Abstract: Copying principles and functions from nature, or even a particular shape, construction, colouration, or pattern is most often a rewarding business. By using shapes that have long been known and thus rooted in human subconsciousness, users can design products that show durability, create confidence or simply be usable and appealing in shape or colour. This is true even if the natural analogy found is not due to the product itself, but to the graphic element of the logo of the company. This article systematizes the natural motifs found in the emblems of the automotive industry and illustrates their effects in branding.

Keywords: natural analogies, automotive, logo, emblem, branding

1. INTRODUCTION

It is of paramount importance for the market position of a company or brand that it can be easily recognized by customers and distinguished from competitors in the market. One of the excellent tools for this is a unique sign that can obviously identify the brand and that can be clearly recognized and remembered. This sign can be the basic element of the brand's image. A good choice of these marketing-frontline emblem is often crucial to establishing a market position. Further we will consider what messages manufacturers are trying to convey with motifs adapted from nature.

1.1. Design close-to-nature

Looking at the history of human development, it can be concluded that man spent much more time near nature than away from it. Despite new impulses, social influences or altered behaviours, therefore, the experiences previously acquired by our ancestors instinctively come to the surface. This is also to justify the fact that,
for example, one of the most suitable choices for general attention is the yellow-black pairing. The main reason for this is that due to its outstanding colour contrast, it is also often used by wildlife as a visual cue, thus becoming one of the most artificially created objects or spaces its most effective means of raising awareness (Dömötör & Péter, 2012).

Similarly, following natural principles or processes, it is possible to suggest different properties either through a design or through a well-designed emblem. A good designer generally strives for consistency between content and form, it's common to think that it's not enough to be streamlined/fast/reliable/durable to be, it must be seen. Logos are a good tool for such indirect communication. The message they convey nonverbally can reach the customer as if it were their own self-recognition, so it is likely to be unquestionable in them it will condense as information.

1.2. Grouping close-to-nature car logos

Most car manufacturers operate as part of a long-standing group of companies, so in many cases the logo of a brand reflects ownership, market, fashion or even user needs it has undergone several changes to this day. In most cases, these changes keep the main motifs, but in some cases, they bring a radically new design. This article deals with the current car emblems of our time, but in some cases – especially related to Hungary – it also looks back at the memories of past times. There are several options for grouping emblems adapted from nature, but in our case the main formal element as a defining motif is the classification criterion.

The basic topic of this article is car emblems using motifs found in nature. Taking a closer look at these, the categories described in detail in Chapter 2 can be created. Among them, we can typically find analogies from the animal world, but in the history of car manufacturing, there was also a recurring motif from the plant known for its characteristic, massive, shiny leaves, a wreath made of laurel branches. Common examples from the animal kingdom include flight-related wings and birds, but horses that are well-established in transport also play a prominent role. Predators are often used by manufacturers, but there are also several examples of mythological creatures. Among the herbivorous animals, motifs referring to ruminants form an even larger set, while the category of creepers closes the line.

2. NATURAL SYMBOLS

Before we examine the listed groups in more detail, it is worth considering the Hungarian aspects of the topic as well. Our country never achieved a world market role in the field of self-developed and mass-produced passenger car production,
but we achieved outstanding economic results in the segment of truck and bus production, where the most important players in the domestic industry were Ganz, Rába and Ikarus.

Figure 1 The Hungarian Puli small car (a) and Komondor military vehicle (b)

In connection with this topic, it is possible to mention the Puli two-seater plastic body urban small car (Figure 1.a), which was produced between 1986 and 1998 by Hódgép in Hódmezővásárhely (Négyesi, 2011). In the same way, the Komondor, presented in 2012, which is a military chemical reconnaissance vehicle of Gamma Műszaki Zrt. with light armour protection (Figure 1.b), was developed and manufactured in Hungary (MTI, 2015). The fact that an ancient Hungarian dog breed was chosen as the name for both vehicles, while the dog is particularly rarely mentioned in other manufacturers’ emblems, brand, or model names, even though these animals are symbols of loyalty, devotion, strength and endurance.

2.1. Plants

In the field of car emblems, the flora provides far fewer examples in proportion, but there is a motif that several manufacturers have preferred to use in their badges. And this is the laurel, which, however, does not carry a message for us in its natural state, but in a man-made object symbolizing victory and glory. This wreath braided from an evergreen plant has been a reward for withering merits since the ancient Greeks. It is interesting that such headdresses were also made of almond pine, celery or olive branch depending on the geographical conditions.

Figure 2 Branding with wreaths of glory
Due to the outstanding advertising value of victories in car races, the use of a victory wreath was much more popular at the beginning of motoring, and then slowly faded from use. Accordingly, none of the brandings shown in Figure 2 are current logos of the given manufacturer. Among them, the Cadillac emblem, which appears first in the reverse order of their disappearance, is the youngest, and by the way, the laurel wreath disappeared from it in 2014.

2. 2. Wings, birds

The most frequently used symbols of all time are the wings, which show the manufacturer's aspiration towards heights. Sometimes they just frame a central inscription or shape, but other times they themselves are the main motif. The Figure 3 shows that occasionally the emblem follows the shape of the wing with almost anatomical accuracy, but in most cases it is only displayed in a stylized way. In Figure 3, from left to right and top to bottom, the first detail of the winged letter "B" of the British Bentley is that, uniquely, the tail feathers of birds are also appear. According to the manufacturer's communications, by the way, bird wings are intended to symbolize speed and independence. Much more symbolic is the Mazda logo (Figure 3b), which features the letter "M" of the brand name, but the "V" shape on the inside evokes the silhouette of a bird flying in the distance, which symbolizes the unfolding of the company's wings in the direction of the future. The logo is also meant to display the creativity, sense of mission and vitality of the brand. The soaring rim motif of the next Mini in line is itself a telling automotive reference that originally appeared in the Morris emblems but is still used today. Figures 3 d-e are unique identification plaques for each Hyundai model. The first emblem depicting a pair of wings and a soaring bird in a rounded trapezoid appears exclusively on the manufacturer's luxury cars under the name Equus, as in the Genesis the Korean company also has a unique mark on its premium brand. Figures 3.f-h show the logos of two British car manufacturers. The legendary and successful Aston Martin has wings on its logo in the same way as Morgan, which builds unique old-style cars that use modern technical solutions within. In the middle, Figure 3.g shows the old logo of the Hungarian Ikarus buses, with a wing motif at the bottom, which evokes the eponymous Ikarus, since according to Greek mythology he was the first person to fly. He embodied an openness to novelty, a desire for human ambition, overcoming fear, and the idea that human ingenuity can work wonders. But at the same time, Icarus has also become synonymous with rebellion, wordlessness and curiosity, qualities that often drive an innovative manufacturer forward.
In the third line of Figure 3 we find the emblems of Chinese manufacturers. The soaring bird silhouette, shaped from five red diamonds, is the symbol of SAIC Wuling Automobile, which specializes mainly in the production of minivans, and is now part of the General Motors group. The asymmetrical winged “1” logo denotes the products of China's largest truck manufacturer, the Jiefang – FAW Group, founded in 1953. Finally, one of the most successful Chinese manufacturers is the winged emblem surrounding the horse head of Geely-owned LEVC (London Electric Vehicle Company), which is not clearly Pegasus, but rather soaring and he wishes to combine nobility into himself. The company has been negotiating with the British government to produce electric taxis in London, although the proliferation of these vehicles is yet to come. However, given the parent company's wide-ranging ambitions – they are also competing successfully in the WTCR – it cannot be ruled out that an increasing number of such cars will soon be used in London to help the air pollution reduction.

Due to its shape, it forms a transition between wing motifs and bird figures with the falcon emblem that appears on the Trailhawk-equipped models of the Jeep brand shown in Figure 4.a. Also known for its excellent eyesight, the silhouette of a raptor circling in the sky tells the user that he can safely start on any terrain, because he will find the right path, on which the brand's model with the best off-road capabilities currently available will surely succeed.

So it can be seen that instead of only depicting wings, the image of the entire bird can also appear on the emblems. The message is similar to the previous ones, but such badges already convey the aerodynamic beauty and functionality embodied by the birds. The eagle is common as a symbol. This predator, considered the king of birds and the air and sky, carries a message of courage, determination, strength
and greatness. In the same way, the wandering falcon is also a popular choice among supercar manufacturers, which has a reason. When falling under control while hunting, it can reach a top speed of over 400 km/h, making it the fastest animal on Earth.

The old logo of New Zealand's Saker Sports Cars company depicted the falcon still in falling flight, which was more of an expression of speed, but the current dynamically lined hawkhead (Figure 4.b) is also distinctly streamlined effect. The image of a hunting falcon hitting a prey on the American Rossion and the British Arash supersport cars sends a message of the aggressive appearance conveyed in the design of their vehicles (Figure 4.c-d). The logo of the custom-built sports cars of the German company Isdera (Ingenieurbüro für Styling, Design und Racing) shows an eagle in a light blue field, similarly while hunting (Figure 4.e).

![Figure 4 Bird depictions on car emblems](image)

Chrysler sold passenger cars under the Eagle brand name with an eagle head emblem (Figure 4.f), but these cars ceased to be marketed. Similarly, in 2007, production of Toyota MR2 mid-engined sports car, which bore the unique emblem in Figure 4.g, was completed. According to a statement from Toyota, it's a ‘bird that represents the aerodynamic beauty created through evolution’, but the owners ironically just label the motif as a ‘screaming chicken’. In the line of old badges, it is also worth mentioning the logo of Dacia, well-known in our country until 1978, which depicts the traditional emblem and coat of arms of Romania, that is an eagle with outstretched wings. The acronym UAP at the top of the shield stands for ‘Uzina de Autoturisme Pitesti’, that means Pitesti Automobile Factory.

2.3. Horses

Also often used automotive emblem is the horse. The possessions embodied in these royal animals evoke positive feelings in most of us and are also closely linked to the early and present mobilization of humanity. Wild horses are associated with a sense of freedom, and strength, speed and dynamism can also come to
mind about them. Draught breeds are best known for their endurance, but the hallmark of each horse is also a strong character. All these are the features that the buyer expects from a car, so from a marketing point of view it is a good choice to promise them even with the logo.

In Figure 3.k, we have already seen the horse as a symbol, but another Chinese manufacturer, Baojun, which belongs to the GM group, also uses a stylized image of this animal on his cars (Figure 5.a). The horse's head, integrated into a diamond shape introduced in 2019, was originally featured on a shield with a much more realistic representation, similar to the current emblem of an Iranian manufacturer called IKCO (Figure 5.b). With a shield known from the era of knights, the nobility of the animal is even more pronounced.

The white horse head on a red background is the emblem of the Eicher motorcycle and truck factory in India (Figure 5.c), which with its graphic elements evokes a flagging horse's mane. A more emphatic reference to speed is one of the most well-known horse-drawn car emblems found on Ford Motor Company's muscle cars called Mustang. The name was already borrowed from the small, strong-bodied horse breed, considered the wild offspring of Spanish horses imported into North America, which is also known by the well-remembered galloping horse shape illustrates (Figure 5.d). A similarly running horse is also displayed in the logo of one of the world's most prominent manufacturers of heavy trucks. With a horse running in the field on the Kamaz products (Figure 5.e), they want to emphasize the strength and agility of their cars. The manufacturer, recognized in the international market and successful in the challenges of the Dakar rally, for example, is the largest automotive company in Russia.

Even more, strength and dynamism dominate in the sight of a prancing horse. It is therefore no coincidence that Ferrari's shield, decorated with the Italian national colours and bearing the yellow colour of Enzo Ferrari's hometown, Modena, also features a confident animal (Figure 5.f). All this evokes the memory of Baracca, an Italian pilot from the First World War, who always painted a black horse on the side of his aircraft (Heptinstall, 2018). The "good luck" symbol is quite similar to the prancing horse figure that adorns the centre of the emblem of Porsche sports cars and is originally featured in the coat of arms of the manufacturer's
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headquarters, the city of Stuttgart, with its posture expressing forward kicking (Figure 5.g). The stylized deer antlers on the shield refer to the heraldic animals of the historical province of Baden-Württemberg, as are the red and black bands of this province (Heptinstall, 2018). Overall, it can be concluded that horses have become important symbols of automakers not only because of the message they carry in themselves, but also because of their historical significance in ancient coats of arms.

2.4. Predators

Unlike horses, predatory animals in most cases are not specifically our cooperative partners. However, because of their effective hunting skills and intelligence, big cats or even wolves, which are dangerous to humans, have always been respected. Predators are characterized by a skill of control, even a violent acquisition of domination. The example of their confident stance can also evoke ancient, wild instincts in man. If anyone in history could control them, their observers assumed an almost unearthly power. Because of this, they have become symbols of confidence and power. The lions also have a prominent role, as their growls and howls containing low-frequency infrasound ranges command authority. In addition, the silhouette of males with rich manes is also an old royal symbol.

Perhaps the most well-known lion car badge is found on Peugeot's products (Figure 6.a). Previously, we could see the two-legged lion facing left, known from heraldry. This emblem has also changed several times since its appearance in 1850 (most recently in 2021), but its meaning has remained the same. With its traditional appearance derived from the provincial coat of arms of the company's first seat, it expresses quality, reliability and longevity. Similar to this is the roaring lion holding the wheel in the emblem of the Australian Holden brand of General Motors (Figure 6.b). According to an ancient fabula, the idea of the wheel as an invention came from observing lions as they rolled rocks with their paws. In the case of the cooling mask decoration of MAN (M.A.N.: Maschinenfabrik Augsburg-Nuremberg) vehicles, the message is already much clearer: ‘Strong as a lion’ (Figure 6.c). The stylized Braunschweig lion, originally the coat of arms of Prince Henry of Saxony, was first used on its trucks in 1913 by the Büssing company, which was absorbed in the early 70’s.
Known for its sportily elegant cars, Jaguar inspires the customer with a more aggressive message, as the very meaning of the word from the indigenous peoples of South and Central America is ‘that puts you down with a leap’. The symbol depicting the attacking jaguar clearly carries this feeling even without words (Figure 6.d). Sticking with the big cats, Figures 6.e-f-g have three very similar emblems following each other. Malaysia's Proton cars feature a roaring Malay tiger, the main motif of the South Korean Spirra supersports car emblem is simply identified as a big cat's head roaring in a triangle, while the 9ff a German tuning company specializing in rebuilding Porsche sports cars, uses a golden cat on a black shield on its rebuilt cars. In the case of the companies involved, there is no need to think about consciously copying each other. Rather, it is because of the character traits that most of us know well from domestic cats that several companies use such symbols. Chrysler, Dodge and Jeep cars are boosted by the Street & Racing Technology division of the Fiat Chrysler Automobiles group. In addition to the SRT mark, the unique logo in Figure 6.h indicates if a “Hellcat” engine has been installed in the vehicle.

Staying within predators, but moving from the big cats to canines, the list is much narrower. This is surprising, if only because the most common trait associated with dogs is loyalty, which can also be a positive value for a car. The most well-known wild dog species, the wolf, on the other hand, carries all the qualities represented by predators, but in addition, the concepts of team spirit, discipline and orderliness can also be associated with to them. They also played a role in ancient legends, as Romulus and Remus, who later founded Rome, were fed by a female wolf. This wolf was chosen as its symbol by the Italian car-building workshop Cizeta, based in Modena, which makes custom cars (Kuah, 2022). However, in the logo of Lobini, a Brazilian manufacturer of sports cars with Audi engines and fiberglass bodies, the wolf's head is much more recognizable, with sharp lines that provoke aggression they reflect, and its narrow eye opening evokes the mysteries surrounding wolves.
The motive of a real, tamed dog is even rarer. As an attempt, we can mention the leaping greyhound that briefly appeared on Lincoln cars in 1927, which evoked speed, endurance and beauty, but had no effect on the brand's later emblems. The most well-known canine car logo that still exists today is the symbol of American Mack trucks with a bulldog depicted in a ready-to-act posture waiting for the command of its owner (Figure 6.k). Just as a curiosity, Figure 6.1 shows the abbreviated logo of Caterpillar implements, which is why it is referred to in construction as ‘cat’. However, the namesake is a very different animal because the founder of the company, Benjamin Holt, was the inventor of the ‘track shoe’ tractor, so this is where the name ‘caterpillar’ comes from, since the word in English. Bobcat, on the other hand, depicts an American lynx both in terms of the original meaning of the brand name and in terms of the main motif of the logo (Figure 6.m).

2.5. Mythological creatures

Creatures in legends, myths and fairy tales always combine the physique of one or more animals with the aim of amplifying or combining some property of real living beings. Such is the griffin, which was considered the lord of all creatures, a symbol of divine power. Armed with the lion's body of the king of animals and the head and wings of the eagle said to be the lord of the air, he becomes the soaring lion that embodies the ascended power. It is believed that the griffin is a kind of dragon hybrid among mythological creatures because it is zoomorphic, because it has animal body.

The dominating effect is further enhanced by the crowned griffin head on the Swedish Saab and Scania logos (Figure 7a-b). The former is the passenger car, and the latter is the name of the truck business, but the main motif of the emblem is absolutely the same. Since the 90’s, right-hand drive versions of Opel have been sold under the same model names but under a different brand name, contrary to common automotive practice, due to the owner's GM unique business policy into circulation (Figure 7.c). The formerly independent manufacturer Vauxhall branded a griffin holding a flag with the letter ‘V’, suggesting that the company's products are treasures like those of these mystical creatures have always guarded. The badge of the German-founded supercar manufacturer Gumpert shows a griffin bird standing on its hind legs in an even more dynamic form, while kicking off for take-off. In their reading, in addition to uniqueness, their cars evoke the unstoppable and power of this mythical creature. According to legends, few people in power and agility can compete with a griffin.
Humanity has a similar attitude towards dragons, which have a huge cult in the Far East. Most of the time, dragon is a positive being with great creative power, which represents both wisdom and protection. It includes all the primal elements, and even, according to some approaches, the dragon is nature itself. It is not surprising that it also appears in the logo of South Korea's oldest car manufacturer, Ssangyong. The brand name itself means twin dragons, and the emblem is a stylized representation of two intertwined dragons rising into the sky (Figure 7.e). A clearer dragon motif can be found on the first two generations of sports cars. Although, according to some car owners, a Viking ship with a dragon mast is modelled on the badge (Figure 7.f). This is contradicted by the fact that we do not know of Viking connections in the history of the Japanese people, but dragons occupy a prominent place in their culture. Figure 7.g shows an emblem with different interpretations, but still more traceable in terms of history. The green creature of the Italian Alfa Romeo badge is a snake in places, a dragon in others, but perhaps the crowned, dragon-headed snake is closest to reality. The misunderstanding is explained by the historical theme on which it was based, since the dragon itself is derived from the coat of arms of the Visconti family, which ruled the city in the 14th century, which has undergone several reinterpretations over time. Perhaps that's why less informed consumers mostly see a monster squirting tongues of flame on the emblem, even though it symbolizes a new man escaping from a dragon's mouth. The manufacturer's connection to Milan is also shown by the symbol of its headquarters, the red cross.

2. 6. Ruminants

Naming this subcategory may seem strange, but that's because the group itself is. We have already met herbivores in the case of horses, where attachment to man, freedom and speed were the main symbols of emblems. For the group of ruminants, this can no longer be said. The animals included here are closer to predators in this approach since they are equally the embodiment of wildness and unbridled strength.
Vehicle emblems from nature

Figure 8 Ruminants, kings of the paths

Figure 8.a shows the emblem previously seen on Dodge cars. Today, RAM products, which became an independent brand with the reorganization of the Chrysler Group in 2010, receive exclusively this ram head symbol. The phrase is expressive for these robust pick-ups. After all, what comes to mind when the king of paths, a ram, comes across? It is to ‘dodge’. Even without words, this is conveyed by the 3D ram head placed on the shield, demanding respect. The same strong dominance is represented by the bulls. The most well-known such car emblem is the enraged golden bull on Lamborghini sports cars, which also seems to be a good choice, since it is precisely this feeling that is expected in the buyers also from an expensive, high-performance vehicle (Figure 8.b). The Italian company originally produced tractors, so from its customers engaged in agriculture, the founder Ferruccio Lamborghini was well aware of the general nature of bulls. The branding, on the other hand, has an image of a specific animal, Murciélago, as this legendary bull survived 24 sword stabbings in a battle in 1879, and thus it became a defining symbol of strength. The motif of the Intermeccanica, which was also founded in Italy but has ties to several nations in terms of history, is currently being used by Meccanica, a Canadian manufacturer of electric mini cars owned and used by a successor company (Figure 8.c). In their marketing communications, this symbolizes pride from the company's tradition. The Spanish are the closest to bullfighting, so it is not surprising that the logo of Tauro, which builds luxury sports cars, also features a silhouette of a bull that has selected its target and is about to attack (Figure 8.d).

In contrast to wild and attacking ruminants, the horned deer symbolizes dignity, majesty and maturity. Possessing important meanings in many cultures, including Hungarian legends, the animal embodies both the periodicity of time and renewal, goodness, maturity or in some places it is masculinity itself, while in the peoples of the East it is synonymous with prosperity and longevity. In Figure 5.g of chapter 2.3, we have already mentioned deer antlers in the case of Porsche, where it is only a reference to the company's headquarters. However, in the case of the Russian automobile plant GAZ (Gorkovsky Avtomobilny Zavod), it is already the silhouette of a proudly standing deer that gives the main motif of the logo (Figure 8.e). Again, the company applies the power radiating from the animal's enclosure to their Ford's license-based products. Interestingly, the brand name of his
commercial vehicles is GAZelle, which is also the name of an even-toed ungulate animal. But this is not the only species of antelope that has inspired manufacturers. The Chevrolet Impala, with its choice of name and unique emblem shown in Figure 8.f, also suggests the gracefulness, dynamism, and acceleration characteristic of the movement of African impalas.

2. 7. Creepers

The last large group includes all animals that did not fit into any of the previous ones. Most of the time, these creatures are not among people’s favourites, but due to some of their properties, they create a feeling of admiration, fear, or curiosity in the observer. It is also worth mentioning here that, for example, an entire category of cars was named after order of spiders that can be classified as arthropods. The name Spider or Spyder, used by manufacturer and sometimes even with different phonetics, is used as the type of designation for lightweight, two-seater, open sports cars. But open-top versions of traditional closed-body sports cars are also often highlighted with this name. The basic idea may come from the fact that the roofs of these vehicles, which come up in bad weather, make these roadsters look like spiders in the eyes of some.

Staying with the official factory emblems, the snake can be mentioned as a recurring motif that appears several times, even though the snake is mostly a negative figure. For example, it symbolizes seduction in the world-wide Christian culture. In connection with this, it became the embodiment of destiny, while in some places snake is the messenger of eternal truth. However, due to the role of snake venom in healing, snakes are also internationally known symbols of wisdom and science.

Figure 9.a provides the first concrete example. The emblem of the Dodge Viper shows the namesake of the sports car, the image of a viper. The family of vipers is a group containing quite a lot of species, with many poisonous versions that are also dangerous to humans. For this reason, the name is known worldwide, so it can be an excellent "advertisement" for a tuned sports car that can also be used on racetracks. Figure 9.b already shows the cobra emblem on the high-performance sports cars of the production cars refurbished by Shelby American. The first job of the company, which is mainly engaged in the production of Ford Motor Company, was AC Cobra. The success of this roadster is shown by the emblem of a cobra with spread neck lobes, which is the most unusual snake in the animal kingdom.
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In addition to snakes, arthropods are also represented on car emblems. Once again, an animal with poison provides the basis for the shield-shaped logo of the company Abarth, which is engaged in Fiat tuning. In addition to the yellow and red colours, the black scorpion, depicted in recognizable detail, also serves to attract even more pronounced attention. A scorpion with a special physique is synonymous with uniqueness and danger. It sends the message that all its body parts are made for fight. The emblem is come from the birth zodiac sign of Karl (later Carlo) Abarth, but the clear marketing interpretation is also not far behind. Abarth cars should be well handled, strong and powerful, but above all they should be small and ‘bad’, like a scorpion.

Finally, a four-legged animal is also represented in this category. The German custom sports car manufacturer Wiesmann consciously chose the gecko as its own symbol. The movement of this family, which can be classified as a suborder of lizards, is well known for its unique adhesion and good manoeuvrability. The manufacturer promises just that. Their commitment is that their cars are able to move extremely fast on any surface, since ‘Wiesmann's cars stick to the road’, so they can be controlled well even at high speeds.

3. SUMMARY

The most important task of brand signs is to convey value. Overall, it can be said that the collective knowledge associated with the figures can be recalled from nature. In most cases, such motifs seem familiar, suggest timelessness, and thus create a sense of reliability. These qualities will always be important aspects in the eyes of customers, so evoking nature is also useful from a marketing point of view, as it helps convey the desired message and improves the memorability of the emblem.

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