Graphics Design Inferences of Social Engineering

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Abstract

Social engineering is a phrase not used commensurately enough to replicate its value to society, especially regarding how relevant it is to the contemporary milieu. In many aspects of life, including religion, politics, education, and other social interest areas, especially in African communities, there are general outcries of generational bankruptcy in norms, values, and morals, and ways of advancing positive social outlays in the society. This study underscores the need to highlight such positive prospects in social order, depict their impacts on society, and adopt ways to influence beliefs and opinions towards positive social consciousness. The objectives of this study include highlighting the concept of social engineering for wider cognition, stressing how organisations can invent avenues to influence and modify social thought and conscious intents to prompt positive values and disciplinary paradigms, and fostering a change of attitudes to embrace positive social values. Primarily, this study seeks to highlight the graphic arts imperative in modifying social engineering. This study at the end asserts that graphic design can be strategised to influence thought patterns and attitudes in order to inspire positive consciousness towards society. The methodology adopts a qualitative approach of visual and thematic analyses to present the imperative.

Keywords: Social Engineering, Thematic, Semiotic, Media, Attitudes,

Introduction

As defined by the Google's English dictionary of Oxford Languages, Social Engineering is of two aspects; the first is the use of centralised planning in an attempt to manage social change and regulate the future development and behaviour of a society. The second definition is within the context of information safety and cybersecurity, the definition asserts the use of deception or manipulation of any individual to divulge confidential or personal information that may be used for fraudulent purposes. The two definitions depict positive and negative aspects of social engineering.

Social Engineering in the positive sense is not popular as it was originally. Recently, it is more concerned with manipulations of hacking and cyber-crimes. The political science, sociology, education, and religious aspects of social engineering are not very popular in use even amongst practitioners of the disciplines. A random enquiry among many professionals revealed most practitioners groping to find meaning, and most times adopt the direct English translation of the phrase to define the concept. However, Social Engineering is an old concept. Ostlund (2007) asserts that the Dutch industrialist J.C. Van Marken used the term "Social Engineers" in an essay in 1894. His idea was that specialised assistance is needed as a strategy to modify human thoughts at addressing challenges. Corporate involvements regarding social engineering in large-scale

formats include the Soviet Union and the Indian experiences as reported by Campbell & Moghaddam (2018), and Chandra (2024) respectively.

As asserted by (Campbell & Moghaddam 2018), in the 1920s, the government of the Soviet Union embarked on a campaign to modify attitudes, ideals, and standards of Soviet citizens, in order to shift social attitudes and frameworks of the Russian people. The use of mass media and social strategies of influence proved successful in reordering the Soviet culture, which was tagged the "New Soviet Man". On the other hand, in India in 2019, (Chandra 2024) reports that social engineering was employed by Uttar Pradesh (UP), a political organisation, to strategise communication to influence and shape the opinions of hitherto divisive castes to unify and attain massive victory in the parliamentary elections. Social engineering involves methods to analyse and understand social systems in order to design appropriate communication approaches and procedures to achieve desired results of influencing social attitudes and actions.

This study investigates how graphics components can be adopted as functional elements in social engineering. This is necessary in a country like Nigeria, where there are widespread complaints of social maladies, including widespread corruption in government circles, insurgency and social insecurity, kidnappings, banditry, social amorality, and general crime waves amongst the citizenry. These have caused surges of interest for travelling outside the country as citizens have lost hope in the Nigerian project. This study views the general hopelessness in the country and opines that adopting graphics components can be used as devices for social engineering towards encouraging patriotism and restoring hope in national life for positive attitudinal change. It is viewed that social engineering through graphics can become a subtle retort for people to adapt to self-attitudinal change, believe in the nation and efforts to release old negative attitudes for new and positive attitudes. If there has to be a national change in the government and leadership attitudes, that change begins with the individual.

Adopting graphics arts components to forge social engineering can further ensure that visual storytelling approaches raise awareness to enlighten the populace. These approaches are strategies that, if followed, can persuade and appeal to the people to be objective in reasoning, so to foster positive attitudes, adhere to ethnocentric sentiments towards native patriotism, and forge loyalty and commitment to build positive values and interests that nurture society. Adopting graphics components in private and public media spaces can register conscious interests in the hearts of viewers to cultivate humane mindsets within the populace. These equip the people to know that though things are difficult and tough now, if everybody contributes positively, things can be changed. Beyond all these, probably one important area of need for social engineering is political. People need to know the essence of voting and voting right for people known with proven integrity. People need to know that selling votes for money and voting for a wrong candidate has been a major impediment against the Nigerian nation. These can be presented to influence the psychology of the people through adopting graphics components in social engineering.

Visual art components in general and graphics designs in particular have the capacity to present captivating imagery. The images attract attention and adopt symbols and totemic identities that inspire native love for locality. This can enshrine certain visuals in public spaces as installations to promote mental and emotional connection and involves ways of conveying messages, raising awareness, and promoting social consciousness. Awareness about social issues includes health and

environmental issues, political sensitivity, and patriotism. Good strategies for social engineering can inspire these from the people through well-planned draughts and presentations. This study seeks to harness the elements of graphics design in manners that can influence desired characteristics in the target population. Government, academia, or private groups and organisations can use corporate imagery, folklore and legends, or any other means within their available disposal to alter bad attitudes. Social engineering is likely to encourage positive attributes and social behaviours on a large scale.

Graphic Design Essence in Social Engineering

Within the operations of social engineering, graphics design can be versatile and impactful in many spheres. It can be relevant in education, religion, health, and politics, and so on. The various components thereof, like illustration, symbols, icons, and scripts, photography, prints, and the recent engagements with new media, have the capacity to really impact communications, persuasion, with captivating aesthetics to appeal to senses and sentiments. These are potent factors to inform, persuade, and appeal, to establish concepts, contexts, and theories. Graphics components can be relevant in creating awareness campaigns, prompting positive behaviours, identity values through symbols and icons, building trust and emotional connect, and influencing social norms. These are all pertinent in social engineering.

Awareness Campaigns: Social engineering is about setting out procedures to influence the thought pattern of people in order that changes in attitudes and behaviours ensue. The first course to attain the process is awareness. If people do not know what the concerns, ills, vices, crimes, or ill morals are, how can they identify them in order to change from them? Graphics design can be impactful in enlightening the people about such concerns, so as to be able to incur positive social change.

The first attribute that provides such ability is the captivating and simplified visuals that attract attention in given spaces. Billboards, posters, handbills, and other graphics concepts are made to be captivating and appealing to sight. Aesthetics are a major consideration, so the beauty of such imagery becomes eye-catching and attracts attention from onlookers. From there, people read and become aware of the messages. This is the major essence of posters and billboards; it attracts attention and ensures awareness about the social conditions of the people. These bills and posters are effective in raising awareness in concepts such as health, heritage, education, politics, and patriotism. They attract the attention of the audience to convey specific messages, whether on public spaces, newspapers, television advertorials, or handbills. Graphics elements can sustain aesthetics and effect utility by informing audiences.When such elements are exposed for long periods or the information is exposed consistently, they drum up specific information that becomes subtle pressure that may later become habits. Habits are consistent behaviours and become attributes and attitudes of such people.

Prompting Positive Behaviours: As asserted by UNODC (2019), corruption has been identified as a main spoiler of Nigeria's ambition to attain the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The aim of social engineering, given this manner of national life, is to prompt positive values and

virtues to sink into the consciousness of the people. On social, electronic, print, or new media, infographics can be created and adopted to present complex data to engage the audience and deliver easily understandable formats. Such consistent presentation will inspire and nurture social norms and values like honesty, sincerity, empathy, kindness, and respect. In this scope of mental exertion, emotional engagement is essential. It inspires a genuine feeling for community, it can improve the political will and patriotism towards hatred of crimes such as kleptomania, nepotism, and despotism, and other administrative misdemeanours. Creating engaging content can resonate with the audience and promote social causes. This can shape and influence attitudes over time. It must be noted that social engineering is not a one-off engagement; there has to be consistency to drum up information which becomes belief, which becomes practice, which becomes habit. When procedures become habitual, they later form culture, since habits like the saying "dies hard".

Identity Values through Symbols and Icons: One of the most prominent features of graphic design in the arts is the notion of semiotics; the study of icons, signs, and symbols, and how they convey meanings in communication and culture. Icons and symbols are aspects of graphics. They can be pertinent in influencing social behaviours based on their components and relevance in conveying meanings and establishing identity. They compress a wide range of meanings and interpret them in simplified forms; this elaborates meanings and enhances understanding of concepts and contexts, ensuring that whatever concepts they interpret make meaning to the audience. As asserted by Effiong (2021), symbols and icons often follow schematic structures that are properly set to follow specific rules; these aid the observer's insight and understanding and even allow the establishment of an independent vocabulary. Symbols condense complex ideas and values that evoke precise meanings recognised by people who share the same culture.

Beyond simplifying meanings for deeper understanding, symbols and icons permanently depict the identity of societies. Such people adopt the identities with emotional connections and jealously guard and protect such identity; native patriotism. Native patriotism is a major influencer in social engineering. It allows the audience's love for their community to influence thoughts and attitudes and encourages positive actions towards such societies. A good example of how graphic components inspire native patriotism is the National Flag. The flag is a symbol, it is an icon, the representation of a people. Like a Coat of Arms, people view these symbols with awe and admiration, and that makes them expend much effort to excel, for greater glory of their country. With deliberate strategic coinage, persistent views on symbols that are anti-corruption can discourage corrupt practices amongst the populace.

Building Trust and Emotional Connection: One of the impactful levels that graphics components can build trust and emotional connection through social engineering is through storytelling. Designers can create imagery that tells stories of the people through their historical trajectories and cultural evolution. This can evoke emotions based on shared experiences or records of past connections. This is a way of building trust among the participating clans, as such emotions have a way of bonding people's trust. Another approach is the creation of imagery that prioritises audience needs, concerns, and values. This enhances the feelings of mutual experiences, raising trust among social members through shared experiences. Imagery resonates

through the embers of society. It builds mutual trust and a unified belief in pushing one another within the society. It nurtures trust and creates love and the feeling of working for the common good of participants.

The trust built as expressed above creates empathy, showing compassion among community members. It encourages participation and interaction and builds relationships amongst them. Such communality breeds promotion of social causes, encouragement of ethical, attitudinal, and behavioural modifications, supporting education which goes a step further to enhance learning experiences and promotion of knowledge sharing.

Influencing Social Norms: As people grow and develop, they understand things better than previously and change from the old ways. At every stage of communal development, there are desirable and undesirable values. Some of such values are results of persistent social needs which occur through time, and social values evolve to suit the changing eras. When people see the need to adopt things that are better than the previous. This introduces changes in culture as all cultures are dynamic; that is why there is the concept of cultural evolution; cultural metamorphosis through the ages. Most times, stereotypes and inaccurate assumptions occur based on groups' characteristic traits; some stereotypes are inherent, and to erode them, it takes gradual processes which may go through the rudiments of information, identification, and shaping perceptions to promote positive behaviours. Shaping values, perceptions, and cultural narratives becomes the most impactful approach to influencing norms; as well, some norms may become obsolete based on cultural evolution, paradigm shifts, or social developmental trends.

To modify such changing norms may be a conscious realisation that such practices are no more relevant to the milieu. Such experiences may cause abandoning old ways which may be influenced by religion or education, e.g., female circumcision. In other ways, such social norms may be discovered, and media strategies are needed to cause a change of mind towards them. People may want changes in culture, politics, or social attitudes because of how things are in their society. People adopt different methods to influence society to adopt new and better norms and customs. There are approaches as tools to change social norms, shape perceptions, and drive positive change by raising awareness; others include promoting positive change and challenging stereotypes through creating campaigns. To attain these in this present era, graphics components can be used, given their capacity to appeal to perception and cognition.

Graphics components/elements in these contexts include billboards and posters, social media handles, animations on television, advertisements on print and electronic media; these are all components of graphic design. Regardless of the strategy for selection of materials and methods and artists' area of proficiency, approaches abound to sort specific needs to change social narratives. This study asserts that adopting graphic components results in attaining social engineering because of the strength the elements possess in augmenting communication.

Society and Social Engineering

The spread of civilisation is the singular most desired commodity that all societies seek. This spread of civilisation comes naturally with social development, and with social development come

both positive and negative trends that affect society. It is left for the stakeholders of societies to map out what they desire or abhor, and set strategies towards attaining them. As community stakeholders wanting to rid their societies of vices and undesired attitudes while retaining virtues, they have to strategise and adopt scopes to regulate their operations. It is from here that the impactful methods are adopted to pursue the goals and get them effected till they are attained.

Important areas of need for social engineering

Education: Influencing society through education is the most common and popular form of social engineering. The rudiments of education allow for conscious efforts of adopting new positive attitudes, shedding off whatever was undesired and adopting what is desired. Through education, values and beliefs are shaped, perspectives and purposes are influenced, and knowledge is imparted to impact people. These raise man's capacity for critical thought, promote personal development, and understanding of nature and social environment, fostering cohesion, addressing communal needs, and building inclusive communities.

To the individual, the most primary needs in life are food, clothing, and shelter, while for the community, education is the most primary need. This is because it empowers individuals with skills and knowledge to enable them to make informed decisions to improve their lives and that of society. Educated individuals get employed and invest in businesses, which contribute to the community workforce to drive economic growth and development. These allow individuals to break from cycles of poverty and improve their socioeconomic status, which is for the good of society at large. Education is the most effective concept that modifies people's thoughts and actions towards positive contributions to social good.

The relevance of graphic design in education cannot be overemphasised. It aids learners' understanding of complex concepts through visual representations. It captures learners' attention and increases engagement with learning content. Illustrations aid comprehension by facilitating effective communication of information, making themes and subject matters of social impacts more emotionally connectable to learners. These foster deeper love for society and inculcate patriotic interests for communities and the nation at large. Digitality and new media in education allow comparative analysis even to universal standards, encouraging that the local system can be raised to best practices as tenable in other climes.

Religion: Like education, religion is another source of social engineering. Religion is competent in influencing and modifying behaviours. All religions preach good morals and peaceful coexistence in societies. All religions profess modesty, honesty, prudence, empathy, and justice, which are all desirable tenets in universal sociology. If these attributes are functional in societies, then there is bound to be responsible leadership and governance devoid of kleptomania, nepotism, and despotism, and other administrative misdemeanours. For a society to operate with positive attributes, it means the leaders and administrators are of good moral character and judgement. As the Bible asserts in Proverbs 29:2, when the righteous rule, the people rejoice, but when the corrupt and wicked rule, the people mourn.

In many aspects, the Bible asserts that citizens should be subject to governing authorities for they are approved of God, Romans 13:1. Other very good examples include 1st Peter 2:13-14, Proverbs 24:21, and Titus 3:1. On the other hand, the Quran asserts in (Surah An-Nur 24:55) that Allah establishes righteous believers in the land, ensuring that fear is replaced with security. These show that religion can enact positive traits in individuals, and these can ensure positive administrative demeanour. Consistent practices have tendencies to instil good attributes in the individuals because when the messages are persistent memories, they modify their behaviours and encourage them to shed off prior vices. However, there have been some social impressions that many religious leaders in some certain sects have used religion to hoodwink their followers and extort money from them. This is not the preoccupation of this study, though it can be accepted that such practices can be aspects of social engineering negatively activated to the advantage of such dubious clergies.

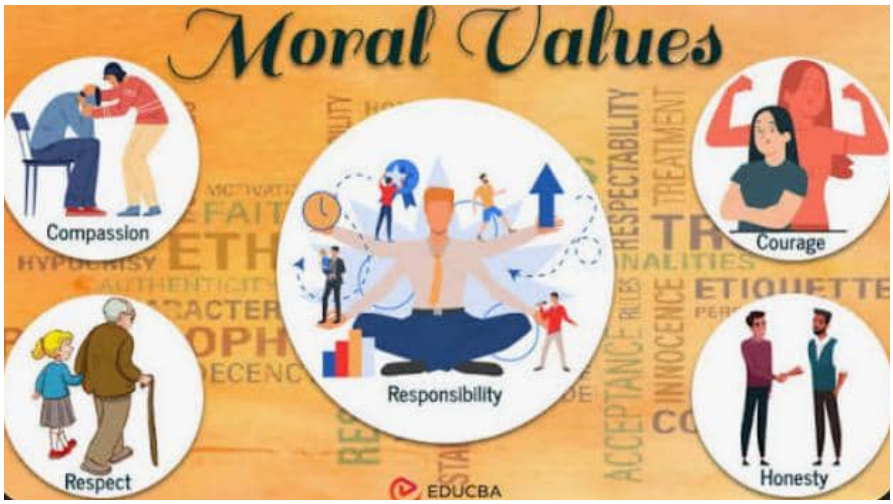


Figure 1: Moral Values- EDUCBA.com

The messages of religion can be powerful, as hereby enumerated: messages in Proverbs 29: 2, Romans 13:1, 1st Peter 2:13-14, Proverbs 24:21, and Titus 3:1 are relevant messages that can inspire patriotism. Imagine that illustrations that are buoyed with typographic inscriptions of the different Bible portions are displayed in homes and public spaces; these will definitely record positive messages that are recorded in the brains. Graphic design in such a manner contributes by simplifying religious and moral messages to the brain. Visual storytelling creates compelling visuals which convey religious paradigms and intensify intent/purpose to the viewer. The Christian literature, My Book of Bible Stories, a Jehovah's Witness publication, was a popular book in years gone by. The captivating illustrations appealed to many children and exerted spiritual significance to convey meaning and evoke emotions. These are forms that inspire reflection and contemplation through visuals that prompt introspection and spiritual growth.

Politics and patriotism: These are other direct ways that social engineering can influence the people towards positive social attributes and attitudes. Politics involves measures that rulers govern the ruled, while patriotism involves the tendency that the ruled love the country and are loyal to social tenets. If properly harnessed, these have ways of influencing the rulers in

administration, and ensuring that the led owe allegiance to the polity primarily, and the leaders too. This is a reason why in every new political dispensation, the executive, legislature, and the judiciary always embark on seminars and conferences where administrative etiquettes and regulations are discussed. These are with the intention of influencing participants towards positive leadership and governance.

The essence of patriotism in any polity cannot be overemphasised; it promotes social responsibility and civic engagement, it supports national development and pride, and it inspires citizens to uphold positive values and shun crimes and vices. Beyond civic education in schools, radio programmes and other national orientation programmes, all components of graphic design can engineer society by influencing people towards attaining patriotism and responsible citizenship. A very simple example is the use of symbolism and iconography. Flags, Coat of Arms, and other national symbols can evoke feelings of unity and patriotism and propel citizens towards social responsibility. Creating imagery that conveys messages of national pride, social duties, and civic responsibility can sustain mental connect with the polity. These foster healthy associations in the populace, giving citizens a sense of pride and belonging in their country. It encourages love for the nation and allows loyalty and duty to protect one's country, uphold traditional norms, culture, and values.

Infographics in the format of posters and flyers create captivating materials and imagery that



Figure 2:What is Patriotism. Source: http://www.freepik.com/free-vector/what-is-patrism-flat-infographicotic-templet-with-military-civilian-people-vector-illustration634441681.htm

promote civic loyalty. As well, artistic public installations are gaining prominence in Nigerian society; these reflect values while promoting engagement of society. With the new media and trends of styles, graphics design has become a very prominent tool for attaining social media campaigns to reach audiences and inspire positive actions. Political strategies which influence public opinion through propaganda or targeted messaging have made direct addresses to targeted audiences. Some strategic designs of textbooks and workbooks as educational materials, instilling certain messages and styles, teach learners civic responsibility and national identity. These affect the attitudinal changes desired as such strategies are drafted and implemented.

An important variable in attaining effective and resultant social engineering is an understanding of social psychology. As asserted by Effiong (2025), social psychology reveals thought, attitude, and yearnings of the people; this allows the artist to understand social needs and interests of the people as he creates his art. This allows the artist to know the best technique and approach to adopt in effort to propagate and apply social engineering. It is the means to influence attitudes, perceptions, and culture on art productivity through the directives of social consciousness. Based on these, graphics artists must take into consideration the political expectations of the populace in order to know what best techniques and approaches to disseminate information that influence the audience.

Health: Good health is a primary need of any society. In truth, good health is underrated, people do not understand the stress in illness, so they tend to take good health for granted. The premium that most governments of the world accord health services is an eloquent testament on the relevance of good health to society. Health is wealth as the saying goes and a healthy individual is a wealthy individual, therefore rich individuals make rich societies. These are basic necessities of any responsible polity. Health Campaigns; using persuasive techniques to encourage healthy behaviours like vaccination or wearing masks, washing hands, foods to avoid. Perhaps of all the campaigns that graphic design are adopted to elucidate, health campaigns are the most popular.

Graphic designs have been severally adopted as materials for advertisements in health intervention campaigns. The United Nations, through the different experiences of pandemics, has developed



Figure 3: Ebola Virus Infection Infographics: Source: Istockphoto.com

different sorts of posters and billboards to warn people to be cautious. These campaigns have exhibited preventive measures and highlighted first aid procedures. These have influenced many to be aware and cautious of these pandemics, and many have been saved through these.

Factors to Consider in Graphics Modified Social Engineering

There are different factors to consider in achieving resultant social engineering efforts; these factors can be relevant across various media adaptations. Different factors can be considered, including: culture and traditions of the people, the targeted audience and demography, the goals and objectives of the specific intention, the message framing as it relates to the target audience,

the communication channel, which is graphics design, the ethical considerations, and evaluation and adaptation. There are many, including environmental, disciplinary, even creed and religion. This study is strictly confined to the scope of graphics design, as it relates to the effects on social engineering, not limited to listed items; the following should be considered. Culture and traditions, communications and style approach, visual appeal and aesthetics, message precision, targeted audience, emotional resonance, and media and platforms.

Culture and traditions: The illustration on the subject should reflect the culture of the people. Where possible, the graphics should capture symbols and icons that represent their traditions and beliefs. These endear the people to the subjects and connect their emotions to the theme. It inspires local interests and belief in what belongs to society. Beyond cultural sensitivity, the imagery should be respectful of the norms and values of such people.

Communications and style of approach: The messages should be such that they attract interest and be persuasive. There has to be respect for the community but with subtle inspiration to action. Some people prefer storytelling sequences while others prefer shots at symbols and semiotics. The preference should be detected and respected.

Visual appeal and aesthetics: This is another sensitive factor for consideration. The imagery and illustrations should be visually appealing and mentally engaging. People like beautiful things; they easily get attracted to images with radiance in hues and orderly arrangements. When the images captivate, the messages are viewed and considered with solemnity.

Message precision: Some of the advantages of message precision in graphics include avoidance of misinterpretation and ambiguity. They convey direct and intended meanings, enhance credibility, and engage audience attention and maintain interests. Eligible typography and consistent visual language focus on key messaging and play down on unnecessary detailing.

Targeted audience: A major essence of targeting an audience in communication ensures message relevance because it tailors messages to audience needs and interests. It creates attention for audience concentration and interaction, because the visuals and typefaces resonate with the audience. Targeted messages to a targeted audience ensure that messages relate to specifics and breed emotional connection, which enhances audience values and preferences.

Media manipulation: This involves strategic use of media, materials, and methods as they are presented with the intention to influence people's perceptions, emotions, and behaviours. This involves knowing what best to use and achieve specific results. An instance can be a comparison between video animation and still photography, what will best depict a plea against stealing. It involves consideration for contextual manipulation of meanings and interpretation of images,

seeking the best schemes to express themes and concepts as they influence emotions, challenge perceptions, and review perspectives.

Above analysis expatiates on effective methods, materials, and scopes to attaining effective graphics tenets. This is to capture audience interests to take action by re-creating concepts, changing attitudes, and generating new perspectives towards attaining the best attainments for society.

Summary and conclusion

Graphic design and practice have contributed immensely to social efforts. It can be effective in modifying behaviours and attitudes if the components are properly harnessed. This is the process of social engineering. Graphics in social engineering, through good strategies of imagery, can be useful; layouts with proper selection of materials and media are essential; messages drafted can shape opinions, evoke emotions, and encourage specific actions intended to alter social mindsets.

Social engineering involves adopting techniques to influence human psychology for people to behave as engineered. Such techniques include advertising, propaganda, and persuasion, though propaganda is viewed as unethical. Defining the target audience and understanding their needs empowers graphics to direct messages, enabling people to heed such message contents. Strategising graphics content can drive emotions, incite excitement, create nostalgia, and create new perceptions. These are effective variables in social engineering.

Graphic design is prominent in social engineering. Its ability to shape public opinion and influence individual decisions has been asserted. However, there is a need for caution to ensure that ethical implications are observed so that messages conveyed are accurate, respect cultures and traditions, and without biases that may cause conflicts and angst against different people(s).

Recommendations

This recommends that:

1. Graphics designers should always be explicit in drafting messages that address specific communal needs. They should equally be concise with visuals to avoid misrepresentations, ambiguity, and distortions.

2. The social values of the audience must be respected, and caution observed in addressing sensitive cultural and traditional procedures. There is a need to consider diversity in customs and beliefs so as to avoid raising conflicts.

3. Graphics elements adopted in messages must be authentic and trustworthy. Messages must be transparent, devoid of latent meanings and manipulations. Deceptive and misleading processes must be avoided.

4. Materials and approaches adopted must follow ethical regulations and procedures. Graphics elements adopted, materials, and media selected, and messages accorded must be responsible, civil, and courteous; components as detailed, must be decent and align with ethical standards.

5. It is recommended that government and corporate institutions should be prudent and intentional in adopting measures to disseminate information to the populace. They should seek responsible practitioners who understand procedures in delivering corporate social missives and people-sensitive dispatches.

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