

# JAPANESE VISUAL COMMUNICATION SURVEY: A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY GRAPHIC DESIGNERS FROM JAPAN

Flávio de Almeida Hobo  
Centro de Investigação em Arquitectura, Urbanismo e Design da UTL – FA  
IADE  
[flaviohobo@gmail.com](mailto:flaviohobo@gmail.com)

## Abstract

To research graphic design in a globalized context it is primordial to consider cultural, social, historical and even anthropological studies to fully understand the aesthetics' choices made by the designer's. Being the "Japanese graphic design" a topic still to be better understand in the West, it is mandatory to gather information from primary sources. These data will be analyzed with support of secondary sources of information about Japanese visual communication, social and cultural studies. This paper presents comments about the result of a survey applied to 105 Japanese graphic designers. The survey was designed with 44 questions. The original survey, to better follow this report can be found in [www.studiohobo.com/CONVERGENCIAS/Flavio\\_Hobo\\_Survey.pdf](http://www.studiohobo.com/CONVERGENCIAS/Flavio_Hobo_Survey.pdf)

**Key-words:** Graphic Design, Japan, Japanese Visual Culture, Portugal, Graphic Design Survey, Visual Communication.

## Resumo

Para a investigação do design gráfico em um contexto globalizado é primordial considerar estudos culturais, históricos e também antropológicos para compreender de maneira integral as escolhas estéticas feitas pelo designer. Sendo o design gráfico japonês um tópico ainda por ser melhor compreendido no Ocidente, é necessário reunir informações a partir de fontes primárias. Esses dados serão então analisados com apoio de fontes secundárias de informação sobre a comunicação visual japonesa e estudos culturais e sociais. O presente artigo apresenta comentários sobre o resultado de um inquérito aplicado a 105 designers japoneses. O inquérito era composto por 44 questões. Para o melhor acompanhamento deste artigo, sugere-se o download do inquérito que está disponível em [www.studiohobo.com/CONVERGENCIAS/Flavio\\_Hobo\\_Survey.pdf](http://www.studiohobo.com/CONVERGENCIAS/Flavio_Hobo_Survey.pdf)

**Palavras-chave:** Design Gráfico, Cultura Visual Japonesa, Japão, Portugal, Inquérito sobre Design Gráfico, Comunicação Visual.

## Introduction

The Japanese visual communication, especially graphic design, does not have yet the proper notoriety in many Western countries. The perception of Japanese graphic design as a tool for internationalization is reduced and obscured by the international popularity of manga and anime that, for western eyes, are synonymous of Japanese culture. This situation may lead to less than desirable academic studies about contemporary Japanese graphic design to western audience. To minimize the scarcity of information for its investigation, it is necessary to obtain data through primary sources of information. With this aim, a survey was created, which results will be presented in this paper that seeks to investigate several aspects related to modern and contemporary Japanese visual communication.

According to Saiki (2002, p. 9), The Japanese graphic design after World War II was inspired by the Western graphic design with ambitions to be recognized by their Western counterparts and if possible surpass them in quality. At the same time, there was a spirit of unity and patriotism in the reconstruction of the country that made visual communication also appealing to the Japanese and their values. Even before, at the beginning of the 20th century, the Japanese designers themselves sought to organize international exhibitions to promote the international exchange and absorb ideas, as an exhibition of U.S. and European advertisements collected by Sadae Takagi in Osaka in 1902, "The Posters of World War One" with works from England, Germany and United States, the international competition for Calpis posters, exhibition curated by Yukio Koriyama, in 1927, with about 400 posters, and many other initiatives aimed at improving Japanese visual communication. (NAGOYA GINKŌ, 1989, p. 150).

After the post-war economic recovery, Japan sought to reassert itself as a nation not only recovered, but modern and in line with Western values. Graphic design, through posters, were part of this propaganda. A year after the creation of JAGDA, was organized an exhibition of Japanese posters, in Europe, in 1979, with the purpose of showing the Japanese maturity in visual communication and as a result, Japanese designers began to receive international awards. (NAGOYA GINKŌ, 1989, p. 268)

In its turn, manga and anime have different histories with regard to its internationalization and soft power policy by Japanese government. The opinions of Rumi Sakamoto, a professor at the University of Auckland, and Seiichi Kondo, former Japanese ambassador in Denmark, make clear the relationship between politics, the image of "cool Japan" and soft power (in CHRISTENSEN, 2011, p.78). Sakamoto recalls that the government of Junichiro Koizumi promoted consciously Japanese pop culture as a new hope in a scenario of economic recession for the recovery of its international influence. On the other hand, Kondo, in his speech, reinforces the role of art and culture as vital in the process of globalization, as it is an effective and discrete way to create "friends" as opposed to the method of coercion. However, the popularity of these Japanese cultural events does not reflect reality and the style of visual communication that is applied to industry and services in the Japanese market. To assist in the investigation of this matter and visual communication issues in contemporary Japan, professionals and academics in the field of visual communication were consulted through a questionnaire design specifically for this investigation.

Obtaining primary data allows the creation of a supportive database to the analysis of secondary sources such as books, articles and documents of other authors. A similar questionnaire is being applied to Portuguese designers in order to spot differences in the activity and professional behavior of designers from both countries. Although this investigation is not centered about comparative studies between Portugal and Japan visual culture, some questions were addressed to Portuguese respondents to provide a reference about how designers and scholars deal with the same issues. Besides, Portugal is, of course, influenced by European graphic design culture.

The term "glocalization" (RITZER, 2003; MATYSITZ & FORRESTER, 2009) which originated precisely in Japan provides one of the key theoretical frameworks for the justification of this inquiry. According to Khonker (2004, p.4) the origin of the term "glocalization" has roots in the Japanese term "*dochakuka*", a portmanteau of ideas "indigenous" and "adapt or transform", which in turn transmitted the idea of adapting farming techniques to local needs of others. In the area of marketing and business, this term referred to the concepts of "global" and "localization". Thus, products and

services that have commercial space on the international market, thanks to globalization, can and should be adapted to meet the cultural values of local consumers. There is a similarity in that term with the idea of indigenization already used in Western anthropology and sociology. However, the term glocalization has a higher value for this research because it has been created in Japan, has been exported and used in the West to the academic, commercial and marketing areas, which have close relations with the graphic design. Therefore, with the concept of glocalization, the designer is asked to think internationally but act locally, adapting their work to the culture in which he/she is inserted. This approach is valid not only in the production of content, but in the interpretation of international trends in visual communication to the codes of values of clients and local consumers. Obtaining information from Japanese professionals and academics linked to the area of visual communication is an essential part to study the development and the relation of Japanese graphic design in the international arena. The designer is a cultural modifier and active in determining the visual style of visual arts business. In the present, experience and cultural knowledge of their environment and from other countries must be in balance with the tastes and preferences of local customers and clients, to promote innovation and communication improvement of products and services.

The questionnaire is divided into four parts, namely: "Interviewee Details", "Design as Profession", "Visuals and Graphics" and "Globalization, Japan and Graphic Design." Each section had questions developed according to the objectives of each section. These goals will be explained throughout this document. Altogether, there were 44 questions with a time estimate of 20 minutes to be fully answered. The application of the survey to Japanese professionals and academics was through an online platform – during the period between December 2011 and February 2012. The survey was sent mainly to electronic addresses available in the database of JAGDA (The Japan Graphic Designers Association Inc.) which currently has 2800 members spread across Japan. Requests were also sent to some colleges, designers and design studios found in researches in books and websites. Altogether, were sent about 1130 emails. Entirely, 219 people visited the online survey, 114 partially responded to the survey and 105 answered in full. It was considered only the opinion of the 105 respondents who fully answered the survey.

Due the questionnaire number of questions, the writing of the outcomes were too extensive. Therefore this 6.000 word report will deal only with the theoretic justification of each of four sections and brief comments of the results obtained. The full questionnaire's *fac-simile* can be downloaded at [www.studiohobo.com/CONVERGENCIAS/Flavio\\_Hobo\\_Survey.pdf](http://www.studiohobo.com/CONVERGENCIAS/Flavio_Hobo_Survey.pdf)

### **Interviewee Details**

Six questions were performed about the interviewee in order to identify the origin and quality of the responses regarding the level of experience of the interviewee which can be measured by academic degree and area of study. Although there are technical and academic courses, graphic design is an area that absorbs professionals with diverse expertise and theoretical knowledge related to visual culture, advertising and marketing. It was also essential to ascertain that respondents had a close relationship with Japanese design reality (being part of a Japanese association or/and being Japanese and living and working in Japan), since this document that will serve as the primary source of analysis on the current situation of Japanese graphic design is composed of answers from professionals or academics with expertise in this area.

There were counted up 105 valid responses, unless otherwise stated, with 84,8% of respondents being male and 15,2% female. The ages were divided into groups (18-23), (24-29), (30-35), (36-40),

(41-46), (47-52), (53-58), (59-64), and over 65. The three age groups more numerous were (36-40) with 21,9%, followed equally by group (47-52) also with 21,9%, and in the third group aged (30-35) representing 19% of valid responses. The three groups less numerous were over 65 years with 1,9%, young people among (18-23) also with 1,9% and finally 5,7% of youths among (24-29) years. All the respondents were of Japanese nationality. The academic degree most common is bachelor's degree corresponding to 45,7% of respondents, followed by 31,4% of professionals who only have technical education and 14,3% with only a high school education. Only 1% of respondents have a doctoral degree, 3,8% are masters and 3,8% considered not fit into any of the options listed. To finish the first part of this survey, the respondents were asked to identify the area of their course/specialization. The vast majority, 71,4% is inserted in the "Graphic Design/Visual Communication." The second largest group comprises 24,8% of people from diverse areas such as 3D animation, administration, engineering, engravers, literature, psychology, economics, interior design, among others

The other options were Industrial Design (4,8%), Plastic Arts (2,9%), Cinema (1,9%), Web design and Multimedia (1,9%), Environmental Design (1%) and Photography (1%). Although the option Fashion Design was available, no one considered this area. Finally, the percentage of respondents who completed their studies between the years of 1981 and 1990 was 30,5%, and those who completed before 1980 (the earliest date available in this survey) were 20%, completing the majority of respondents. The other groups were: between 1996 and 2000 (16,2%), 2001 and 2005 (15,2%), 1991 and 1995 (14,3%), 2006 and 2011 (2,9%) and after 2011 (1 %).

### **Comments for “Interviewee Details”**

The most prominent public in the survey are men, with a majority of 84,8%. Most respondents are older than 30 years and already have technical or higher education. With 71,4% of respondents belonging to courses in the area of graphic design /visual communication and 100% of Japanese nationality.

Just for comparative purposes, the 49 Portuguese respondents who answered the survey are mostly women (59,2%). The age group between 24 and 35 years accounted for 61,2% of the respondents, which 44,9% already have a master's degree and 40,8% have finished higher education. Respondents are also mostly from courses belonging to the area of graphic design/visual communication (63,3%), yet with a most recent conclusion of the studies (65,3% between 2001 and 2011). This may be related to the achievement of Master degree by respondents and by the changes in the academic curriculum due to the treaty of Bologna.

Therefore, it is safe to say that the answers given to this investigation can be considered valid to compose a document with primary sources of information and assist in research on Japanese visual communication and creating a comparative basis with Portugal.

### **Design as Profession**

This section consists of eighteen questions that explore topics facing issues of graphic design professionals in Japan, client relations, working tools, creative process, inspiration sources and considerations about the reality outside Japan. Some of the obtained answers will be compared with those given by Portuguese respondents, in order to acquire points of similarity and contrast between the two cultures, especially with regard to the habits of professionals and academics in the field of visual communication. This section is more focused on sociological and anthropological issues which are considered fundamental to the extracultural study of graphic design.

### **Comments for “Design as Profession”**

Virtually all Japanese respondents (99%) consider that "visual communication/graphic design" is part of their professional activity although this percentage is considerably higher than the number of respondents who have a degree in the same areas. That is, it is possible that graphic design and visual communication professionals have academic education in other areas. In the Portuguese case, this difference also exists, although lower (77,6% vs. 63,3%). A preliminary analysis would be that the Portuguese designers devote more years to study (more masters and lower age group) and also had formal education in the same area in which they work (besides the percentage shown in "visual communication/graphic design", respondents with courses in "industrial Design" were 28,6% and those with activities in this area are 34,7%). In Japan, professionals showed greater migration between areas. A speculative hypothesis would be that there is a larger labor supply in the Japanese market and professional training happens more frequently outside of academia, with daily practice, allowing the professionalization outside the area of specialization and smaller percentage of individuals with a college degree compared to Portugal.

The use of royalty-free images is used most preferably in Portugal than in Japan. On the other hand, in Japan a photographer is more often hired to create the necessary image for the graphic piece. This situation assumes greater control over the photographic image and greater visual exclusivity in Japanese design. This situation can be an indication of customers' investment capacity in certain campaigns, since royalty-free images have lower prices.

The Japanese designers are not often inspired by the artwork of other Asian or South American works and give preference to the work of United States citizens, Europeans and Japanese. Therefore, literacy in graphical visual culture of the West is average (57,1%). Thus, there is the indication that the Japanese graphic designers still are inspired by western graphic design. However, the use of the English Language by the Japanese is very rare (61,9%), especially when compared with the Portuguese who reported using it frequently (44,9%). Still on Western influence, although there is a weak tendency for the use of images of western people in the Japanese visual communication, there is a small imbalance in relation to Portugal. It was observed by the responses that the Japanese make use of Western images more frequently than the Portuguese use images of eastern people in graphic works.

There was a divergence between the data obtained by the survey and from the review of secondary sources of a Japanese expert on Japanese advertising effectiveness outside Japan. Yoshihiro Sato, creative director of Dentsu, and Yasumichi Oka, former creative director of Dentsu, said in an interview that they consider difficult for a foreigner to understand Japanese advertising. According to Sato, a foreigner who did not live in Japan at first would thought that the ads do not make sense. Oka shares the same opinion, and highlights the short time that TV ads have (15 seconds) and the use of Japanese celebrities who are not known in the West (HICKS, 2008, p. 22). However, it was seen earlier that the Japanese respondents' opinion does not reflect the opinion of Sato and Oka. Respondents, for the most part, think it "likely" or "very likely" that the Japanese ads would be effective outside Japan. Even though the opinion of Oka is about advertising on TV, the big advertising campaigns are interlinked between different media, with the same history and the same visual adapted for TV, newspapers, outdoor, Internet, etc.. One approach used by Dentsu is known by the term "Cross Communication" which refers to a method of transmitting an information combining two or more media (SUGIYAMA and ANDREE, 2011, p. 86). That is, if the language or

advertising approach on TV is very peculiar and specific to the Japanese taste, the print campaigns tend to follow this characteristic.

The other questions in this section related to customer relationships and inspiration sources have data that will have greater relevance when interpreted in specific contexts, such as the research based on this inquiry or by other researchers who will later use that data. For this paper, these interpretations will be avoided to prevent deviations from the main objective of disseminating results and to preserve the size of this document.

### **Visuals and Graphics**

In this section, respondents answered questions based on the images shown. The objective is to evaluate the visual interpretation that the Japanese have of the artworks made both in Japan and in other Western countries, like Portugal, Brazil and USA. The importance of this section lies in the fact that the opinions obtained by Japanese respondents will serve as the basis for comparisons with the western point of view, to delineate possible differences in interpretation of images, or how cultural information influence these interpretations. Therefore, three sections with different goals were created. In the first section, nine images of graphic works were selected and it was requested a brief visual analysis by respondents. The second section was composed of three images belonging to Western advertising campaigns from Portugal, Brazil and USA, to be assessed by respondents on how these images are similar or different in relation to the visual style practiced in Japanese advertising. The third section consisted of the evaluation of general graphic knowledge of enshrined works of artists and designers from various countries, in order to assess not only the visual knowledge but also if the images produced in Japan have some feature that Japanese professionals in the field of visual culture and graphic design would recognize as familiar.

Thus, for the first section, each of the nine images has a set of 45 options and an open field for the respondent to write any other quality, if he/she so decided. The options, inspired by the book of Donis A. Dondis (2000) comprise a set of qualities that are possible within the visual grammar and other options specific to Japanese and Asian culture and to the images chosen. The list was required because of the need to measure and compare the qualities of the images with equal criteria. Otherwise, the opening for definitions of an exclusively subjective character would make it difficult to measure and compare the results due to syntax, synonyms and especially the translation of Japanese terms that could ascend to thousands, considering the multiplication of the number of respondents by nine images selected and the numbers of possible features for each image that could range from three to six. The options were equal for all images, helping the memorization of the possible alternatives and minimizing fatigue of respondents. The seven most chosen characteristics will be considered for analysis and compared with the choices made by Portuguese designers in response to the same images. Thus, the percentages refer to the times at which a particular alternative was selected by respondents with minimum and maximum limits of three to six features per image, respectively. The nine images chosen represents different styles of graphics: from kawaii and Japanese style to western influenced ones. All of them were done in Japan for Japanese audience.

The goal of this section is to obtain data on the interpretation that the Japanese respondents make of the images and compare them to the interpretations of people who do not live in the same socio-cultural environment (in this case, the comparison would be made to Portuguese designers) and to better understand, with the help of socio-cultural studies, which is the taste related to visual language

of the Japanese who are accustomed to these images. That is, only the theoretical knowledge of the researcher on the subject does not warrant a completely reliable interpretation of the Japanese visual culture. The primary data obtained aim to minimize this gap. The results presented in the text are the seven characteristics most chosen by respondents, representing the most striking communicative features according to the Japanese view.

### **Comments for “Visuals and Graphics”**

The first section presented nine Japanese posters and the appreciation of respondents about each of them. The same images were sent to the Portuguese respondents and the results will be briefly presented here now, so that the reader can compare the results. The differences and similarities of views for each of the nine images are too extent for the size of this paper. Thus, the presentation of the results of Portuguese respondents and the eventual analyzes will be concise.

First image, by Mitsuo Katsui done in 1997 for the clothing brand "Pleats Please" of Issey Miyaki: abstract (59,2%), emotional (42,9%), artistic/authorial (38,8%), contemporary (24,5%), unusual/interesting (22,5%), strange (18,4%) and indirect/subtle (16,3%). The abstractness is the most striking point for both, Portuguese and Japanese. By maintaining the abstract quality like the most striking feature, the thought of Kenya Hara on the effectiveness of communication can be shared here. Hara (2007, p. 242) says the ads are effective to the public if offered to them as an empty vessel for the public to freely dispose of their ideas and desires. For an ad related to fashion, Katsui seems to have followed this way of thinking.

Second image, by Hisashi Narita in 2004 for cosmetic company Shiseido: Japanese influence (46,9%), fun (40,8%), Eastern influence (36,7%), emotional (34,7%), easy understanding (34,7%), intelligent (30,6%) and balanced (24,5%). The Japanese influence is the most striking point for both the Portuguese and the Japanese.

Third image by Tomoaki Furuya for the watch brand Breitling, held in 2006: sober/serious (36,7%), direct communication (34,7%), consume/hardselling (28,6%), contemporary (26,5 %), Western influence (24,5%), clean/minimalist (20,4%) and easy to understand (18,4%).

Fourth image, by Glanz Agency, located in Tokyo, for the Tokyo Museum of Contemporary Art in 2008: focused on typography (61,2%), Eastern influence (38,8%), Japanese influence (30,6%), unusual/interesting (24,5%), clean/minimalist (24,5%), contemporary (22,5%) and sober/serious (20,4%). The focus on typography is the most striking point for both Portuguese and Japanese.

Fifth image, by Takayuki Soeda. Created in 1986 to Tokyo Gas: fun (53,1%), informal (34,7%), strange (32,7%), freestyle (28,6%), Japanese influence (26,5%), artistic/authorial (26,5%) and unusual/interesting (24,5%). The fun character is the most striking point for both Portuguese and Japanese.

Sixth image, the cover of Dragon Age – Pure, of 2007 created by unknown author: excessive elements/exaggerated (63,3%), consume/hard-selling (44,9%), Japanese influence (44,9%), common/popular (32,7%), complex/elaborate (30,6%), fun (26,5%) and focused on typography (22,5%). Excessive elements is the most obvious characteristic for the Portuguese, while for the Japanese the most prominent factors are Japanese influence and consume/hard-selling quality.

Seventh image, by Junya Kamada, for a conference of awareness on picking up dog droppings, held in 2006: clean/minimalist (67,4%), Japanese influence (42,9%), focused on typography (40,8%), intelligent (36,7%), eastern influence (24,5%), balanced (24,5%) and Asian influence (18,4%). The minimalism in this work was the characteristic most noticeable by the Portuguese but was only the tenth feature indicated by the Japanese considered that the focus on typography first.

Eighth image, created in 2011 for the conference dedicated to music, arts, technology and design of APMT: Western influence (55,1%), contemporary (55,1%), modern colors (38,8%), focused on typography (36,7%), artistic/authorial (34,7%), balanced (30,6%) and symmetric (20,4%). The Western influence is common ground as the most striking feature both for the Portuguese and Japanese.

Ninth image, by Shigeo Fukuda for the exhibition *The 100 Monalisa smiles*, in 1970: artistic/authorial (34,7%), Eastern influence (30,6%), Japanese influence (26,5%), Asian influence (22,5%), clean/ minimalist (22,5%), traditional (20,4%) and unusual/interesting (20,4%). The artistic/authorial character is the most striking point for the Portuguese and the Japanese.

In the last section, at least two authors on the list influenced Japanese designers: Milton Glaser who inspired Nobuhiko Yabuki, Haruo Miyauchi and Makoto Wada, in the 1970s, to use illustration work as a genre of expression independent of common sense in the midst of visual communication (NAGOYA GINKŌ, 1989, p. 285) and Andrey Beardsley who inspired Ayao Yamana, although Yamana followed a more romantic and innocent style compared to the Beardsley grotesque eroticism (THORNTON, 1991, p. 53). Certainly the influences are not limited to these two authors, and a more detailed and extensive investigation may reveal that Western authors chosen, and others who have not entered this investigation, are known to the Japanese public and somehow influenced their visual communication.

### **Globalization, Japan and Graphic Design**

The fourth and last part concerns the relationship between Japan and its visual culture with the outside. The seven questions that are part of this section seek to find the opinion of respondents on how the Japanese visual culture relates to and is seen outside Japan. The answers to these questions will give some initial thoughts on how the Japanese see their own visual culture in an international context and will provide support for theoretical substantiation, along with specialized literature on new hypotheses about the evolution and relationship between Japanese and international graphic design.

The first question the respondents were asked to think of elements of Japanese culture and design in an international context. It was given a list of items which are part of the history, culture, economy and politics of Japanese softpower. The type of response was to arrange the items in order notoriety or degree of perception in the West. It is a matter of self-perception and cultural projection in the globalized world. Later, answers will be compared with the views of western respondents and differences of opinion are to be discussed, to explore the issues of Japanese self-image and perception of international audience.

The classification method is given by assigning weights in relation to the classification given by the respondents. Specifically in this matter, there were ninety-eight valid responses with nine items for respondents to classify. Thus, to classify an item in first position, will be assigned a weight of nine

values for that item. The second position will have a weight of eight values, the third position will have seven values and this pattern continues until the assignment of only one value for the classified item in the ninth position. With this assignment of values, the final classification of best known items outside Japan, on the opinion of Japanese respondents, was in the first place "anime", second "manga", third "movies", fourth "history" (Japanese), in fifth "arts", sixth "architecture", seventh "legend/folklore", eighth "graphic design" and in ninth place "object/industrial design". The following table shows the votes of each item in detail.

	ANIME	MANGA	MOVIES	HISTORY	ARTS	ARQUIT.	FOLKLORE	GR. DES.	OBJC. / IND. DES
I	54	23	3	9	4	2	3	0	0
II	29	52	4	4	5	2	1	1	0
III	9	12	19	15	19	14	6	2	2
IV	2	5	26	17	15	20	6	1	6
V	0	2	13	14	17	17	13	12	10
VI	2	0	10	12	15	21	12	14	12
VII	0	2	12	5	17	14	9	23	16
VIII	2	0	6	17	5	7	14	21	26
IX	0	2	5	5	1	1	34	24	26

**Fig.01:** Detailed table with the votes by the Japanese respondents. Column with Roman numerals is the placement of the items in the ranking. In the subsequent columns are the number of votes given for the each placement. The columns are arranged in order of placement (ratio between number of votes and the multiplying factor as explained earlier. Total of 98 valid answers.

The same question was posed to Portuguese respondents, and there were 45 valid responses to this question. In the first place of the ranking comes "anime", "manga" in second, third "movies", fourth "history", fifth "arts", sixth "architecture", seventh "legends", eighth "graphic design" and at last "object/industrial design".

	ANIME	MANGA	HISTORY	OBJ. IND / DES.	FOLKLORE	FILMS	ARTS	GR. DES.	ARQUITECT.
I	15	11	6	2	5	2	2	1	1
II	11	16	5	2	2	4	1	1	3
III	5	5	5	6	6	9	3	4	2
IV	4	2	5	9	7	4	7	6	1
V	1	2	11	6	3	1	10	5	6
VI	2	4	3	6	4	7	8	5	6
VII	3	1	2	6	3	6	5	6	13
VIII	3	1	5	8	3	4	6	9	6
IX	1	3	3	0	12	8	3	8	7

**Fig.02:** Detailed table with the votes by Portuguese respondents. The sequence of columns respects the same scoring criteria as the Japanese respondents table. Total of 45 valid answers.

### **Comments for “Globalization, Japan and Graphic Design”**

When comparing the results of both tables, there are differences that would be expected as countries, cultures and totally different points of view are being compared. But there are individual results which can give an interesting reading. The most obvious is the placement of "anime" and "manga" in the first positions in both situations. Among the options given, they are clearly the two most powerful elements of soft power that Japan has. The difference between the domestic Japanese opinion and the one from the Portuguese is that the former show greater confidence in the international popularity of anime and manga since most of the votes are concentrated among the top positions. According to Portuguese opinion, despite it also focus on the first two positions, there are votes distributed in all other positions with smaller discrepancies. According to Saiki (2002, p.14), since the nineteenth century, Japan has been the object of Western interest for different reasons that have been changing through time. Different languages in aesthetics and culture influenced the West. The ukiyo-e prints influenced the Impressionists, the tea ceremony influenced the architecture of the Bauhaus and the anime and manga influence current generations with an aesthetic language that is also used in animations made in the West. The exportation of new behavioral options based on consume is also evident outside the otaku and cosplay universe as can be seen with the Hello Kitty phenomenon. Besides the obvious use of the child's age, Hello Kitty is a new possibility of expression for women, as stated by Dan Peters (em YANO, 2006, pp.158, 59), senior designer in the marketing department of Sanrio, the consumers of the Hello Kitty products are looking for a different language than that offered by the Western children's characters. The strangeness proposed by Japanese approach creates an interest that overrides the gentle yet obvious sweetness of the infant universe of Disney or Warner Bros. Finally, the importance of soft power in Japan is not only restricted to the economic and cultural, but also political scope, since there is still tension related to anti-Japanese sentiment due to the imperialist attempt by Japan and wars caused in East Asia (ALLEN and SAKAMOTO, 2006, p. 4, 5). Thus, the culture and image of Japan is exported in an anti-propaganda, gentle, fun, commercially viable and desirable way to its neighbors and the wider world.

Another interesting interpretation is given in the position resultant from the item "graphic design". In both situations this item was placed in the penultimate position. Considering that this survey was directed to professionals and scholars in visual communication design, the result is somehow unexpected. In the Japanese case, there was no one who considered graphic design (or objects/industrial design) as the most popular item outside Japan. In Portugal, the perception of Japanese graphic design is slightly more positive. As previously seen (HICKS, 2008, pp. 22, 23) , the Japanese advertising is not as simple to be understood outside its context because of cultural issues. Also, some practices used in Japanese print advertising are uncommon in the Western context, such as "image advertising" which consists of an ad in which photography, illustration and title (copy) don't say anything about the product, but give the viewer a good feeling (THORNTON, 1991, p. 185). It was a trend that started on Japanese television in the 1970s and was adapted to print media. This style or trend started to become more evident with the third generation of graphic designers born in Japan during World War II or shortly thereafter. So, for having a history of Japanese context-specific feature and because graphic design is not treated as an object of soft power but rather as a tool for advertising to internal trade, the opinion of Japanese designers on the international popularity of Japanese graphic design is not the more positive. Opinion that supports the view of Portuguese respondents.

When it comes to the answers to the second and third questions one can verify the U.S. influence in Japanese graphic design and the recognition by some of the respondents. No doubt with the end of World War II, Japan was heavily influenced by the United States. There is an ever increasing use of English words in Japanese vocabulary. However, the difference in votes between the United States (61%) and Germany (21%) to see which country most influenced the Japanese visual communication shows that it is necessary further research on the cultural impact of World War II and the geopolitical issue between "Germany" and "Europe ": that is, considering the influence of European design, the sum of the countries Germany, France, England, Italy and Switzerland surpass the United States. Contextualize the European influence on American design should also be considered to better understand the influences of Japanese visual communication.

In the last question, opinions about what makes a print ad or poster to be effective for the public are divergent in both cultures investigated. 73,5% of the Portuguese respondents answered that the intelligent visual metaphors are needed for a print ad to be effective. This same item appears in fifth place in the responses of Japanese respondents. As previously noted, western ads use edited images to make them hyperreal and manipulate them to create visual metaphors. The "visual style" of the three ads shown in the previous section was considered somewhat similar to the Japanese style. This demonstrates that there is a difference in style between some works done in Portugal, Brazil and USA and what is practiced in Japan. The main feature for the efficiency of a print ad in Japan is "simplicity", characteristic which was also chosen by the Portuguese (63,3% in Portugal and 63,8% in Japan).

Observing the three most-voted features by the Japanese and Portuguese respondents it is shown that in Portugal there is a preference for more functional or technical ("clever visual metaphors", "simplicity" and "text with a good story (good copy)") items. On the other hand, the Japanese respondents emphasized the more artistic or related to visual aesthetics ("simplicity", "intensity/strength" (of the image) and "artistic quality") items. This difference may be further investigated under the hypothesis that the Japanese visual and artistic development occurred differently than the European and that influenced the aesthetic taste with regard to graphic design and visual communications. That is, the way of thinking and materialize an image in the Renaissance manner, using mathematical and logical concepts like perspective and volume, for example, found no reciprocity in Japanese art. According to Thornton (1991, p. 53) factors such as geographical distance and language barriers hindered the exchange between Japanese and international designers resulting in delays of about ten years for artistic movements such as De Stijl, Constructivism and the Bauhaus concepts come to the knowledge of the Japanese.

## **Discussion**

This paper presents the results of the investigation that gathered opinions of a specialized public in Japanese visual communication. Some opinions were compared with the views of the Portuguese experts to emphasize some points of interest for further investigations. This paper aimed to show data and information to people interested in Japanese visual communication in order to be used in other researches in the future. The comments inserted at the end of each section were brief, with the goal of enhancing the data and opening possibilities for further investigation on the various issues presented here.

The study of graphic design should be considered as a cultural, social, historical and even anthropological study. When it comes to international markets, the designer activity becomes more

complex because he/she is drawing solutions to an audience with different cultural codes and, in some cases, poorly understood. Even globalization and the virtual abolition of territorial distances, thanks to the already known telematic advances, do not overlap completely to requests from clients and local consumers. Thus, the investigations that promote knowledge of graphic design from other countries and its socio-cultural context are a tool not only for local evolution of the practice of graphic design but also for better understanding of new forms of intercultural interactions and its commercial results.

## References

ALLEN, Matthew; SAKAMOTO, Rumi - Popular culture, globalization and Japan. New York: Routledge, 2006. - Introduction: inside-out Japan? Popular culture and globalization in the context of Japan.

CHRISTENSEN, Asger Rojle - Cool Japan, Soft Power. Global Asia. Vol. 6. n.º 1 (2011). p. 77-81.

DONDIS, Donis - Sintaxe da linguagem visual. 2. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2000. 8533605838

HARA, Kenya - Designing Design. 1. Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2007. 303778105X

HICKS, Robin - Advertising's Eastern Enigma. 2008. Disponível em WWW: <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1487756061&Fmt=3&clientId=85378&RQT=309&VName=PQD>>.

KHONDKER, Habibur Haque - Glocalization as Globalization: Evolution of a Sociological Concept. Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology. Vol. 1. n.º 2 (2004). p. 1-9.

MATUSITZ, Jonathan; FORRESTER, Maya - Successful Glocalization Practices: The Case of Seiyu in Japan. Journal of Transnational Management. Vol. 14. n.º 2 (2009). p. 155-176.

NAGOYA GINKŌ - Posters/Japan 1800's-1980's. Nagoya: Nagoya Ginkō, 1989.

RITZER, George - Rethinking Globalization: Glocalization/Globalization and Something/Nothing. Sociological Theory. Vol. 21. n.º 3 (2003). p. 193-209.

SAIKI, Maggie Kinser - 12 Japanese Masters. New York: Graphis Inc., 2002.

SUGIYAMA, Kotaro; ANDREE, Tim - The Dentsu Way: Secrets of Cross Switch Marketing from the World's Most Innovative Advertising Agency. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011. 9780071748124

THORNTON, Richard S. - The Graphic Spirit of Japan. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1991.

YANO, Christine - In Godzilla's Footsteps: Japanese Pop Culture Icons on the Global Stage. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. - Monstering the Japanese Cute: Pink Globalization and Its Critics Abroad.

Obs: Investigation supported by FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia