Typography and Children

Approaching an understanding of deep emotional connections with typefaces through a font-based board game by applying thinking and reasoning while remembering feelings with typefaces

First Author M Sharmila Padmasri Unitedworld Institute of Design, sharmila.malladi@gmail.com

Second Author Abhrojit Boral, Unitedworld Institute of Design, abhrojit@karnavatiuniversity.edu.in

Abstract: *Typefaces designed and developed in various parts of the world have a very strong influence not just on the visual scope of the subject but also help the user in understanding the scope and depth of a subject it is used in. The use of various typography showcases the diversity of the human race and the kind of content consumed by the user. Keeping this in mind a social experiment was conducted where users interacted with an inquiry about how best a word is represented using typefaces. The experienced commenced with a typography-based interactive board game where the players will have to understand and interact with typefaces and font styles throughout the game.*

Keywords: Typography, Game, Emotional type, Type roles, Recognition, Activities

1. Introduction

Fonts evoke emotions. The characterization of a font tells the user how it would sound when used. According to cognitive fluency, if and when our brain has difficulty processing
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some information, the task at hand appears to be harder (*How cognitive fluency affects decision making* 2011). The same philosophy wraps around typefaces - the more complicated the font looks the longer it takes to read and understand it. Different aspects of a typeface including its buildup impacts the emotional connection it forms in the mind of the reader. Typographic author David Jury (2006,2011) said that typography is judged by two criteria: utility and aesthetics (p. 17), and Mills and Donnelly (1999) in an early book addressing online type foundries, said that fonts can communicate as much as the words themselves (p.9).

The different fonts of a typeface help in conceptualizing and creating an image of identity thus impacting the imagery of a brand. Fonts invoke emotions which set a image of how the font is to be used by the user. Visual cultures, popular films and social narratives ignite psychological reactions which then form fodder for the designers to choose design elements like typography. According to the Picture Superiority Effect, the written content is less significant in affecting brand perception and brand memorability than how the text appears (i.e. the typeface) on a brand's output. The choice of font and consequently the typeface can change the viewer's perception.

BruceRogers(1949), famed designer of the typeface Centaur, said he"became aware of letters as something more than mear units in a word" (p.1). Through fonts, most designers impact and affect with the confidence of the target users, as it impacts the way a narrative is perceived and read. This is especially true in this generation where it is perceived that most users feel that core knowledge about typography is already available hence in order to find a gap in the common knowledge of the user a gamified system is created which feeds into the knowledge of the user.

2. The Methodology

A research was conducted, where people at random were asked to choose the right combination from a list of the same word expressed in different typefaces that they think, would sit the closest to. The location chosen was the grounds of the college where students usually meet during recess and discussions range across various topics. During the research, subjects came across a printed poster where a word was written using different typefaces with a printed request for them to choose the most appropriate typeface which resembles the attire of the meaning word as shown in figure 3. This process was repeated multiple times using different words and their consequent meanings. This helped in

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understanding how different typefaces have built a predetermined mental model of the word associated with it. A font might mean old and vintage for some while the same set of movements might be perceived as Serious by others.

Figure 1,2 The reaction of the experiment conducted.

Figure.3 The social experiment is underway.

3 The Findings

The experiment primarily showcased two specific findings.

1. The first one was that almost everybody associated a specific typeface with the meaning of the printed word. The meaning of the word almost always dictates the typeface chosen which is an observation that a designer needs to be adept at even

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when they are working on design collaterals and not just a single aspect of design. For eg., If the word is 'Gym' then most have chosen a typeface which is both, thick and looks strong.

2. The second observation showcases that different people perceive the same word in different way which makes it evident that the meaning of a word sits differently with different respondents. This experiment, however, had a bias associated with it - Most respondents would be influenced by the answers given by the previous responses. The fear of missing out seems abundantly clear in that particular age group as respondents want to stick to the popularity meter. However, we also recorded students reaching out and interacting with the experiment when they are without company.

3.1 Inference from the Research

Research has also found that knowledge received from lateral sources and user-led choices stays in our core memory for a longer time. That is the primary reason why gamified learning has become a singular success and finds its place in school textbooks (Bennett, *Gamification in the classroom: How to get started* 2022). A typography-based game is one where gamified interactions happen using typography where the user/s takes critical decisions in the game depending on their previous knowledge of fonts and font selection in order to proceed and progress into the game. A fun way of learning is always encouraged as it yields better results among the working generations were with an increasing amount of social attributes with different nuisances and an over the number of creative communications the level of concentration is decreasing rapidly. At times typography plays a subdual role and at other times it dominates the visual narrative showcased to the user.

Typefaces impact the user in more than one way. On one hand a typeface keeps the visual balance and a steady visual narrative while the other responsibility is to keep the narrative structure strong and constant. This conveys a message to the reader. According to previous surveys, different fonts are associated with different emotions and personalities.

3.2 The Game

The game *'Fonts and Feelings'* spreads awareness about how fonts invoke emotions and how that can be implied in different areas. This game is to make children learn about

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fonts and understand how fonts invoke emotions. The multi-player board game has five different font-based card games with specific actions and a diagram of changing narratives at regular intervals. The deciding factor in the progress of the game is the result of a dice throw. The result of the dice throw decides the forward progress of the game where the participants will have to engage in the tasks and activities allotted to them. All the tasks and activities are conceptualized around the concept of recognizing and understanding a typeface and the expected emulation of emotion through the process.
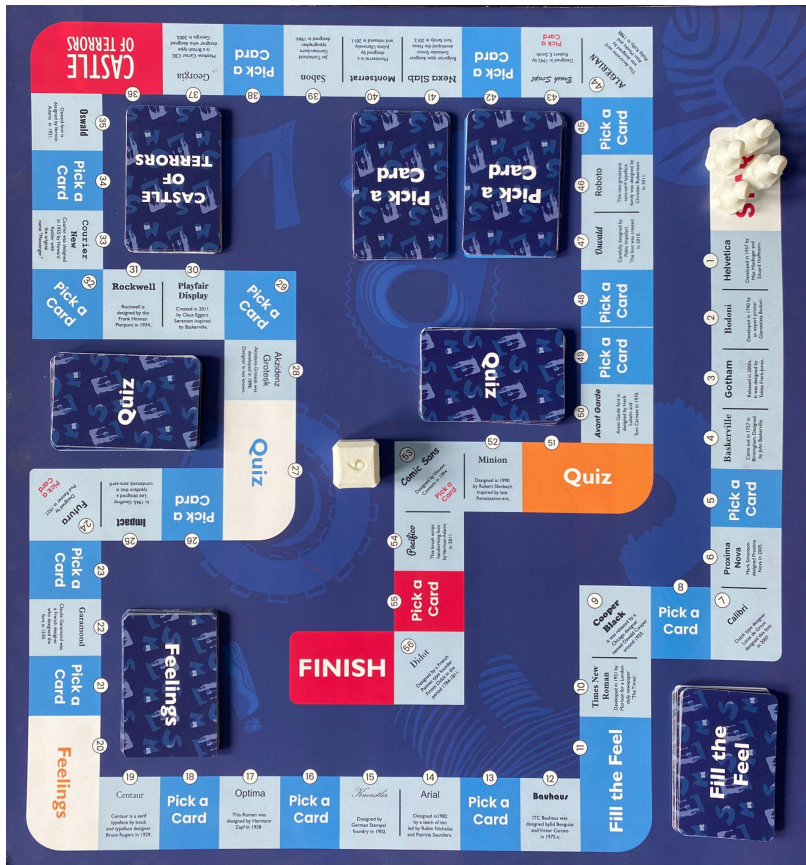

Figure 4. Top view of the board game

Each step into the game has a unique typeface on it with the name of the designer and the year it was designed in. There are five games in total at different intervals with a unique call to actions cards in between. The board game comes with five different decks respectively which represent the five different games. Each game starts with a *'Pick a card'* deck. The *'Pick a card'* calls for various user-centric actions like *'Go to the next Sans Serif font'* or *'Take five steps ahead*.
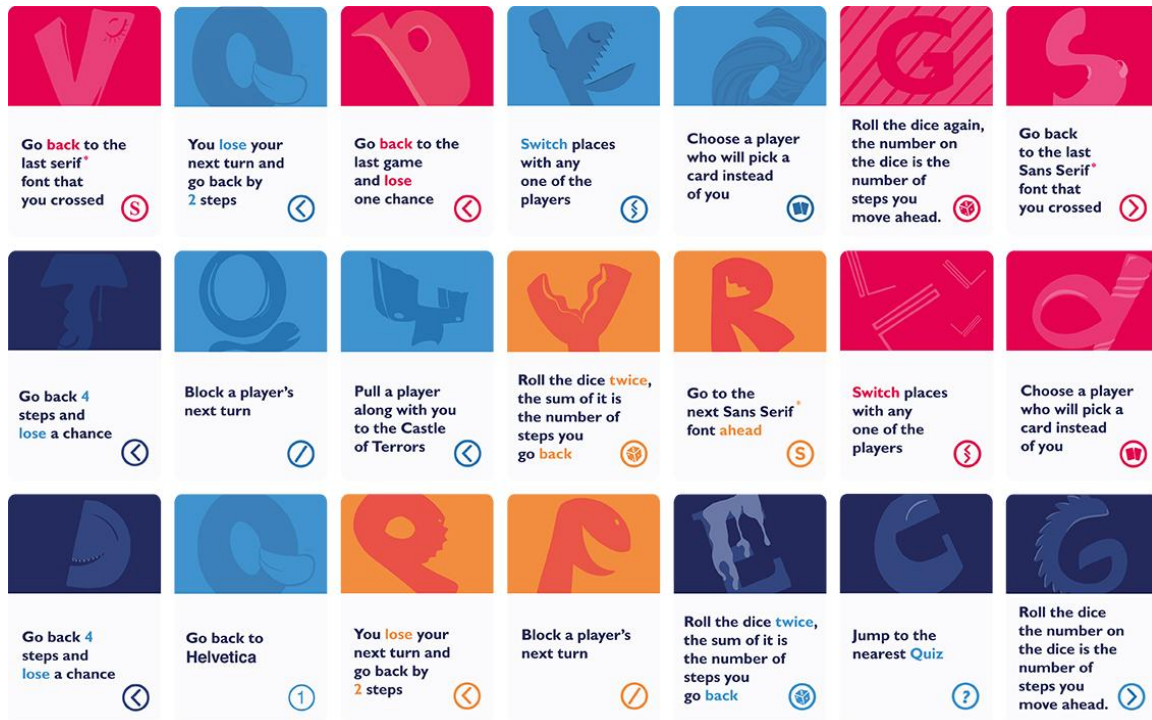
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Figure 5. The design and the narrative structure of the 'Pick a Card'

Figure 6. Card View

The first game on the run is '*Fill the Feel*' in which a player has to complete the word by guessing using the three keywords written below. In the second game termed '*Feelings*', the player has to answer a simple question written which is related to a typeface mentioned above the question. The answer will be reflected in the feel that the typeface invokes.

Figure 7. Card View of different words based on the poll received during the social experiment mentioned above.

The next game is a quiz, which has objective-based general knowledge questions like *'Which was the first movie by Disney?'*. The answer would be written at the bottom. The next game is the castle of 'Terrors'. Since, the research done suggests that people associate Gothic typefaces and blackletter typefaces with words like fear and terror, this game is to learn about the famous typefaces. This game follows a simple policy of reward and punishment which increases engagement among the users especially a keen sense of healthy competitiveness. If a player lands up in this section called 'Terror', they would have to engage in a war. This war is between any two players. The player gets to drag any co-player of his choice to war. Whoever wins gets to move forward while the loser stays in the castle of terrors forever.

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Figure 8. The design and the narrative structure of the 'Castle of Terrors'.

The next game and the last game is a Quiz with questions on famous typefaces. Research says that people relate to fonts based on their semantic memories. The questions in the quiz are on famous companies and brands that we see every day and the fonts they use. For eg., '*Which type of typeface is used by The New York Times?*'.

The game is designed to bark up on different emotions such as general societal humorous arguments towards a particular typeface. The game is for fun-based learning, where recipients understand and stand to gain core knowledge at each step about typefaces. This increases the level of engagement among the different participants while encouraging participants from multiple and essentially non-design backgrounds to actively engage themselves while encouraging others in the game. Additionally, the game introduces new typefaces to the viewer which allows them to learn some of the most popular typefaces in the world.

The game imbibes and contributes to the lifestyle and choice of the player/s by using words that resonate with the current social trends of the consumer. Most students and young adults have been exposed to multiple typefaces for more than a decade now due to the overuse of user-oriented typefaces created to convey specific needs. So visual recognition was kept in mind and only typefaces which belong to the popular culture were used.

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3.3 Future Integrations

We understand that there is always an impending chance that the game would run its course with time as options in the printable medium especially the questions and tasks laid out are limited. Resourcing these takes a toll on resources and cannot be laid out as a sustainable plan. Hence the use of app-based questions where new questions and tasks are generated every day can be a great way of regenerating this game in a new format every time. One might argue that the whole game can be in the digital format and question the need for a physical game but a dual existence where the base lies in the physical domain is very important as it gives tactile support to the minds of the user where it can be played in a social construct where multiple players can dit and play this game.

Another tangent where dynamic experimentations are possible is where the role of Augmented Reality is injected into this game. The app will be able to scan the board and create AR (Augmented Reality) interactions at different stages of the game where the player has to pick a card. instead of picking a card from the already existing deck of limited options, an interactive card can be projected onto the board by the AR-based app on the phone. this would help in creating deep yet enjoyable and multi-perspective interactions with the game.

4. Conclusions

Young people today have been exposed to the user-generated trend for well over a decade (Buehner, *College student preferences for trendy versus classic typefaces*). Games have the potential to build better cognitive and communication skills while endorsing emotional learning. In the digital age of Web 4.0, where the digital world is no longer a desire but a fundamental need of the user an understanding of typography becomes important as this understanding is showcased in their confidence in using devices better. From our findings we have realised that the function of typography affects the lives of an user as the meaning of the word almost always dictates the typeface chosen and that is one of the most important aspects of developing this game. On average we human beings come across more than 2000 words per day all showcased in different types with varying fonts. Having a basic understanding of the font and its inert expression helps us in making decisions faster. The game was designed to keep the aspect of learning while having fun with knowing more about typography and being able to use it independently as research suggests that gamified versions of learning activate all senses in a human being.

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Future Scope

For a game which caters primarily to a young audience, the need for a digital platform exists because the digital platform is extremely flexible and dynamic. This dynamic nature of the digital platform allows new resources to be added to the game. For eg., in the 'Feelings' card new typefaces can be added in a dynamic shuffle which would be showcased in an app. This would make the game more interesting as the players would be faced with new questions and tasks every day thus evoking a higher curiosity.

Acknowledgement

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