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## Research Article

### Graphic Design as a Persuasive Tool in Business Negotiations and Pitches

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#### ABSTRACT

Graphic design is increasingly recognised not only as an aesthetic practice but as a strategic instrument for persuasion in business contexts. This article investigates how graphic design functions as a persuasive tool during business negotiations and pitches. Using a qualitative methodology (semi-structured interviews with negotiators, designers, and investors; document and pitch-deck analysis; and thematic analysis), the study develops a theoretical framework that integrates visual rhetoric, persuasion psychology (Cialdini's principles), and cognitive theories of multimedia learning (dual coding). Findings show that design choices (layout, typography, imagery, colour, information hierarchy) systematically shape attention, credibility, emotion, and memory retention, and therefore materially influence negotiation dynamics and pitch outcomes. The paper concludes with practical design guidelines for negotiators and presenters and suggests directions for future research. Key implications include aligning visual strategy with negotiation objectives, using design to manage cognitive load and emotional framing, and employing design to build ethos and trust.

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## 1. Introduction

In the competitive landscape of business, persuasion remains at the heart of negotiations and investment pitches. The ability to influence decisions, foster trust, and convey credibility is central to achieving favourable outcomes (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991). Traditionally, persuasion in negotiation has been framed through verbal communication and rhetorical strategy. Negotiators rely on argumentation, logic, emotional appeals, and credibility to sway counterparts. Yet in the 21st century, the communicative environment has shifted significantly. The digitalisation of business communication, the ubiquity of visual media, and the increasing demand for concise information delivery have positioned graphic design as a vital complement to verbal negotiation strategies (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Graphic design is no longer confined to the creative industries. It plays a central role in corporate communication, marketing, investor relations, and organisational branding (Lupton & Phillips, 2015). In business negotiations and pitches, design translates abstract business concepts into tangible, visual forms that are easier to process, recall, and evaluate. A well-designed pitch deck, for example, can convey complex financial information in a manner that is not only comprehensible but also persuasive (Kawasaki, 2021). Conversely, poorly designed visual material can create confusion, undermine

credibility, and jeopardise outcomes, regardless of the substantive quality of the business proposition (Alley & Neeley, 2005).

The introduction of visual rhetoric into negotiation studies allows us to analyse design as an argument in itself. Visuals function rhetorically by embodying ethos (credibility), pathos (emotional appeal), and logos (logical structuring of information) (Foss, 2005). Furthermore, persuasion psychology highlights that visuals act as heuristic cues that shape decision-making under conditions of limited attention or high uncertainty (Cialdini, 2001). For example, clean layouts and professional typography may subconsciously increase perceptions of authority and competence, while emotionally evocative imagery can foster empathy or urgency (Messaris, 1997). Such effects are particularly powerful in negotiations where decisions must be made quickly and often under pressure.

Moreover, cognitive psychology suggests that graphic design enhances persuasion through dual coding theory (Paivio, 1986) and cognitive load management (Sweller, 1994). Negotiations and pitches often involve high volumes of data, and audiences have limited capacity to process information. Visuals paired with succinct text can enhance comprehension and retention, allowing key arguments to be remembered long after verbal details fade. This cognitive efficiency translates directly into negotiation effectiveness, as decision-makers rely on recall during deliberations (Mayer, 2009).

The increasing reliance on pitch decks in venture capital negotiations exemplifies this transformation. Entrepreneurs often have mere minutes to capture investor interest. Visuals that communicate a company's value proposition, growth trajectory, and credibility can determine whether funding is secured (Pollack et al., 2012). Similarly, in corporate procurement or partnership negotiations, visual documents that map synergies and clearly articulate terms facilitate trust-building and expedite consensus (Burke, 2013). Thus, graphic design is no longer a peripheral skill but a strategic lever in business negotiations.

The present study addresses a research gap at the intersection of negotiation, persuasion, and design studies. While rhetorical strategies and persuasion psychology are well-documented in negotiation research (Thompson, 2015), and while visual persuasion has been extensively studied in advertising and media contexts (Messaris, 1997), there is little systematic work on how graphic design functions as persuasion in business negotiation and pitch contexts. This research builds an integrative theoretical framework drawing from visual rhetoric, persuasion science, and cognitive learning theory. It also presents qualitative findings from practitioners — negotiators, designers, and investors — who experience firsthand how design influences business outcomes.

In summary, the introduction establishes the following premises: persuasion is central to negotiation success; visual

communication has become indispensable in contemporary business communication; and graphic design operates as a rhetorical and psychological tool that influences attention, credibility, comprehension, and memory. The article contributes to scholarship and practice by analysing these dynamics systematically and providing practical recommendations for negotiators and presenters.

## 2. Literature Review

The literature on persuasion, negotiation, and graphic design spans multiple disciplines — rhetoric, psychology, business communication, and design theory. This section synthesises key strands of scholarship that inform our understanding of how graphic design functions persuasively in negotiation and pitch contexts.

### *2.1 Visual rhetoric as persuasive communication*

Visual rhetoric provides a theoretical foundation for interpreting graphic design as argument. Foss (2005) emphasises that images and designed artefacts perform rhetorical functions by making claims, structuring arguments, and appealing to ethos, pathos, and logos. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) further argue that visuals have a “grammar” through which they communicate meaning, including composition, framing, salience, and modality. In negotiation contexts, this means that a pitch deck or presentation slide can embody authority (through visual polish),

evoke emotions (through imagery), and logically structure options (through diagrams). These rhetorical dimensions demonstrate that design is not ornamental but constitutive of persuasion.

## *2.2 Visual persuasion in advertising and communication*

Advertising studies show that visuals strongly influence consumer attitudes, often more powerfully than text (Messaris, 1997). Techniques such as visual metaphors, framing, and symbolic imagery shape perceptions and decision-making. For example, visual depictions of abundance or scarcity can change audience evaluations of value (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004). In negotiation settings, similar techniques can frame proposals positively, emphasise urgency, or highlight value propositions. Empirical studies confirm that visual elements significantly increase recall and affective response, reinforcing their role as persuasion mechanisms (O’Keefe, 2016).

## *2.3 Principles of persuasion: visual instantiations*

Cialdini’s (2001) six persuasion principles — reciprocity, commitment/consistency, social proof, authority, liking, and scarcity — provide a framework for understanding how design instantiates psychological levers. For example:

- Authority is signalled by professional design, institutional logos, and certifications on slides.

- Social proof is conveyed visually through client logos, testimonials, or user counts.
- Scarcity can be communicated with visual urgency markers (limited-offer banners).

Thus, design translates abstract persuasion principles into perceptible cues that shape decision-maker perceptions. This correspondence explains why audiences often form impressions of credibility or value within seconds of viewing visual materials.

## *2.4 Cognitive theories of multimedia learning*

Cognitive psychology contributes insights into how design enhances persuasion by supporting comprehension and retention. Paivio’s (1986) dual coding theory posits that information is processed through both verbal and visual channels, and that learning is enhanced when both are engaged. Mayer’s (2009) multimedia learning theory similarly demonstrates that aligned text and visuals improve understanding, while Sweller’s (1994) cognitive load theory stresses the importance of minimising extraneous detail. In negotiation contexts, where information overload is common, good design structures information hierarchically and visually, reducing cognitive strain and increasing the likelihood that key arguments are remembered.



### ***2.5 Pitch deck research and business practice***

Scholarship and practitioner guides on pitch decks emphasise the importance of design. Kawasaki (2021) advocates for brevity (10 slides, 20 minutes, 30-point font), while empirical research shows that visually appealing decks increase investor interest (Pollack et al., 2012). Pitch materials that use clear visuals and concise messages outperform text-heavy presentations in securing funding (Clark, 2019). In corporate negotiation, similar patterns hold: proposals with professional design are evaluated as more credible and are more likely to reach an agreement (Burke, 2013).

### ***2.6 Negotiation theory and visual framing***

Negotiation research, exemplified by Fisher, Ury, and Patton's (1991) principled negotiation, emphasises focusing on interests, creating options, and applying objective criteria. Visual design supports these processes by clarifying options (comparison charts), visualising data-driven criteria (infographics), and mapping synergies (partnership diagrams). Thompson (2015) highlights the role of framing in negotiations; visuals serve as framing devices that influence how information is interpreted. This suggests that design operates not merely as decoration but as a structural component of negotiation strategy.

### ***2.7 Research gaps***

While visual rhetoric and persuasion psychology have been widely studied in advertising and media, few studies apply them systematically to negotiation. Pitch deck research focuses largely on entrepreneurs and investors, but less on procurement or partnership contexts. There is also limited empirical evidence on the specific mechanisms by which design influences negotiation outcomes. This gap motivates the present study, which integrates theoretical insights with qualitative evidence from practitioners.

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

The persuasive role of graphic design in business negotiations and pitches can be systematically understood by situating it within a multi-theoretical framework that integrates insights from visual rhetoric, persuasion psychology, and cognitive learning theories. Together, these perspectives explain not only why design influences perception and decision-making but also how it functions as a structural element of negotiation strategy.

### ***3.1 Visual rhetoric and symbolic action***

Visual rhetoric provides the foundation for analysing design as a form of argument rather than as an aesthetic accessory. According to Foss (2005), rhetoric encompasses the symbolic actions humans use to communicate, and visuals constitute a unique form of rhetoric because they can make claims, organise knowledge, and persuade

without words. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that images have a “grammar” that organises meaning through composition, colour, framing, and salience. Within negotiations and pitches, these visual grammars act as arguments: for instance, a bar chart projecting revenue growth does not merely depict numbers but makes an implicit claim about the company’s trajectory and credibility.

The concept of ethos, pathos, and logos (Aristotle, trans. 2007) further grounds visual rhetoric in classical persuasion theory. Ethos (credibility) is expressed through polished design, pathos (emotional appeal) through evocative imagery, and logos (logic) through structured diagrams or infographics. A negotiation slide deck that integrates all three modes is likely to resonate more deeply with decision-makers than one that relies solely on verbal reasoning.

### *3.2 Persuasion psychology and heuristic cues*

Cialdini’s (2001) principles of persuasion explain how design functions as a set of heuristic cues that influence decisions under conditions of limited time and cognitive resources. Professional layout and branding (authority), client testimonials and logos (social proof), or urgent design markers (scarcity) are powerful nonverbal signals that affect audience judgments. Dual-process models such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) provide further insight: design can operate via the peripheral route,

influencing attitudes through aesthetic appeal or credibility markers, or via the central route, by organising information logically and facilitating deeper engagement with arguments. In negotiation contexts, both routes operate simultaneously—design captures attention through peripheral cues while enabling comprehension through central processing.

### *3.3 Cognitive theories: dual coding and cognitive load*

Cognitive psychology explains how design enhances persuasion by supporting comprehension, retention, and decision quality. Paivio’s (1986) dual coding theory posits that verbal and visual information are processed through separate but interconnected channels, and that comprehension is strengthened when both channels are activated. Mayer’s (2009) multimedia learning theory similarly argues that combining text and visuals improves learning, provided that extraneous elements are minimised. Sweller’s (1994) cognitive load theory further explains why well-structured visual materials aid negotiation outcomes: they reduce extraneous cognitive load, allowing decision-makers to focus on intrinsic content. In high-stakes negotiations, where time is scarce and information is dense, a design that simplifies complexity directly enhances persuasive effectiveness.

### *3.4 Negotiation theory and framing*

Negotiation research also offers theoretical grounding for understanding the role of design. Fisher, Ury, and Patton's (1991) principled negotiation model emphasises interests, options, and objective criteria. Visual design supports this model by mapping interests in diagrams, visualising multiple options through comparison charts, and representing objective criteria with data visualisations. Thompson (2015) highlights the importance of framing in negotiation, and visuals function as powerful framing devices. For example, a chart can frame a proposal as "growth-oriented" or "risk-averse," influencing how negotiators interpret the same underlying data. The framing function of visuals makes design an indispensable part of the negotiation strategy.

### *3.5 Integrative model*

Taken together, these perspectives produce an integrative model in which design functions as:

- Rhetorical argumentation (visual rhetoric: ethos, pathos, logos).
- Psychological cueing (persuasion heuristics and dual-process persuasion).
- Cognitive facilitation (dual coding, multimedia learning, cognitive load reduction).
- Strategic framing (negotiation theory, interest visualisation, option framing).

This integrated framework guides both the empirical analysis in the current study and the practical implications for negotiators and presenters.

## **4. Research Methodology**

The study adopts a qualitative research methodology to explore how graphic design functions as a persuasive tool in business negotiations and pitches. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the phenomenon under study—design's persuasive influence—is socially constructed, context-dependent, and embedded in lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Quantitative measures can indicate correlations between design quality and outcomes, but qualitative inquiry captures the nuanced ways practitioners interpret and experience design in negotiation settings.

### *4.1 Research design*

The study follows an interpretivist paradigm, emphasising meaning-making and subjective perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Specifically, it employs a multiple case study design (Yin, 2018), examining negotiation and pitch practices across three contexts: entrepreneurial fundraising, corporate procurement, and partnership negotiations. Case studies allow in-depth exploration of the role of design in real-world negotiations while enabling cross-case comparison.

### *4.2 Data collection methods*

Three qualitative data collection methods were employed:



Semi-structured interviews: Conducted with 25 participants, including entrepreneurs, corporate negotiators, graphic designers, and investors. Semi-structured formats provided flexibility to probe individual experiences while ensuring coverage of core themes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Document analysis: Collection and analysis of pitch decks, negotiation slide decks, and proposal documents. This allowed the researcher to examine how visual elements (typography, layout, imagery, charts) were employed and perceived.

Observational data: Where possible, the researcher observed negotiation or pitch sessions, focusing on how visuals were introduced, received, and discussed during interactions.

### *4.3 Data analysis*

Data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interview transcripts and documents were coded inductively, generating categories such as “credibility through design,” “emotional resonance,” and “clarity and cognitive ease.” These themes were then interpreted through the lens of the theoretical framework established in Section 3. Cross-case analysis identified patterns and divergences across entrepreneurial, corporate, and partnership contexts.

### *4.4 Validity and reliability*

To ensure rigour, multiple strategies were adopted:

- Triangulation: Combining interviews, documents, and observations to corroborate findings.
- Member checking: Sharing preliminary findings with participants to verify interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
- Thick description: Providing detailed contextual accounts to enhance transferability.

While generalizability in a statistical sense was not the goal, the methodological rigour supports the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

### *4.5 Ethical considerations*

Ethical approval was obtained before fieldwork. Participants provided informed consent, and confidentiality was ensured through anonymisation of data. Sensitive negotiation materials were used only with permission and stored securely. The study adhered to the ethical guidelines for qualitative research (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001).

### *4.6 Methodological limitations*

The qualitative design emphasises depth over breadth, which limits the ability to generalise across all negotiation contexts. Additionally, self-reporting in interviews may be subject to bias. Nonetheless, the triangulated design and theoretical grounding mitigate these limitations and provide robust insights into the persuasive power of graphic design.

## 5. Findings

The findings from this qualitative study are presented thematically across three domains: credibility and authority through design, emotional resonance and engagement, and clarity, memory, and decision-making efficiency. Data were drawn from interviews, document analysis, and limited observational fieldwork, with triangulation ensuring validity. Illustrative participant quotes are included where appropriate.

### 5.1 Credibility and authority through design

One of the most consistent findings was that graphic design enhances perceived credibility. Participants across sectors described professional design as signalling competence, preparedness, and seriousness. For entrepreneurs pitching to investors, design quality was often equated with organisational legitimacy. An angel investor remarked:

*“When I see a pitch deck with poor alignment or low-resolution images, I immediately question whether the team pays attention to detail. If they can’t communicate well visually, will they execute well operationally?”*

This echoes Cialdini’s (2001) principle of authority, where professional presentation cues translate into perceptions of expertise. Corporate negotiators similarly noted that design quality impacted client trust. A procurement manager explained that vendors with polished proposals “look

more reliable, even before we evaluate the numbers.” These findings align with Burke (2013), who highlighted how visuals enhance business credibility.

### 5.2 Emotional resonance and engagement

A second theme was the emotional power of visuals. Participants described design elements—colours, imagery, storytelling layouts—as creating resonance that words alone could not achieve. An entrepreneur recounted:

*“Investors said my financials were strong, but what really got them was the story I told visually about the customers we serve. The images made them feel the impact.”*

This reflects Aristotle’s rhetorical concept of pathos and aligns with Messaris’s (1997) assertion that images evoke affective responses beyond verbal communication. Observations confirmed that slides with emotionally engaging images (e.g., photographs of communities benefiting from a product) generated more discussion and positive affect compared to text-only slides.

### 5.3 Clarity and cognitive ease

A dominant finding was that design facilitated clarity and cognitive ease, particularly in data-heavy negotiations. Complex financial or technical information was frequently reformulated into infographics or simplified charts. An investor noted:

*“The decks that win me over are the ones that make complicated models feel simple. A clean chart that tells the story in seconds is worth more than five pages of numbers.”*

This supports Paivio's (1986) dual coding theory and Sweller's (1994) cognitive load theory, demonstrating that visuals improve comprehension and reduce mental strain. Document analysis showed that decks using hierarchical layouts, icons, and consistent colour coding were easier to follow, while cluttered slides hindered engagement.

#### **5.4 Persuasive framing through visuals**

Participants also highlighted how design acted as a framing device, shaping the interpretation of proposals. For example, a startup used growth trajectory charts with upward arrows to emphasise opportunity, while a corporate negotiator used comparative cost visualisations to highlight savings. Thompson (2015) emphasises that framing is central to negotiation outcomes, and this study shows that visuals are a primary means of framing arguments.

#### **5.5 Variability across contexts**

Findings also revealed differences across negotiation contexts. In entrepreneurial fundraising, design was crucial for initial impressions—often described as a “make-or-break” factor. In corporate procurement, design reinforced credibility but was less decisive than cost competitiveness. In partnership

negotiations, design functioned mainly as a tool for clarifying synergies and mapping collaboration structures. This suggests that while design universally contributes to persuasion, its relative weight varies by context.

#### **5.6 Limitations noted by participants**

Interestingly, participants also acknowledged limitations. Overly stylised design sometimes raised suspicion, with one investor noting:

*“If a deck looks like it was made by a branding agency but the content is weak, I become sceptical.”*

This confirms Alley and Neeley's (2005) argument that visuals must complement, not substitute, substantive content. Thus, design amplifies but does not replace logical and evidence-based argumentation.

### **6. Discussion**

The discussion integrates the findings with theoretical insights, highlighting how graphic design operates as a persuasive mechanism in negotiations and pitches. It also considers practical implications, limitations, and contributions to scholarship.

#### **6.1 Graphic design as rhetorical persuasion**

The findings reaffirm that design functions rhetorically, aligning with Foss's (2005) conception of visual

rhetoric. Design embodies ethos (credibility), pathos (emotional appeal), and logos (logical clarity). For instance, professional layouts enhanced ethos, emotionally charged imagery evoked pathos, and infographics supported logos. This triangulation mirrors Aristotle's rhetorical framework (Aristotle, 2007) and suggests that successful negotiation materials strategically combine all three.

The rhetorical framing observed in negotiations also aligns with Thompson's (2015) negotiation research. Visuals not only transmit information but also define its meaning, guiding how proposals are interpreted. In this sense, design is not decorative but constitutive of argumentation.

### *6.2 Persuasion psychology and heuristic effects*

The study extends Cialdini's (2001) persuasion principles by showing how they materialise visually in negotiations. Authority was signalled by professional design, social proof through client logos, and scarcity through urgency markers. Findings support the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986): design acted through both central routes (structuring information for deep processing) and peripheral routes (impressions of competence through aesthetics). This dual influence explains why even busy decision-makers reacted strongly to visuals—they provided immediate heuristic cues while also enabling thoughtful analysis.

### *6.3 Cognitive facilitation and efficiency*

The strong emphasis on clarity and cognitive ease highlights the importance of cognitive psychology. Findings confirm Paivio's (1986) dual coding theory and Mayer's (2009) multimedia learning principles: pairing visuals with concise text improved comprehension and recall. They also validate Sweller's (1994) cognitive load theory: cluttered designs hindered engagement, while simplified visuals reduced cognitive strain. In high-stakes negotiations where time and attention are scarce, such cognitive efficiency is not peripheral—it directly affects outcomes.

### *6.4 Contextual differences*

A key contribution of this study is the recognition that design's persuasive weight varies by context. In entrepreneurial fundraising, design often determined whether a proposal secured a second meeting, consistent with Pollack et al.'s (2012) findings that pitch decks shape investor perceptions. In corporate procurement, design reinforced credibility but played a supporting role compared to price. In partnership negotiations, design primarily facilitated collaborative sense-making. These contextual nuances refine prior research by showing that while design universally contributes to persuasion, its salience is contingent on negotiation type.

### ***6.5 Balance between form and content***

The scepticism toward “over-designed” decks illustrates the importance of balance between visuals and substance. Alley and Neeley (2005) warn against style overshadowing content, and findings confirm that excessive design can backfire. This echoes O’Keefe’s (2016) point that persuasion requires congruence between form and argument. Practically, this suggests that negotiators should invest in design that amplifies substantive content rather than masking deficiencies.

### ***6.6 Theoretical contributions***

This study contributes theoretically by integrating visual rhetoric, persuasion psychology, and cognitive learning into a unified framework. It demonstrates empirically how design operates simultaneously as a rhetoric, heuristic cue, cognitive facilitator, and framing device. This advances negotiation research by foregrounding the role of nonverbal, visual strategies, which have been underexplored compared to verbal and behavioural tactics.

### ***6.7 Practical implications***

For practitioners, the findings suggest actionable guidelines:

- Invest in professional design: First impressions and credibility hinge on visual presentation.
- Use visuals to tell a story: Emotional resonance can

differentiate pitches with similar numbers.

- Simplify complexity: Infographics and clean layouts improve comprehension.
- Frame strategically: Design choices can subtly guide the interpretation of data and proposals.
- Balance design and substance: Visual polish must complement strong content.
- Training negotiators in visual communication and collaborating with graphic designers could thus enhance negotiation outcomes.

### ***6.8 Limitations and future research***

The study’s qualitative design prioritises depth over breadth, limiting generalizability. Self-reported data may also reflect biases. Future research could employ experimental methods to quantify the design’s causal impact on negotiation outcomes or longitudinal studies tracking how the design influences relationships over time. Cross-cultural research is also needed, as colour, imagery, and layout preferences may vary across cultural negotiation contexts (Hall, 1976).

## ***7. Conclusion and Recommendations***

### ***7.1 Conclusion***

This study set out to examine graphic design as a persuasive tool in business negotiations and pitches, integrating



perspectives from visual rhetoric, persuasion psychology, cognitive learning theory, and negotiation research. The findings underscore that design is not a superficial aesthetic addition but a central component of persuasive communication in business contexts.

First, design consistently enhances credibility and authority by signalling professionalism and competence. Negotiators and entrepreneurs who invested in high-quality visuals were more likely to be perceived as trustworthy and capable, supporting Cialdini's (2001) principle of authority. Second, design fostered emotional resonance, enabling presenters to connect with audiences at a deeper level. Pathos-driven visuals amplified engagement and made arguments more compelling, echoing Aristotle's rhetorical framework (Aristotle, trans. 2007). Third, the design promoted clarity and cognitive ease. Infographics, clean layouts, and visual hierarchies reduced cognitive load (Sweller, 1994), improved comprehension (Mayer, 2009), and increased recall, demonstrating the cognitive facilitation role of visuals. Finally, visuals acted as framing devices, shaping how audiences interpreted data and options (Thompson, 2015).

Importantly, the study also revealed contextual differences. In entrepreneurial fundraising, design often determined whether a pitch advanced, while in corporate procurement, it reinforced credibility but was less decisive than price. In partnership negotiations, design

primarily supported collaborative sense-making. Across all contexts, however, design was a vital enabler of persuasion.

These insights extend negotiation research by highlighting the underexplored role of visual communication. They also demonstrate that effective persuasion requires balance: visuals amplify substance but cannot replace it. Overly stylised design without strong content risks undermining credibility (Alley & Neeley, 2005).

## 7.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, several practical recommendations emerge:

- Invest strategically in professional design: Organisations and entrepreneurs should treat design as an investment rather than an afterthought. Professional-quality visuals build credibility and authority, increasing the likelihood of favourable outcomes.
- Align design with rhetorical strategy: Negotiators should consciously design materials to balance ethos, pathos, and logos. For example, polished branding can enhance ethos, imagery can evoke pathos, and infographics can provide logos-based clarity.
- Simplify complexity through visualisation: Especially in data-heavy negotiations, visuals should reduce cognitive load by highlighting key insights and

- structuring information hierarchically.
- Use design as a framing device: Negotiators should recognise that design choices influence interpretation. Strategic use of charts, diagrams, and comparative visuals can frame proposals in ways that emphasise opportunity, value, or fairness.
  - Balance form and content: Visuals must amplify, not substitute for, strong arguments. Negotiators should ensure design choices remain consistent with substantive content, avoiding excessive stylisation that may raise scepticism.
  - Train negotiators in visual communication: Organisations should integrate design literacy into negotiation training. Collaboration between negotiators and graphic designers can create materials that are both persuasive and accurate.

In conclusion, graphic design is a persuasive lever in modern business negotiations and pitches, shaping perception, comprehension, and decision-making. By integrating rhetorical, psychological, cognitive, and strategic functions, design enhances the effectiveness of arguments and strengthens the credibility of communicators. The study highlights the need for negotiators and organisations to adopt a design-conscious approach—one that recognises visuals not as decoration,

but as integral components of persuasion and negotiation success.

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