form the identity work coherently as an animation piece. The signage design is the three-dimensional aspect of the project. It presents the branding applied in a tactile way and also reflects a relationship with the space in which it is showcased. With these visual and sensory tools, the Gateway will showcase the rich graphic language of the new brand identity.

The written component of the thesis explores the ideas of Marc Gobé in relation to emotional branding and Peter Turchi and Tim Ingold in reference to storytelling. Linda Leung and Donald Norman’s works and Ellen Lupton’s theories on graphic design are also examined to further investigate theories of storytelling in branding and motion graphics.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NRC-IFCI: National Research Council

LEED: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

IPF: The Industrial Partnership Facility

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DEDICATION

To my sister Gül – the professor – who has been a great inspiration for me since the day it all began.

QUOTE

*At its core, graphic design is all about observation.
We look, we notice, we see something others do not,
or we see it in a way that others do not.*

WILLIAM DRENTTEL

I. INTRODUCTION

“A prerequisite for finding our way through any story or novel is to be lost: the journey can’t begin until we’ve been set down in a place somehow unfamiliar” (Turchi 113)

This thesis describes my journey – an exploration into design as a form of storytelling– inspired by my personal vision, research and creative process. This thesis reflects the learning experience as much as a final design project.

Before coming to Emily Carr University, my experience as an art director in advertising made me feel constrained and limited, without critical engagement as the commercial advertising business requires fast visual applications. There was no room for theory or research. This thesis project and the research I have done has enabled me to think about design in far more depth.

Throughout this journey, I will be sharing my theoretical explorations – theories of human psychology, behavior, branding design, literature on storytelling and experience – in conjunction with research in the social sciences related to the field of design. Consequently, the visual component of my thesis project will reflect this combination of science, humanities and design methodologies. In this sense, the storytelling model will also mirror my design process.

The structure for the thesis formed as my project began, developed and continued despite challenges and limitations. As Turchi suggests, this is a journey of a discovery, of something I didn’t anticipate, couldn’t even imagine before it was found. (Turchi 13)

When I attended secondary school, I did not enjoy any of the chemistry or physics classes that I had to sit through. The world of formulas, equations, compounds and molecules seemed very distant to me. My single fondest memory in science class was looking at the biology illustrations and being fascinated by the colourful and abstract images such as close ups of blood cells and mitochondria.

Later on, I entered Bilkent University in Turkey and I became a graphic designer, happily engaged with colours, typefaces, layouts and logos, a profession safely distant from that complex and frightening world of secondary school physics class. It was not until I was faced with the recent opportunity of interning as a designer for a scientific institute, as part of my Master of Applied Arts in Design requirements at Emily Carr University that I had to let go of my discomfort with all things scientific. I heard the words ‘fuel cells, hydrogen technology and research institute’ coming out of a colleague’s mouth, as she informed me of this opportunity. Memories of boredom in science class resurfaced and I initially rejected working on a project that I knew nothing about. This was a joint project between the National Research Council and Emily Carr University.

I am not a scientist; up until recently, I did not know a single thing about hydrogen technology. I felt that I would rather find another project to work with which would be more inspiring. Needless to say I was wrong and quick to judge, almost missing out on an opportunity where I could learn new skills as a freelance designer for a scientific, research-based government institute that is working to promote a cleaner environment. I was about to find out that fuel cells and hydrogen¹ were not so intimidating and that I should let go of my bias. Nico Macdonald, a writer and consultant focusing on the overlapping intersections or shared ideas between design, business and technology, touches on this common issue in his essay ‘Can Designers Save the World?’

We (designers) need to take users (clients) seriously and not impose our perceptions, values or prejudices on them, and treat them as robust individuals needing effective and satisfying design solutions, while critically assessing what they tell us (20).

¹ Hydrogen is known to be an efficient energy source and can be one of the efficient energy responses to prevent climate change, as it’s known to be producing pure water as waste. “It (hydrogen) contains more energy per unit mass than any other chemical fuel – almost three times as much as gasoline – and unlike the waste product from fossil-fueled technologies, the only waste product of hydrogen-fueled technologies is pure water.” (Scott 22).

With this internship experience, at the beginning of my design journey, I learned not to judge so quickly and that I should allow opportunities to present themselves even in unpredictable ways, leaving room for discoveries.

Once I embarked on the internship opportunity with the National Research Council of Canada, I started working on a branding project for The Institute for Fuel Cell Innovation (NRC-IFCI) in Vancouver. Throughout the research and creation process, I came to realize that the visual identity could be expanded and enhanced through visualizations such as a branding guide, signage design for the building and an informative animation, all cohesive in their visual language. This realization also made me question my role as a communication designer and what I could do for the Institute, its new brand, and how I could complement this new brand identity, through the tools of design, in an engaging way. My internship consisted of various print design assignments for the Institute and resulting from these experiences, I got an insight into the Institute's identity and realized the need for a new brand identity. By the end of my internship at the Institute, as the budget and time constraints became clear, I was told that the project was on hold. However, these limitations created a turning point in my story, as I decided to take on this internship project as my Masters thesis, separate from the Institute. This opportunity allowed me to explore and experience a design process independently and it became much more than I could ever anticipate.

The Institute is located deep in the green woods of the University of British Columbia, in a highly advanced 166,000 square foot building, which holds a LEED² accreditation. The building consists of laboratories, equipment space, conference facilities, demonstration space and offices. The Institute's role is to lead the partnerships that support Canada's fuel cell and hydrogen industry. It has become a networking, education and innovation hub where research, development and testing of fuel cell systems take place.

² LEED, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. "LEED rating system, a set of standards for incorporating environmentally sustainable design and construction principles in building projects." (Gibson 120).

As a result of my observations and research at the Institute building and the outcome of the surveys done with the employees of NRC-IFCI throughout the internship period, I gained better insight into the Institute and an idea to involve the public space of the building into the project was also born. I will be explaining the story of this public space, the Gateway, in the following chapters and will draw on the reasons, proposing it as a suitable showcase area.

To outline the thesis project, I will be forming a brand identity and will be enhancing it through emotional branding strategies, with the intention of creating an audience experience through a public space, with the use of multi-dimensional design elements. Additionally, I intend to examine the role of signage design in a public space and the psychological processes involved in the recognition and acquisition of place knowledge. I'm interested in understanding the influence of interactive and tactile design pieces, and how visual cues can influence an individual's experience through that space. Jorge Frascara, whose work I will explain in more detail, also emphasizes this idea.

The objective of all visual communication is to effect a change in the public's knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. For such a change to happen, the communication must be detectable, discriminable, attractive, understandable and convincing. It has to be constructed on a knowledge of visual perception, human cognition and behaviour, and with consideration for the personal preferences, cognitive abilities and value systems of the audience (Frascara 4).

My aim with the use of a successful branding design is to achieve recognition for the Institute and engage its visitors upon entering the building. Considering that these visitors will mostly be composed of stakeholders, investors, project partners, academia, government visitors, and media representatives, they need to be informed about NRC-IFCI, its brand and be convinced of the brand's effectiveness. Most importantly, stakeholders, government representatives and investors in this field should be persuaded

to invest in the development and research of hydrogen technology, as continuous support and coordination is essential to further progress. On the other hand, academics, researchers and students should be educated about this technology and convinced to get involved in the Institute's work. As suggested by the Institute for Information Design in Japan, the role of communication, media and information design tools play an important role in order to attract attention and connect businesses and audiences (Institute for Information Design Japan 20).

The challenges have been many through out this experience and allowed for consideration of a number of questions concerning the branding process.

- How do branding strategies such as 'emotional branding' enhance ideas of storytelling?
- How does storytelling relate to experiences in 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional spaces?
- How does branding design in the field of information design have an impact on viewers' perception of the brand and a space?

In order to understand and explore these questions further in my thesis, I will draw on theories of Peter Turchi and Tim Ingold, on storytelling and narrating through a space and Jorge Frascara's work on user centered graphic design. Also, the branding strategies proposed by Marc Gobé, and theories of Donald Norman and Linda Leung on highlighting the significance of design, especially sensory design in branding and its role in creating lasting impressions. Additionally, I will examine Reginald G. Golledge and his theories and substantial research on way-finding behaviour and cognitive mapping.

For the visual component of this thesis, I have relied primarily on works and research of different designers and theorists from various fields, such as Chris Calori and Per Mollerup. I will be reviewing their work on environmental graphic design, way-finding, signage design, and on creating a brand image as it covers different forms of storytelling in a space. Additionally, I will be investigating Ellen Lupton, Jennifer Cole

Phillips and Edward Tufte's theories on graphic design and research on colour and typography.

II. THE STORY OF THE GATEWAY AREA AND THE RESEARCH

As I briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, my summer internship at NRC-IFCI lasted a couple of months during the summer of 2010. However, with the inspiration I received through this experience, I decided to take on this opportunity and develop it into my thesis. During this internship period, I was assigned to work with another Emily Carr student, Stephanie Vacher, an industrial designer assigned to work on the project's three-dimensional and interior design aspects. To start off this collaboration, Stephanie and I tried to gain a basic understanding of NRC-IFCI, its missions and what solutions we could bring to them as their designers. As we were initially asked to work on the interior of the public space, we decided to do our research on the Institute and this specific area.

The public space of the NRC-IFCI building, called the 'Gateway', is a T shaped hallway on the ground floor of the building, facing the entrance. This space is a showcase for education and information on fuel cell and hydrogen technologies. It displays the signage and storyboards, visualizing information about fuel cell and hydrogen technology and NRC-IFCI's role in this industry. Another goal of the Institute is to host special events and increase the educational outreach to the public through the use of various media in the Gateway. The space will actively promote NRC-IFCI capabilities and facilities to the industry, academics, and to investors, additionally will act as a hub for the fuel cell cluster, supporting networking and interaction.



Figure 1 The Gateway of NRC-IFCI's building.

During the first phase of the research process – the data collection – we aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Institute, the public space ‘Gateway’ and the potential design that we would create in the upcoming months. We decided to prepare a visual and an interactive survey for the employees of the Institute. By interviewing directors, project managers and employees, our aim was to explore the Institute’s structure, its internal work strategy, as well as its essential culture and its essence. Additionally, we set out to gain a general idea of what the employees of the Institute thought about the place, the identity and in particular the Gateway area, as that space was the focus point for the project. Based on our findings, we were going to move forward with the branding project. (See Appendix A)

Although the results of the survey showed us that a large proportion of the employees were not fully satisfied with the existing look of the hallway the Gateway area,

the majority seemed pleased to be working at NRC-IFCI. One of the scientists, who has worked at NRC-IFCI for three years, said that he found the Institute to be an innovative place where people work in harmony. Another employee mentioned that it was a comfortable place to work at. During the analysis of the survey results, we became more conscious of the main messages and ideas that the Institute wanted to enhance and communicate. The idea of NRC-IFCI being an innovative, sustainable and highly technological institute was appreciated and comprehended by the employees as all the participants mentioned the same features, the key elements. The replies to the question regarding the Institute's identity were various: "exploration, sustainability, innovative, respected, dynamic, research-based, network, dedicated, green..." Furthermore, this analysis showed us the participants' points of view in regards to the re-design of NRC-IFCI identity. It was clear that the existing branding needed some reevaluation. Additionally, it was also brought to our attention that the Gateway needed a way-finding design – a signage system.

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At a time when we were approaching the end of our internship period at NRC-IFCI, Stephanie and I presented a basic proposal of our ideas on a new branding design and how this identity could be applied to the Gateway area, to a selected group of people from NRC-IFCI. However, not long after this presentation, we were informed that the design project would be on hold for some time, due to the Institute's budget plans. We were asked to focus on various other design projects for the Institute.

With the start of my second year at the Masters Program, I decided to move forward with this branding project, seeing a great design potential with the hopes of evolving it into something with a more significant impact. Shortly after this decision,

I received permission from the Institute to take on the project and started shaping it towards a master's thesis, in an independent way, with no involvement from the Institute.

My main goal with the project is to create an innovative, trustworthy and authoritative institutional character in order to describe the way the Institute will communicate to its stakeholders in a space such as the Gateway, which helps to create a venue for people to experience the brand, the Institute, in a positive way. However, the importance of the area is that it enables the exhibition of branding design in three-dimensional space, which is a less conventional branding approach with the potential to be more engaging than the present visual identity (FIGURE 2) and the logo of the National Research Council that NRC-IFCI also shares as it does not have a brand identity of its own.



Figure 2 The existing NRC-IFCI logo.

As the next step, I proceeded with the research and continued the data collection. I prepared sketches, analyzed an image-based survey and completed interviews with employees. Additionally, I reviewed the architectural plans, also joined the tour of the space to identify the traffic flow in the Gateway area and to learn more about the users' experience of the space. These methods helped me to determine the user patterns and

needs regarding the Institute's branding project, specifically for that area. The need for a way finding design was one of the aspects that was brought to my attention after reviewing the survey, as part of this data collection.

As a result of the survey and the research I have compiled, I was able to examine the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities that the brand is associated with.

Weaknesses of the brand, as indicated by the results, included lack of promotion in the field of clean energy and unclear communication. NRC-IFCI's branding gets lost among the other NRC institutes and similar organizations, mostly those that are part of the National Research Council. It does not seem to differentiate itself from the rest of the branding identities as they all seem to have the same look. It is important to note that NRC-IFCI has no individual visual identity. The Institute currently uses NRC's government logo on public communication materials. In order for the NRC-IFCI to aesthetically and conceptually separate itself and have uniqueness to its brand identity, as its role in the field is different, the design will play an important part in order to achieve this goal.

NRC-IFCI, as a Canadian Institute, reflects similar multi-cultural attributes to the country itself by hosting employees and stakeholders with different nationalities, from different cultural backgrounds. One of the intentions of the Institute is to facilitate links between different groups and different projects in the clean energy field and promote a dynamic work environment that is comprised of professionals, students, researchers and designers from different fields. This collaborative environment is vital to NRC-IFCI's identity.

Having a multi-cultural, dynamic work environment that is located at a sustainable, LEED-accredited building makes the Institute a special setting, regardless of its important role in the clean energy field. A space like the Gateway also presents itself as a showcase, exhibition space, hosting the qualities of NRC-IFCI, allowing the public to get a feel for the brand and interact with it in a personal way. During this previously mentioned research process, I also attended a tour of the public space, given by Lindsay

McKillop, a communications assistant at NRC-IFCI. As McKillop briefly walked me through the hallway and told me story of the Gateway, she explained that the idea for the naming of the hallway formed as it's supposed to be a gateway for the public to see what NRC-IFCI does in the hydrogen and fuel cell industry.

As I was taking this tour, I examined the displays on the walls, information boards that showcase interesting events, improvements and changes happening among the industry partners in Canada and around the world. There were objects displayed around the hallway area that were meant to demonstrate the technology, however, McKillop stated they were not functional and it was hard to understand as they were not very interactive.

While we walked along the hallway, she informed me that the Institute wants to attract attention to the Gateway from leader organizations and companies in Canadian hydrogen and fuel cell industry, in order to promote and present their work and the development they bring into this field. Their hope is that such presentations in the area will result in new collaborations among other companies in the industry. Moreover, the Institute likes to display the work of companies from other parts of the country and not be limited to Vancouver in order to bring in a bigger Canadian context.

Throughout this tour, I also noticed that the displays on the walls were text-heavy, difficult to read and therefore not accessible. There were also places missing signage in the area and according to McKillop, this lack of signage creates confusion for any newcomers. A very positive attribute of the building, however, is the LEED feature, including the solar panels on the roof of the hallway area, in the atrium. Additionally, a fuel cell unit that is located at the end of the hallway powers the lights in the Gateway area.

The Institute also hosts IPF – The Industrial Partnership Facility and “incubates” (McKillop) companies by giving them office spaces and opening up the lab space, resources of NRC-IFCI in order to help commercialize the technology faster. McKillop also pointed out that the Gateway is used to promote and emphasize the sustainable

features of the building, but mostly, its role is to tell the story of the fuel cell technology: what it does, how it is developed and Canada's role in this research.

In order for me to tell the story of the Institute in the Gateway through the branding design, I wanted to acquire a better understanding of the space. As people often tend to use their memory when they navigate without an aid, they rely on their experiences and their memories related that certain place. Therefore, it was important to see the results of this experience, as it would give me an insight to the experiences and common behaviors of NRC-IFCI employees. To pursue this I used a mapping tool suggested by the design firm IDEO. As one of its research methods, IDEO uses cognitive mapping in order to observe how people navigate in a space. For the experiment, I asked people at NRC-IFCI to draw maps that conveyed the major impression they had of the Gateway area, without looking at the space. Accuracy for its own sake was not required during this experimentation and no published maps were going to be used by the participants while drawing the sketches. What I wanted was a quick, unaided impression that people had in their minds, which they used while moving around, navigating through these hallways. This way, I would be able to examine their behaviors in these spaces.

In his book Wayfinding Behavior, Reginald Golledge, examines wayfinding and cognitive behaviors related to navigation and brings together a group of scholars to discuss the topic from various perspectives and diverse fields. Golledge starts the book by addressing the cultural and universal importance of cognitive maps and explains how they are 'stored memories', maps that are always there both for human beings and animals.

Maps both record what is known and remembered about an environment and act as wayfinding aids. In the absence of these artifacts, humans and other animals rely on internal representations or stored memories, now commonly referred to as 'cognitive maps' or 'internal representations', are used to guide travel (Golledge xi).

The map-drawing experiment was important as it gave me an insight into the spatial behaviors of people and let me discover significant elements of the space, such as referring to the lobby area as ‘furniture’, ‘waiting area’ or reception as ‘ the front desk’. These details that occurred as a result of the experiment were also helpful in creating the signage design and in relating the symbols to these elements. With the help of each different drawing, I was able to observe how people, familiar or not so familiar, navigated through the space and how the cognitive maps were different from each other. Participants are unique individuals; their perception (FIGURES 3-4-5) and their experience of the space will also be different from each other. Navigating through a space is a physical experience and while perceiving this space we access information by seeing or touching. Ingold expresses this in his writing, as he emphasizes how we use our bodies when observing a space.

Many geographers and psychologists have argued that we are all surveyors in our everyday lives, and that we use our bodies, as the surveyor uses his instruments, to obtain data from multiple points of observation that are then passed to the mind, and from which it assembles a comprehensive representation of the world – the so-called cognitive map (Ingold 88).

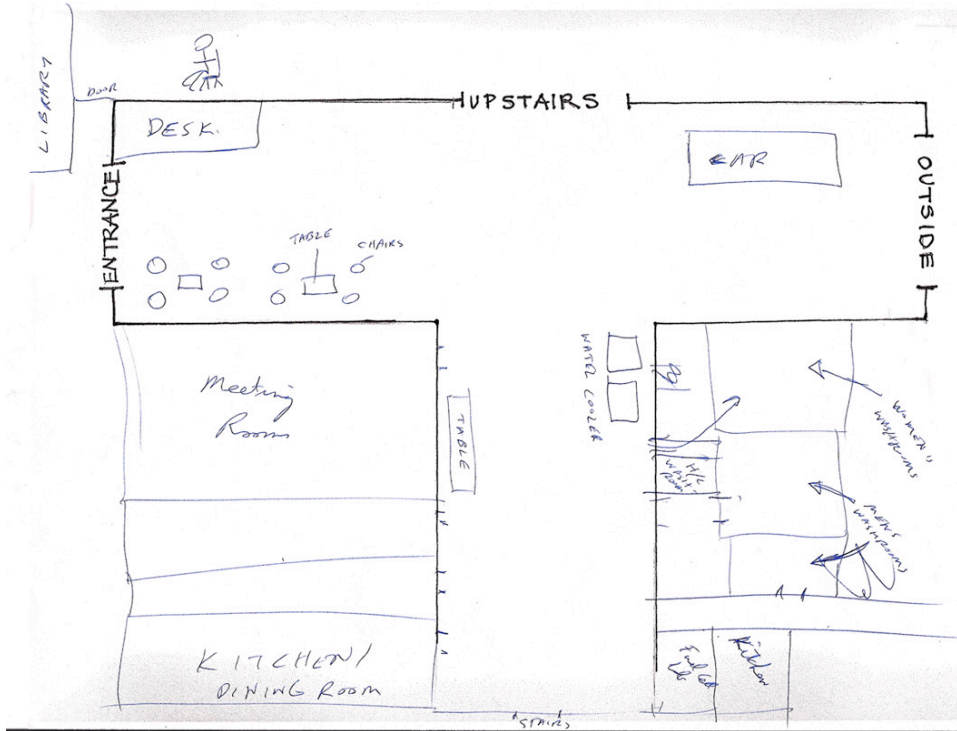


Figure 3 An example of a cognitive map drawing of the Gateway.

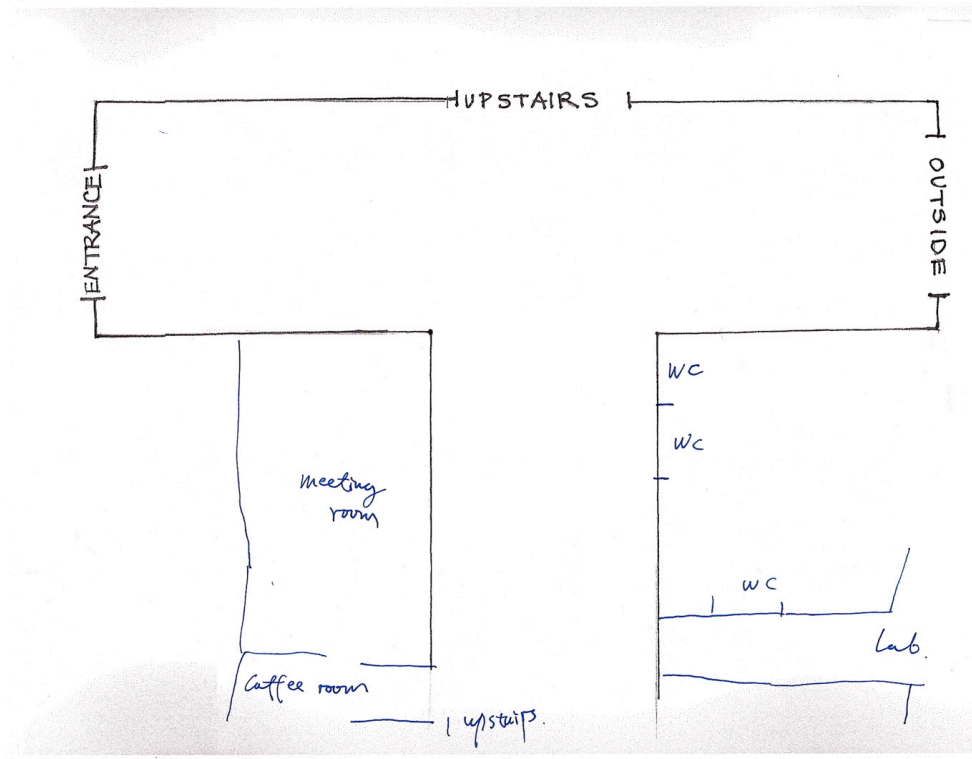


Figure 4 A less detailed example of a cognitive map drawing of the Gateway.

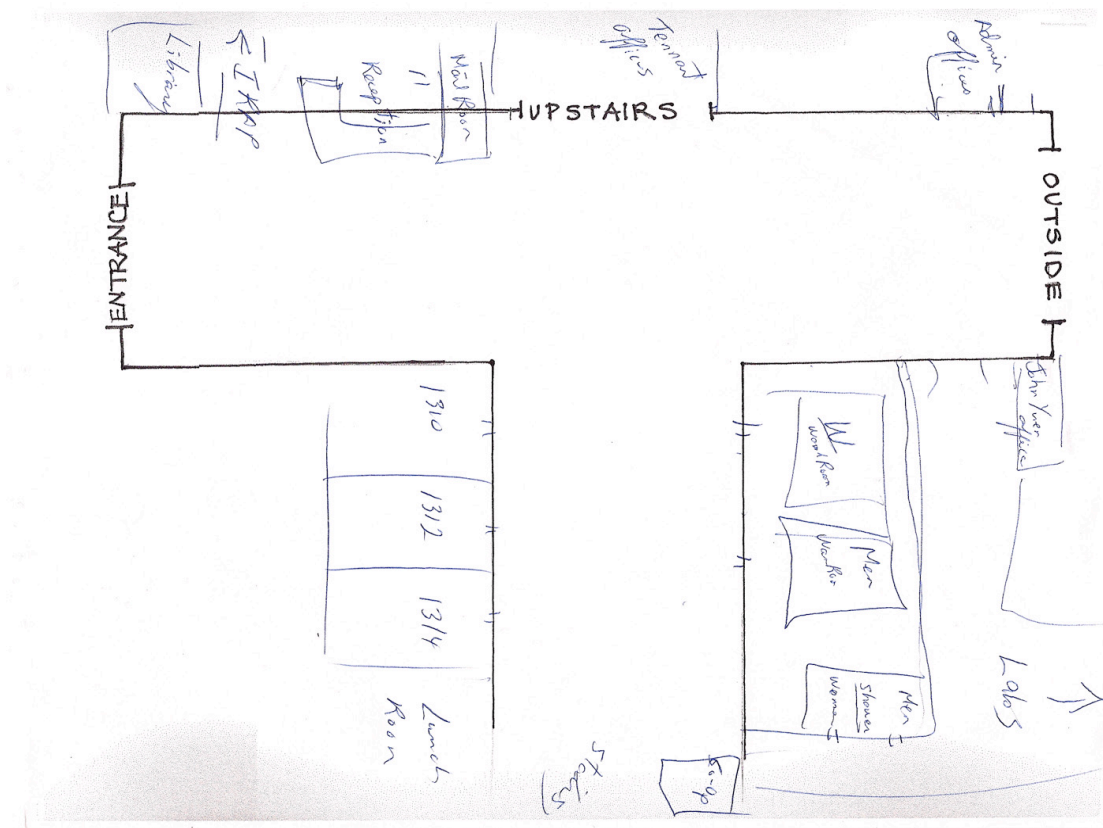


Figure 5 Another sketch from cognitive mapping experiment.

In relation to the cognitive maps, Tim Ingold, the author of Lines: A brief History suggests that walking, drawing, observing and telling a story all have a common point. He asserts that they all proceed along perceived lines and through this assertion he explores a new understanding of lines. In his opinion, we proceed along lines and lives are lived on paths but not just in spaces. He adds that people gain knowledge of the world around them and describe this world with the stories they tell.

“I have suggested that drawing a line on a sketch map is much like telling a story. Indeed the two commonly proceed in tandem as complementary strands of one and the same performance. Thus the storyline goes along, as does the line on the map” (Ingold 90). While measuring these drawings – cognitive maps– it is clear that the mental map of each person is unique, as a result of all participants being different individual beings that

possess a unique set of personal experiences and are subject to a unique flow of information in the space.

The expectation of a storyteller is that the audience will individually interpret the story to create a personal experience. William James, a 19th century psychology theorist explored aspects of personal experience and related them to his theories of consciousness. He asserts that “consciousness is in constant change” and that we are not able to experience the same sensation in the exact way twice, adding,

Such a difference as this could never have been sensibly learned; it had to be inferred from a series of indirect considerations. These make us believe that our sensibility is altering all the time, so that the same object cannot easily give us the same sensation over again (James 3).

Part of the research for IFCI’s brand included anticipating the public’s expectations and providing an educational experience that is worth revisiting. In order to create this story and for the audience to experience these unique sets of emotions, I looked into branding strategies and examined ‘The Emotional Branding’ approach.

III. THE STORY OF EMOTIONAL BRANDING

With the information I compiled through my research process, as mentioned in the previous chapter, I got a better sense of what I should do with the new branding design for NRC-IFCI. This chapter will describe my research on the topic of emotional branding and how I plan to make substantial use of this strategy in my project.

My initial intent for my thesis project was to propose a re-branding design for NRC-IFCI, a signage system for the public space and an interactive touch screen map. This interactive screen would showcase the way hydrogen and fuel cells work, the important role they play in the clean energy debate³ and it would be displayed in the Institute's public space. With the help of this technology, I was aiming for visitors of the space to gain a better understanding of fuel cells, and through this interactivity, I wanted to get them involved in learning the story of both NRC-IFCI and fuel cell technology. As powerful messages are conveyed through multiple senses, I was also interested in investigating the implications of information and environmental design in creating awareness for the visitors in this specific space at NRC-IFCI.

However, with time and budget limitations, the interactive part of the project was delayed mostly due to the complex technical aspects required with the touch screen. As I did not want to disregard the significance the tangible and multi-dimensional aspects would bring to a design project, I realized I had to make changes and decided to focus on the branding aspect of the thesis project, in order to bring in these qualities of sense, touch and emotion to my work. As my direction shifted, I also wanted to apply the research I had done with tangible and interactive design to the new branding identity. In order to enhance the idea of experience and storytelling through the design of a brand, I turned my attention to emotional branding and different tangible methods to apply this

³ Clean Energy: Sustainable energy provides energy in such ways that it meets the needs of the present without compromising next generations' ability to meet their needs. Sustainable energy sources mostly include all renewable sources and technologies that improve energy efficiency.

idea. Although this shift in the project seemed challenging at first, I believe it brought with it a new area to be explored. Throughout this chapter, I will be explaining my research and exploration on the topic of emotional branding and how it can enrich a storytelling experience.

Donald Norman, a cognitive scientist, professor of computer science and the author of books such as Emotional Design, User Centered Design and The Design of Everyday Things, mentions the importance of attractive and pleasurable products. His book Emotional Design, which is mostly devoted to the design of products and their effects on the consumer, also touches on the character of brands and companies. He suggests that the personalities of products, companies and brands need as much care as the product itself. In addition to this, he outlines how emotional branding is about building relationships and how it can give a brand a long-term value.

In the world of products, a brand is an identifying mark, the symbol that represents a company and its products. Particular brands produce an emotional response that draws the consumer toward the product or away from it. Brands have taken on the emotional representation. They carry with them an emotional response that guides us toward a product or away from it (Norman 59).

As a communication designer, my role is to tell the story of NRC-IFCI, as I form the branding identity for the Institute. Like a storyteller, I aim to let the audience experience the identity of the Institute and through the design elements I intend to not just create a visual image, but also an emotional effect.

Linda Leung and her co-authors Mark Ward and Carla Drago, in the essay “What’s the Story? Harnessing the Power of Storytelling in Film for Experience Design”, state that stories – whether in interaction design or in information design – can be found everywhere and that sense making is formed through the stories constructed, therefore “stories define experience” (Leung 36). By telling the story of the Institute through my

design, my intention is to create a sense of awareness of what the Institute stands for and what they are trying to achieve. As a result of this experience, my goal as the designer / the storyteller is to get the attention of my audience and, furthermore create an emotional attachment, a connection to the brand. As Leung and her co-authors emphasize, a good story should have an engaging and an emotional impact.

“A story may be regarded as an emotionally engaging experience. But perhaps this is what characterizes a *good* story: it captivates viewers, holds their attention and has emotional impact.” (37). An important outcome of emotional branding is the attachment between the brand and the viewer, which is formed through experience. This impact is important in relation to my work, as NRC-IFCI should gain the awareness of the right audience, their stakeholders and potential collaborators. The main messages that NRC-IFCI would like to put forward regarding its identity are that it is an innovative, sustainable, research and technology-based institute. As these concepts are the main communication points for the brand, my purpose as the storyteller will be to create a brand that speaks of these values. “A story might consist of a series of messages an organization seeks to convey about itself. A compelling brand is like a good story in that it communicates the key message of a company clearly, such as reliability and trustworthiness” (Leung 38).

NRC-IFCI would also like to communicate the important roles it takes on, as it works toward the development of fuel cells and hydrogen technology and as this economy will bring extensive environmental and economic benefits for Canada. NRC-IFCI also provides opportunities for Canadian and international companies, researchers and other stakeholders to work together in developing a cluster. One particular challenge for NRC-IFCI is to obtain continued support and funding from the government. Therefore it needs to promote itself and its facilities, including the Gateway. The Gateway is a unique facility within their industry and NRC-IFCI believes that it needs to emphasize and promote this space.

Marc Gobé, the author of books such as Emotional Branding, Brandjam and Citizen Brand, is known for his innovative approaches in communicating branding and brand identities for a wide range of clients and corporations. His book Emotional Branding emphasizes the importance of connecting with people's hearts through branding and he adds that since writing the book, he has come to the conclusion that design, as a communications tool, is the best instrument that can achieve this connection.

Design is the new instrument, that new tune, the influence, and for some corporate entities it is the expression of an entirely new culture—a culture of innovation and advocacy—that focuses on human wellbeing. (Gobé xi)

Gobé's book on the concept of emotional branding introduces us to the idea that design will play an important role in creating an impact, that emotional design is sensorial.

With these ideas of experience design, storytelling and emotional branding in mind, I set out to create an innovative, trustworthy and authoritative visual identity for the new NRC-IFCI branding. As requested by the directors of the Institute, these concepts are just some of the main messages that they like to give as the Institute relates to its stakeholders including its employees, investors and volunteers. My goal with the branding project is to have a more comprehensive visual-system approach, which will reflect a more positive image, instead of the existing outdated and incoherent identity design. The new brand identity will be successful when it achieves to communicate certain messages, emotions within the fuel cell industry. These emotions will be responses the new identity will evoke, such as NRC-IFCI being an innovative, dynamic and research-based Institute, working on an optimistic, sustainable technology. When the Institute starts to be recognized with these values, then the identity will be successful.

After comparing the brand identities and overall design of different websites and printed material belonging to other organizations and companies in the clean energy

field in Canada, I concluded that there were few developed or communicative examples that provided leadership. One exception is the branding identity for The Canadian Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Association⁴ branding, (FIGURE 6) which stands out from outdated aesthetics in the field. Based on their logo and their coherent use of typography, Canadian Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Association's identity can be considered fresh and contemporary, in between a cluster of outdated branding design examples. Though I have only seen the logo and some of the print publications, it appears that the designers applied a coherent use of typography with the typeface DIN. The striking and fresh colour palette also attracts attention to the logo, creating a distinct look.



Figure 6. Logo of Canadian Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Association

To differentiate its brand image from the Canadian Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Association and from the rest of the fuel cell cluster, NRC-IFCI can use aspects of emotional branding⁵ and I believe this will enable NRC-IFCI to reinvent its outdated image and promote itself in such an innovative field like clean energy. As Marc Gobé explains, “Good design did not reinvent the brand, but released the latent potential within its image, its audience, and its company” (xxvi).

A brand identity integrates business strategies with brand strategies and attributes, and then skillfully expresses those qualities to create a unique and memorable position for the brand in its market. Even though NRC-IFCI is not aiming to be a

⁴ The Canadian Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Association, CHFCA, a national association dedicated to developing Canada's hydrogen and fuel cell sector.

⁵ Emotional Branding: A concept, a unique visual process devised by Jöel Desgrippes and Marc Gobé, to define a brand's emotional persona and to create stories around brands, to add a tangible aspect in order to add an emotional dimension that customer or the audience could relate to.

commercial brand or may not hold a traditional marketing approach, it needs an efficient and successful brand identity, as its primary goal is to be viewed as a networking place, a hub, a place for people, and all stakeholders to gather. Its main purpose – to link the related businesses and organizations in the field – makes the Institute different from the rest of the organizations not primarily concerned with networking.

David Gibson, who is a way-finding designer and the cofounder of Two Twelve Associates –a graphic design firm refers to branding and place making in his book The Way-finding Handbook. The book aims to be a designer’s guide to way-finding design, in which he recommends that design can be used to transform public spaces. He suggests that way-finding design allows people to learn about institutions and that these design projects can be influential and affect large populations. According to Gibson,

Branding fosters awareness, enthusiasm, loyalty, and participation. In recent years branding has also been embraced by cities, cultural organizations and institutions not traditionally associated with this kind of marketing approach (68).

The Gateway area presents opportunities for three dimensional and interactive display designs. The motion graphics that is created as part of the thesis project is for the LCD screens that are displayed along the hallways of the Gateway. This animation is an initial step for similar future interactive work, which can be developed into more detailed, informative touch screen designs, displaying information in an engaging and an interactive way.

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The first steps of building a strong brand involve brand discovery, a process that examines the existing brand values and suggests new ways to improve the quality of the experience. During the analysis process of my project, I anticipated and visualized the messages and the visual look, the Institute wanted to communicate in order to create value for its stakeholders and build upon the components of the brand experience. The

stakeholders and employees have a very optimistic attitude towards the Institute, the Gateway and what they represent. As a result of my survey, I gained an insight into the perspective of the stakeholders, the users of the space and understood what could be done to enhance the value of their brand. With the use of site-specific interviews, research and the survey, I realized the need for a way-finding design and a solution for information design problems in the space. With these needs in mind, as part of the brand strategy, a 'brand vision', 'brand target' and 'brand elements and identity system'⁶ needed to be presented in order to move forward with the design elements such as the signage and the animation. Additionally, the informal conversations, meetings and presentations I had with the representatives of NRC-IFCI helped me to understand the needs and the reasons from the administration's point of view. Throughout these meetings, I was able to get feedback to the design work I worked on and was informed more detailed about the Institute's budget limitations.

NRC-IFCI, with its 'brand vision', is trying to compose an innovative, technological and a sustainable image, creating the feeling of a network or a hub for related industries and its stakeholders. The Institute, while being open to networking opportunities, academic and media relations, also aims to be a highly innovative research-based organization, supporting the development in hydrogen technology. With the new brand identity, I aimed to underline these aspects of the brand vision that the Institute wanted to enhance. With the help of the identity, an emotional investment, or attachment between the stakeholders and the Institute needed to be promoted, not just because of its scientific value but also because of its dedication to the clean energy field and its efforts towards achieving this optimistic technology.

Identities become iconic through the deployment of a visual language that brings out the feelings brands want to convey and the feelings people are expecting across a variety of media and brand experiences. An iconic

⁶ The terms, 'brand vision', 'brand target' and 'brand elements and identity system' are standard branding terminology, not exclusive to a specific author.

brand design campaign keeps on refreshing itself and, most importantly, stands out with a message that connects to our hopes (Gobé 110).

An iconic brand design, as suggested by Gobé, involves a brand strategy and a visual language expressed in a variety of media – products, graphic design, and interior design of a space – or in other elements of the ‘brand experience’. My role as a communication designer is to create and form this visual link for the Institute and for its audience, visitors. The Gateway space provided a significant opportunity to showcase and implement the brand experience through the use of application of brand elements and identity system. The ‘brand elements and identity system’ – a selection of brand components such as, a logo, logotype, colour palette, typographical details and concepts for signage – is positioned in order to fulfill the basic visual needs as part of the strategy and bring the new brand to life. As a main component in my project, a complete style guide, also known as branding guideline book, is used in guiding the application of the brand identity system and its elements, explaining certain regulations and rules of the use of brand identity. Alongside other visual work, the details of this branding guidebook and how these visual elements have been applied in the interactive animation piece and signage will also be explained in the next chapters.

When beginning the visual development of the brand, I explored with different graphic elements and shapes, created symbols and brand marks, with initial considerations focused on a colour palette and typography that led to signage for the building. With these explorations, I was able to build an overall look, feel – a brand design – the Institute wanted to form. As Marc Gobé, the author of Emotional Branding quotes Joe Duffy, a leading brand designer, on the importance of the role of brand design; “Brand design gives people a feeling of what an experience is compared to listening to what the brand wants you to hear through a tactical thirty-second commercial” (Duffy qtd. in Gobé 108).

With this role and affect of experience in mind, I aimed to form a stronger connection between the viewer –stakeholders of the Institute– and the Institute, taking on the role of the storyteller, through the design work I’m creating. I intended to communicate messages – emotions that will evoke as a result of these messages – that are evident within every piece of the branding project, conveying that the Institute is innovative, optimistic, dynamic, professional and sustainable.

As Donald Norman emphasizes, “Brands are all about emotions. And emotions are all about judgments. Brands are signifiers of our emotional responses, which is why they are so important in the world of commerce” (60). As the project started to take shape, I knew I needed to collect more information on the Institute concerning its identity, the Gateway area and be able to gain insight, so that I could proceed with the design applications, which would be directed in the best possible way.

As defined by Linda Leung, a story, as means for making sense of chaos can also be conceived as the transformation of data into information (36).

During the next steps in my project, I was able to collect different varieties of data through surveys and site-specific interviews and analyzed this data in the formation of my design work. With the help of concept mapping technique that I used throughout this formation, I was able to make better sense of the data I received and visualized a map that guided me in order to create this brand experience.

Based on the data I collected, I realized that the internal stakeholders, everyone from scientists to the student researchers, who are working at NRC-IFCI everyday, felt that the Institute was innovative, sustainable, dynamic and multi-layered, multi-cultural. It was my primary responsibility to create brand that was evocative of these emotions and these values. Once the dynamic and visual elements evoke such emotions within the audience, than a positive and an educational experience can be anticipated.

IV. THE STORY OF THE DESIGN ELEMENTS

I gained a better vision of what I wanted to do for the new branding, as my research on the Institute and the Gateway area unfolded, as I stated in the two previous chapters. This chapter will be examining the visual elements of my thesis and my process towards the creation of this brand identity and how I plan for each element to act out its part in the story of the brand.

Throughout the data collection period, which includes the initial survey, the interview I conducted with Lindsay McKillop on Gateway, (mentioned in the previous chapter) and the cognitive mapping experiment, along with my literature review, I composed a mood-board. This mood-board became for me a concept map (FIGURE 7) – an image guide formed of abstract images that was a visual foundation to build upon and from which to move forward. This was an inspiration point for me as it set the mood, the colour palette, the typographical style and the whole of the visual language that I want to include in my design. It also has been very helpful in keeping me on track and became a map, guiding me through my design journey towards my objective destination. This map was created as a result of previously mentioned research and initially is based on the synthesis of a visual language that I wanted to form for the new brand identity. It also visually documents the branding process, the main inspiration points as displayed in the process book.

As a result of the data that I collected throughout the research phase, I synthesized the main ideas the Institute wanted to communicate – the emotions that are expected for the audience to experience – sense of optimism, dynamism, innovation, sustainability, through these images. This map, when included in the process book, not only gives an idea of how such abstract concepts can be visualized through imagery, but also presents an insight into the designer's vision. The images used within this map represent the fuel cell cluster and how this technology is light, hidden, yet has impact, as

it is an innovative, fast paced and an optimistic field. NRC-IFCI is an institute that deals with technology and works towards creating a clean energy form that is invisible.



Figure 7 Concept map (mood-board) formed of abstract images, used for inspiration.

During this exploratory process, I aimed to visualize concepts and ideas towards creating a new logo—a mark for the branding—by making sketches and forming rough visual concepts. As a communication designer, I believe a logo is not the single element

that makes the branding successful. It is an important element, but it is the sum of all the elements: the signage, the printed matter, the colour palette and the typography that makes the brand cohesive and creates an experience. However, as the logo is the main representative and usually the first aspect of a brand that we see, it needs to be able to reflect the whole attitude of the brand. It should be able to achieve this goal in a simple and a direct manner.

At the point of writing this thesis, I finalized the logo design for the new NRC-IFCI branding. My process during the creation of the final symbol started with a hexagon shape as it made clichéd visual references to the scientific and the common structure of cells. I also found the shape relevant in relation to the structure of NRC-IFCI, as it is a whole formed of different departments working towards the same goal. Max Kisman, author of the essay “The Language of Letters-Language is Reference”, suggests that using clichés does not have to be negative. In fact, in communication we can use it to our advantage. By integrating the hexagon, a shape that can be interpreted as a cliché, into my logo design, I was intentionally using a shape that everybody recognizes and can easily relate to similar concepts. (Kisman 114).

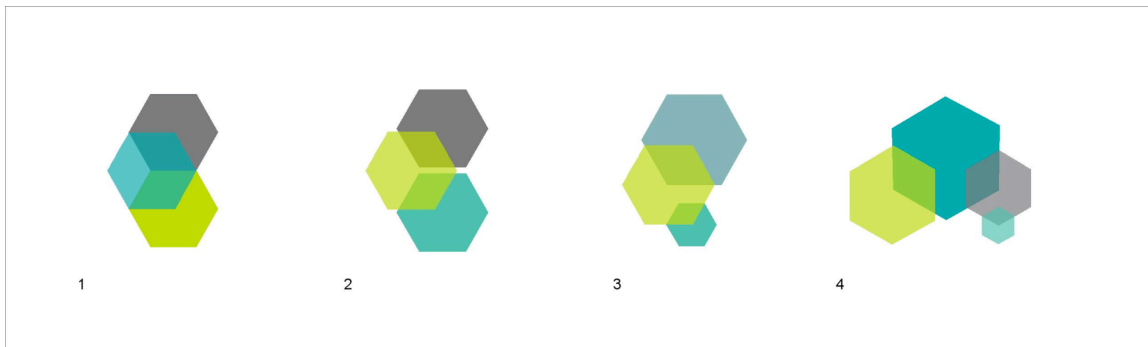


Figure 8 Logo evolution.

However, as a result of a class critique among fellow graduate design and visual art students, my opinion about using the hexagon shape changed as the majority felt that

the symbol was too “pharmaceutical or medical looking”. My intention with this symbol is to create an attractive element but also relate it to the people of the Institute and what they stand for – scientific, innovative, sustainable, but not medical. As Jorge Frascara discusses the role of the graphic designer in his book User-Centered Graphic Design, he points out how this role, and the applications of communication designers, should address society’s needs and problems. Therefore with the hexagon shape, I intended to form a lighter, more modern and a dynamic shape, in order to reflect the Institute’s character, and its qualities.

The attractiveness of a message, the emotional tone of its reception by the audience and therefore the possibility of the audience remembering a message and acting accordingly are heavily influenced by aesthetics. But this has to be a content-driven aesthetics, and one that relates to the world of the audience (Frascara 14).

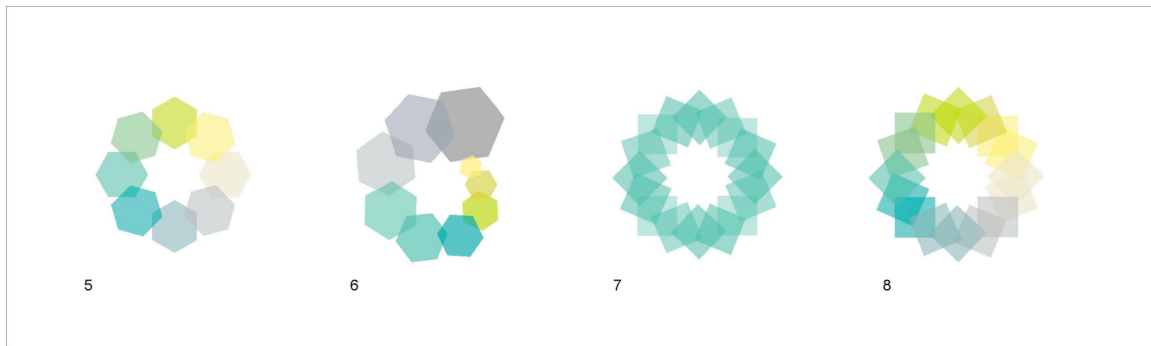


Figure 9 Second phase in logo evolution.

With Frascara’s point in mind, I started to keep my reference even more related to the Institute and examined the basic shape of the square, (FIGURES 8-9) as a simple single fuel cell device. The heart of a fuel cell stack is a square shaped sheet. (FIGURE 10)



Figure 10 A fuel cell sheet in between stacks of fuel cells.

Consequently, the final logo (FIGURE 11) became a better solution and stood out among the rest of the previous logo studies. I decided to proceed with this version, as the combination of squares became more meaningful and relevant as a whole. At its core, it is a representation of a fuel cell. The dynamism and the energy of the combined shape, refers to the developments and the high technological values and features of the Institute – a reminder of a clean future that the Institute is working towards. By layering the square shape to resemble the stacks of fuel cells and with the use of transparency and texture, I intended to create an image, which refers to the lightness of the hydrogen gas.

As Ellen Lupton and Jennifer Cole Phillips propose in Graphic Design the New Basics, a critical book that explains main forms and structures of graphic design:

Transparency can serve to emphasize values of directness and clarity through adjustments and juxtapositions that maintain the wholeness or legibility of elements. Transparency can also serve to build complexity by allowing layers to mix and merge together (Lupton and Phillips 183).

Lupton and Phillips also point out that the texture resulted by overlapping the squares added a new dimension to the symbol. Layers can add another dimension to information and can act individually or as a whole.

The concept of layers comes from the physical world, and it has a long history in the traditions of mapping and musical notation. Maps and time lines use overlapping layers to associate different levels of data, allowing them to contribute to the whole while maintaining their own identities. (Lupton and Phillips 127).

The final logo I designed – the abstract dynamic form – also visualizes the idea of NRC-IFCI – a multi layered Institute – where a variety of disciplines cross and overlap in order to work towards the same goal, developing clean energy. With rotation of the squares, the logo gained a movement, symbolizing the dynamism of the Institute. This rotation in shapes also adds a sense of sequence to the logo, building into a story – a story of the Institute and of clean energy. The colour palette and the change of colours in the layers are also related to the features that form the Institute – innovative, sustainable, high tech and research based.



Figure 11 The final logo.



Figure 12 Colour palette.

Edward Tufte on the use of colour, suggests that, “A grand strategy is to use colors found in nature, especially those on the lighter side, such as blues, yellows, and grays of sky and shadow. Nature’s colors are familiar and coherent, possessing a widely accepted harmony to human eye – and their source has a certain definitive authority.” (90).

With Tufte’s suggestion on colour palette in mind and also to emphasize the environmental aspect of NRC-IFCI, I decided to focus on a more naturalist palette, keeping away from the common, high tech look of cold and bright colours that are usually seen in the field of fuel cell technology. “Color can convey a mood, describe reality, or codify information. [...] Color serves to differentiate and connect, to highlight and to hide” (Lupton and Phillips 72). Additionally, the initial survey I conducted with the employees and their response to certain keywords about the Institute helped me to make the connection between the colour palette and the main concepts that I wanted to get through with the use of Emotional Branding.

With this final logo, I aimed to stay away from the abstract illustration of vehicles or speed, as they seem to be the first ideas that come to mind regarding the fuel cell and hydrogen energy. My intention in staying away from this relationship is the common

usage of similar concepts and abstractions especially in branding of the emerging hybrid car industry. However, the idea that NRC-IFCI is trying to promote is not simply related to automobile technology, but to their position as a hub for related industries to collaborate in the clean energy field. The logo composed of squares that are referring to the fuel cell sheets are forming this concept of networking and connection as they are used overlapped. I also find this logo more efficient in achieving a graphic vocabulary that adds a flexible and interactive expression of the identity of the brand. With this in mind, I wanted to enhance the innovative yet sustainable features of the Institute, where technology based research, networking and collaboration takes place.

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Process Book

As every brand has a printed guideline on the regulations and rules of the brand identity, I decided to create one for NRC-IFCI, as I wanted a print component in my project which would allow me to articulate and state certain aspects of the new identity that I am working on. With this piece, I intended to have a tactile object, a printed aspect of the branding design, which also tells the evolution of visual concepts behind the identity of the Institute and emphasizes the role of the process in a design project. As a graphic designer, with a background in print design, I see tactility as an important aspect and a book, being a compelling object, can add much to a sensory experience and to the storytelling that I intended to create for the audience. This piece plays an important role as it also showcases the story of my design process from the initial sketches to the finalized version of the brand identity, forming an informative and a tactile piece. David Jury in his essay ‘Convention and Creativity in Typography’, touches on printed matter that can be formed into an object, Jury suggests, “If printed matter is to exist, it must be made into something, an object that can attract the attention of those whose attention is sought. In short, it must be solicit” (101).

In her essay, “Walter Benjamin: Traces of Craft” Esther Leslie examines storytelling and craftsmanship in relation to Walter Benjamin’s essay “The Storyteller”, about a 19th century Russian storyteller and the affinity between craft skills and storytelling. Benjamin’s theory of the craft practice is based on the hand and the handmade, that which feels like the objects are pure knowledge of the world of the hand, of the craftsman. Through this essay, I was able to get a better understanding of tactility, craftsmanship and storytelling and how I can use tactility to tell the story of the Institute and to tell the story of my design experience through this process book. The book reveals the steps that I took in order to complete the project. In her essay, Leslie expresses that, “To touch the world is to know the world” (6) as she refers to tactility and underlines Benjamin’s approach to storytelling and crafts making. She suggests that true experiences are conceived as they’re practiced by hand and the hand that ‘touches’ has practical experience of life.

As I let my audience experience the tactility of the work – similar to Benjamin’s theory on storytelling – I communicate the knowledge of the craftsman, the designer. I aimed to give a better understanding of the brand, a more hands-on look and I intended to tell a story in order to convey the personality of the brand, to share the visual process the work has gone through. Leslie quotes Benjamin in her essay and states; “After all, storytelling, in its sensory aspect, is by no means a job for the voice alone. Rather, in genuine storytelling the hand plays a part which supports what is expressed in a hundred ways with its gestures learnt work” (Leslie 7). Furthermore, Leslie adds,

In the case of the modern mass-reproduced object, however, despite new conditions of production, such intimacy and imaginative investment in objects may still be possible. Craft as mode of activity translates into craft as a power, an obscure power, nestling in the imaginatively conceived object (11).

The process book gives me an opportunity to both showcase the regulations on the branding in a refined way but also a detailed look into the creation process of the

whole identity from logo to signage design for the audience to experience on a print level. “The world is complex, dynamic, multidimensional; the paper is static, flat. How are we to represent the rich visual world of experience and measurement on mere flatland?” (Tufte 9).



Figure 13 Spreads from the Process Book.

During the creation process of this book, I was able to document the important features of the brand, such as the precedents I looked into, the formation of the colour palette and the typography, as it is an important element in brand identity.

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Typography, an important element in communicating a brand, should refer to a level of quality that is required to clarify and reveal the written word. Steven Heller, art director of the New York Times Book Review and author of various publications on graphic design, such as The Education of a Typographer agrees. “Type is the formal expression of writing, and writing is the physical representation of language” (vii). During the decision making phase for NRC-IFCI logotype, I initially focused on DIN, a typeface that was designed in Germany, to be used in areas of science, engineering and technology, also for technical drawing labels. Even with this history, DIN appeared to be a suitable match for the subject matter. However, I decided to move forward with another typeface, Gotham, as DIN’s structure did not seem the perfect match for the geometric structure of the symbol. The combination between round shape of the letters of Gotham worked more harmoniously with the circular symbol when compared to the letters of DIN. Additionally, Gotham is a modern and contemporary typeface and seemed to be a suitable match for the updated look of NRC-IFCI.

The type designers of Gotham, Hoefler and Frere-Jones, were influenced by hand lettering and public signage and, as they state, it was born from old hand-drawn signage of New York City, mostly made by city engineers of the time. Hoefler and Frere-Jones designed Gotham to be visually authoritative and suitable for public spaces. These attributes and its adaptability to various applications made the typeface ideal for NRC-IFCI’s brand.

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Signage Design

In an effort to showcase how the new branding can work in three-dimensional format and also in relation to the public space - the Gateway - I also included signage design as part of the brand identity. As I mentioned in previous chapters, resulting from my research in the area and the survey that I did with the Institute employees, a way-finding design became a requirement for NRC-IFCI’s public space. Therefore, the main

intent with this component of my design project is to showcase the brand application in a three-dimensional medium and let the visitors to experience the story of the space through way-finding. “There is no doubt that good signage builds good relations with any given audience” (Calori 11). As explained by Chris Calori, an author and a designer, “Interpretative information tells a story about the meaning of a concept or theme of a site or a corporation and its products, and so on” (9). In order to tell the story of NRC-IFCI and communicate the main concepts as part of the emotional branding approach, I focused on this area of environmental graphic design, signage. Calori goes on further and defines that there are three distinct but overlapping areas in EGD⁷, interpretation being one of them.

Interpretive information is most often expressed in the form of exhibitory, which can be composed of a site itself, physical artifacts, audiovisual and interactive media, images, graphics and more. Interpretative information intersects with signage, in that interpretive information in the form of text and images can also be displayed in signage programs (Calori 9).

As I concluded the written component of this thesis project, I also completed the design of the signage system, a series of symbols that are informative and visually engaging. The signage is intended to increase not only the sense of the Institute’s identity, but also to fulfill the need for an informative way-finding design for the space. Safety is an issue in an environment like NRC-IFCI, where there are laboratories and restricted areas to the public. “We will come to realize that signs cannot only offer incredible charm and sensory delight, but also become a beacon of reassurance and safety when we are lost” (Calori 4).

Site signage can influence an organization’s branding. Quite obviously, the company’s wayshowing says something about the company’s general capacity to deal intelligently with practical problems and about its care for

⁷ “Environmental Graphic Design embraces many design disciplines including graphic, architectural, interior, landscape and industrial design, all concerned with the visual aspects of wayfinding, communicating identity and information, and shaping the idea of a place” (www.segd.org).

people. Companies that lack an interest and ability to provide decent wayshowing don't deserve respect and patronage (Mollerup 223).

Mollerup, referring to the way-finding design as site signage, emphasizes the affect of this medium, its three dimensional quality in an organization's branding, stating that; "site signage is part of an organization's body language. It sends continuous messages about the organization's skills and attitudes. As a result, on-site signage contributes substantially to the organization's branding." (223).

To identify the Institute and to articulate its core values and mission through the visual language of the branding, I used the same colour palette and the typography as I did with the rest of the brand identity coherently. The signage pieces for NRC-IFCI are designed to be on glass and placed on designated locations throughout the Gateway's hallways. The symbol designs are based on the drawings, the mental mapping exercises that I conducted with the employees of NRC-IFCI and are designed to express and visualize their perception of the space.



Figure 14 Final signage designs.

The use of type is an important point for the visual appearance of a signage system and as mentioned before, the typeface Gotham that is being used for the overall branding, is suitable and efficient as it has recognizable letterforms. As Mollerup emphasizes; “Typography is the backbone of the sign graphic system because, most of the informational content of a sign program is conveyed by words rather than pictorial elements” (103).

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Animation

The non-static element of my project is a short animation, demonstrating the logo and its elements in action. The animation is informative, accessible and understandable as it visualizes the basic elements of the identity in motion, in an effort to tell the subtle story of NRC-IFCI’s new brand identity. As Donald Norman suggests, “Why must information be presented in a dull, dreary fashion, such as in a table of numbers? Most of the time we don’t need actual numbers, [...] So why not display the information in a colourful manner, continually available in the periphery of attention, but in a way that delights rather than distracts? Why not have information displayed in a pleasant, comfortable way?” (101).

With this motion graphics piece, I visualized the main elements of the brand – the pieces of the logo – in a non-static way, adding a different sensory element in order to create awareness for the new branding of the Institute. This component of the project also acts as the digital segment and helps to complete a sensory experience at the exhibition space. As there are also three-dimensional and two-dimensional pieces in the branding project, the animation provides an opportunity for the audience to view the design elements in a digital manner. Additionally, it can also be used for promoting the branding in NRC-IFCI’s website, at multiple venues or related organizations other than the Institute’s space, as digital design can be easier to distribute.

My initial idea, as I previously mentioned, was to design graphics for an interactive multi-touch screen. However, this element of the project changed and evolved into an animation piece, still maintaining an engaging visual experience.

As I have tactile components in the project such as the process book and the signage, the screen adds a new sensory dimension, as it is non-static, emphasizing the idea about storytelling through different mediums in the Gateway space. This way, I used the visual components of the branding identity such as the logos and the typography like main characters in this story. As Ellen Lupton and Jennifer Cole Phillips also states, “Animation encompasses diverse modes of visible change, including the literal movement of elements that fly on or off the screen as well as changes in scale, transparency, colour, layer, and more” (215). Simple interactive graphic behaviors can delight and enrich the experience (ibid) by creating an engaging and an easy to understand visual experience on an active, changing surface – the screen.

With the use of rich graphical elements that are inspired by the logo and its elements, the branding design ended up visually compelling, refreshing and created a solid basis for various applications, helping to enhance the sense of emotional branding in this specific environment, as the animation is intended to be shown from different screens at the Gateway area.

Designers can access the entire bandwidth of human perception by investing data with weight, space, and texture. In doing so, they provide sensual experiences of communication, deliciously revealing the richness of complex datasets, so full of meaning and potential interpretations. [...] Well suited to the continuous and graduated sensations we derive from our immediate environment (Klanten 179).

While these visual cues provide sensual experiences, they also play the role of a storyteller in a coherent way with the rest of the identity. Stories that give a message, communicate an idea follow a path as in these elements – the book, the animation and the signage – as they all follow a similar way in doing so. Each of these elements acted

their part within a sequence in order to tell the story. The book proceeds page by page while the animation continues in sequences similar to the way we perceive information through signage in a space – following a linear path.

As fuel cells are a dynamic and an innovative technology form, the identity for the Institute also needs to have space for exploration and should represent the evolving and changing characteristic of this energy. Each new partnership in this field means new opportunities and participation is important for the advancement of fuel cell technology. To get this knowledge –the story – and the key ideas across to the intended audience, this visual experience that is achieved through the brand identity plays the main role.

V. CONCLUSION

Sometimes, the best stories are the ones with an open ending, as they lead us to new opportunities and let us take our imagination further. I see my project and its process as a living organism and I hope for it to develop, even after completing my thesis.

Working for NRC-IFCI, in an area completely new to me – fuel cell technology – has been a challenging but a beneficial learning experience. It has broadened my vision and turned me into a researcher / communication designer. Different theories that may have seemed irrelevant or distanced at first have come together and are applicable to a variety of fields. As Frascara suggests,

There are enough market-driven designers to keep the economy going, but there is a great need for talented communicators in the social marketing field, as much as there is a need to demonstrate to governments and the private sector how much benefit there is to be collected from intelligent communications in this field. (Frascara 31).

Emotional branding strategies have long been used for commercial purposes. One of my primary intentions in writing this thesis is to point out that strategies such as storytelling and emotional branding can be applied to a research-based government institute like NRC-IFCI, as these strategies can be useful and efficient in spreading the ideas such institutions or organizations are working with.

During the time I was about to complete my thesis, I had an opportunity to present my work-in-progress to the key members from NRC-IFCI. At this presentation, I was able to share the new brand identity at its initial phase and got a positive response from my primary audience – the main representatives of the Institute. This group related to the new look very easily and was able to comprehend the idea of story telling through the visual elements as they are very familiar with the field and have a broad knowledge of the technology. This experience has shown me that the new brand identity was able to communicate the intended messages – innovative, technology and research-based,

sustainable and a dynamic Institute –to its audience clearly and was well received as it has been found efficient and relevant to the Gateway space.

Storytelling through experience, interactive and multi-sensory design tools are commonly used in museums. My hope is that this type of learning through experience and storytelling can be brought to venues like NRC-IFCI; as such institutes are equally educational, informative and innovative. The public needs to be more aware of how complex systems work in relation to institutions like NRC-IFCI. They should be able to relate to the advancements in science and technology in order to become more involved and participate in a sustainable future. Within this thesis project, each design element acts to fulfill this role in the showcase area –Gateway – that is devoted to the mission of demonstrating the dynamic and optimistic identity of fuel cell technology. Whether in the form of signage design, or as motion graphics, these pieces tell the story of the Institute in a visually engaging way.

As Kenya Hara beautifully states, “Verbalizing design is another act of design”. Writing and researching this project made a significant impact on my design practice. While I firmly established a viable brand and brand elements for NRC-IFCI, I realized it was merely the first step in an ever-evolving process to change the various stakeholders’ experiences in the public and discreet spaces in NRC-IFCI’s building.

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APPENDIX A.

Survey Questions:

1. How long have you been working in this building?
2. What do you use the lobby for? (meetings, eating, just walking through)
3. What frustrations do you have with the current layout of the lobby?
4. On a scale of 1 - 10 how bright would you say the current lobby is?
(1 - not bright, 10 - very bright)
5. Pick three key words you would use to describe the NRC-IFCI
(example: innovative, futuristic, green)
6. Pick four photographs that best represent the organization as a whole:
(Images of interior spaces in different schemes and, abstract images representing various moods in relation to NRC-IFCI public space.)

Images have been removed due to copyright restrictions.

7. What building in Vancouver do you think has a great lobby space?
8. Do you think there's adequate seating space in the lobby? Too little? Too much?
9. On a scale of 1 - 10 how much time do you (and your visitors) spend in the lobby space?
(1 - very little time, 10 - lots of time (holding meetings, eating, etc.))
10. What do you think is the current focal point of the lobby?
(where do your eyes go first?)
11. Do you think the lobby needs any additional facilities? (If so, what?)
12. Do you find the present signage system successful?
Do you think it's informative enough?