



## Audiovisual design: An integrative review in search of definitions

*Design audiovisual: uma revisão integrativa em busca de definições*

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### Abstract

With the development of the digital landscape and the expansion of video exhibition spaces, the term "audiovisual design" has emerged in commercial, academic, and literary spheres to define project specificities based on the consolidation of language and the audiovisual industry. In this context, we consider it relevant to investigate the development of the concept and eventually discuss and propose conceptual guidelines based on these findings. To achieve this, we first conducted an integrative literature review on the term "audiovisual design" and its related terms in publications in Portuguese and Spanish, using the Capes, Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO, and Google Scholar databases. We identified publications from 2003 to 2021. Subsequently, we performed a qualitative analysis of the results (content analysis), leading to the development of a conceptual synthesis based on the characteristics, functions, methodology, and context of Audiovisual Design.

**Keywords:** audiovisual product, audiovisual method, audiovisual context, audiovisual function, design.

### Resumo

*Com o desenvolvimento do cenário digital e a expansão dos espaços de exibição de vídeo, o termo "design audiovisual" surgiu nas esferas comercial, acadêmica e literária para definir especificidades de projeto com base na consolidação da linguagem e da indústria audiovisual. Portanto, afigurou-se relevante investigar o desenvolvimento do conceito e, eventualmente, discutir e propor diretrizes conceituais com base nessas descobertas. Para tanto, primeiramente, foi realizada uma revisão integrativa da literatura sobre o termo "audiovisual design", bem como seus cognatos em publicações em português e espanhol, nas bases de dados Capes, Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO e Google Scholar. Como resultado, foram identificadas publicações entre 2003 e 2021. Em seguida, realizou-se uma análise qualitativa dos resultados (análise de conteúdo), permitindo propor uma síntese conceitual, com base nas características e funções, no método e no contexto do Design Audiovisual.*

**Palavras-chave:** produto audiovisual, método audiovisual, contexto audiovisual, função audiovisual, design.





## Introduction

It can be said that audiovisuals media emerged as a phenomenon through cinema at the end of the 19th century (Mascarello, 2015). Initially seen as something that entertained and fascinated, it has consolidated itself as one of the main forms of communication today, especially after the digitalization process, disseminated in contemporary society and driven by the ubiquity of the internet (Bonsiepe, 2020).

In the 19th century, design emerged as an activity associated with the development and expansion of industrial processes. It came to designate the action or craft of giving material form, designing models, or planning sketches based on concepts and in accordance with the limitations imposed by mechanization and serialization (Cardoso, 2008). Since then, design has taken on the role of shaping products and has established itself as a fundamental field of activity in the creation of physical and digital artifacts used by human beings.

Among these artifacts that are within the scope of design, audiovisual stands out, mainly based on its industrial thinking approach intrinsic to the film and television markets. In this way, design specialties have emerged, such as production design (Baptista, 2008), sound design (Carvalho; Pereira, 2017), title design (Braha; Byrne, 2012), photographic design (Kasap, 2020), and motion design (Shaw, 2016), aiming to better configure images, sounds, and movements associated with films, shows, and other products related to these industries.

With the development of the digital landscape and the expansion of video exhibition spaces on the internet, it seems natural to understand audiovisual language as one of the modes or media of design expression. Thus, the term "audiovisual design" has emerged in commercial, academic and literary spheres to define its design specificities in comparison with other conceptually more developed areas.

Audiovisual design is an area of design that is gaining more and more relevance in the contemporary scene, driven by the growing demand for high-quality visual and audiovisual content. However, as it is a relatively new area in design, it lacks reference materials, which can become a challenge for professionals and researchers in the field who need to seek information from a variety of sources and disciplines. Hence, the importance of an investigation that conducts a broad survey of the term audiovisual design and proposes definitions for it.

Therefore, in this study, we aim to identify the definitions of "audiovisual design" (and its correlates in Portuguese and Spanish) present in the literature over the last 20 years and propose an updated definition supported by an analysis of its previous conceptual constructions. This is to find possible conceptual paths in relation to this potential theoretical and professional domain.

## Methodological procedures

We structured this research based on an integrative literature review (national and international), as recommended by Mendes, Silveira, and Galvão (2008), searching for

occurrences of the term "audiovisual design" and its cognates in Portuguese ("design audiovisual") and Spanish ("diseño audiovisual").

We searched for articles, theses, dissertations, and other scientific and academic publications in the following online databases: Capes, Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO, and Google Scholar. Although Google Scholar is a database with a different search approach compared to the others, we included it in this research precisely because it searches for recent terms in the literature, thus increasing the chances of finding definitions in various sources.

Based on Mendes, Silveira, and Galvão (2008), we organized this research according to the following methodological procedures: (1) integrative literature review; (2) numerical organization of occurrences; (3) chronological organization of the findings and their respective authors; (4) content analysis organizing the findings into three distinct semantic categories; (5) content analysis generating a synthesis of the findings based on their central passages; and (6) textual presentation of the conceptual synthesis divided into these three categories.

For the inclusion and exclusion criteria, we conducted a quantitative survey of occurrences, followed by a qualitative analysis based on reading the titles and abstracts. Subsequently, we read each of the texts selected in the previous stage in full with the aim of identifying the conception, context, or meaning in which the phrases are presented. The search covered publications in English, Spanish, and Portuguese that contained at least one of the expressions: "audiovisual design," "audiovisual design," and "audiovisual design." There was no time cut-off for the selection of documents. We ignored publications that were not freely available, that only cited the term in their bibliographical references, or in notes that were unrelated to the main text were ignored.

We conducted a qualitative analysis using content analysis of the concepts found, based on Bardin's (2016) framework, with the aim of obtaining a conceptual synthesis. The content analysis proposed is divided into three stages: (1) pre-analysis; (2) exploration of the material, categorization, or coding; and (3) treatment of the results, inferences, and interpretation.

## **Literature review results**

As mentioned above, we conducted a quantitative analysis, followed by a qualitative analysis in order to achieve the proposed objectives.

### *Quantitative analysis*

According to the parameters defined by the methodological procedures, we found the following numbers of publications in the respective online databases, as organized in the figure below:

Figure 1: Results of occurrences in scientific articles

	P. Capes	Scielo	Scopus	Web of Science
Audiovisual Design	31	4	31	16
Design audiovisual	21	3	5	9
Diseño Audiovisual	25	3	0	0

Source: Prepared by the authors (2020)

In addition to the databases already mentioned, we also used Google Scholar to broaden the diversity of concepts, integrating articles obtained from other theoretical sources such as texts on educational institution websites, books, etc. The search conducted for this investigation involved applying one term at a time to the search prompt, leading to pages in the respective languages. The number of documents found in this case was as follows:

Figure 2: Results of occurrences in Google Scholar

	Google Scholar
Audiovisual Design	851
Design Audiovisual	314
Diseño Audiovisual	1760

Source: Prepared by the authors (2020)

The term was found more frequently on Google Scholar and obtained more results in Spanish. However, in these cases, the term "diseño audiovisual" was only mentioned without any consistent conceptual development. Regarding the texts that actually develop the concept in some way, the majority of publications come from countries in South America (Brazil, Ecuador, Argentina, and Bolivia) and Central America (Nicaragua and Guatemala), followed by Spain and Sweden.

From a detailed reading of the titles and abstracts (and textual excerpts, in the case of Google Scholar), and the full texts in a second stage, we selected 24 documents that met the established

criteria. The authors provided important definitions and different perspectives on the term "audiovisual design."

### *Qualitative analysis*

Based on the central excerpts from the selected documents and using indirect quotations of the voices of the authors who contributed to this investigation, we organize the concepts obtained into three categories: (a) characteristics and functions; (b) method; and (c) context. Three figures are presented below, each dealing with one of the categories detected.

In Figure 3, we present the definitions proposed by the authors related to the intrinsic characteristics of the audiovisual object. It deals with its constituent elements, the solutions that can be generated from its configuration, and the areas already consolidated in design that it comes closest to.

Figure 3: Audiovisual design considerations (features and functions)

AUDIOVISUAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS: FEATURES AND FUNCTIONS	AUTHOR(S)
Aspect of graphic design that uses cinema and audiovisual elements to transmit messages. Seeks solutions to media communication problems.	Ràfols and Colomer (2003)
It talks about concepts or characteristics that relate to what they represent. It is not just a more or less pleasant image that speaks of the product it accompanies but also becomes part of the product itself. It has a functional character, always based on something else, and has no autonomy.	Cabrera Herrera and Hernández (2008)
Also known as motion design, is a type of design that integrates sound with moving images. It can be categorized into three main types: film design, TV design, and animation.	Cortez (2011)
It is composed of visual language elements and sound language elements, with the possibility of arrangements between them, which take place in analog time and synchronous time, in layers. It is complex and hybrid.	Galeotti and Mazzilli (2011)
It verifies, through its design, the characteristic features of objects (such as feature films, advertising, TV shows, videos,	Vitulo (2012)



among others) that define it as a technological device. It acquires meaning according to its ontological capacity to become plausible.	
It better conceptually resolves the idea of "media production". This is because the concept of design often involves two important paradigms: problem-solving and meaning creation, especially associated with the aesthetic field (audiovisual), in addition to the focus on meeting the needs or preferences of an audience.	Swenberg (2013)
It is responsible for communicating the values of a brand in the television area, adding audio and movement, which is called television graphic identity.	Monteagudo (2014)
It is responsible for bringing graphic products to life through sound and movement.	García Rosales (2015)
It is a communication system based on the expressive capacity of form, through units of meaning capable of participating in the communicative act and interrelating visual, auditory, and verbal signals.	Azogue Yanchaliquin and Gullsqui Yunda (2016)
Motion graphics and motion design are the same.	Valdivieso (2016)
Known as motion graphics, it is positioned in the domain of Multimedia Graphic Design.	Diaz (2017)
Corresponds to a graphic element that can move alone or be accompanied by another element. It can be part of a web project, a complement to a background video set to the rhythm of a certain song, or part of a special effect in a film. There are multiple facets, typologies and elements that can be used to convey continuity in the image, always with the aim of communication.	Mayo (2017)
Defined as the action of conceiving, programming, projecting, and producing audiovisual communications of a graphic-sound, and moving nature, generally created using technological	Orellana (2019)



means. Its purpose is to transmit specific messages to determined groups through audiovisual media.	
Complementing auditory and visual stimuli with design to provide information in a more didactic and interactive way.	Pairazaman Rengifo (2019)
Design features (in audiovisual design) can define audiovisual hierarchies that prioritize information by highlighting specific visual or audio elements.	Search (2019)
It is the "design thinking" of designing products that involve images and sounds, which are placed in space and time to serve a communication purpose.	Speziale (2019)
Its main function is to resolve communication problems.	Garcia (2020) (cited by Barrera and Morales)
It is a project activity.	Niedermaier and Toro (2021)
Among the functions of audiovisual design is to organize information compactly to create a sense of order and coherence in the audiovisual flow of a project.	Vega Tamaríz (2021)

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the theorists found (2024)

In Figure 4, we provide a project perspective that relates the construction of the audiovisual object to the production and consumption chain in which it is inserted. It highlights the association between the audience and their motivations for consumption.

Figure 4: Audiovisual design considerations (method)

AUDIOVISUAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS:  METHOD	AUTHOR(S)
It is used for planning and analyzing the production, circulation, and consumption cycle of audiovisual works.	Becker, Gambaro and Ramos (2017)
It is a methodological proposal for planning audio and video production based on four lines that configure and model this process: identity, motivations, experience, and content.	Becker and Gambaro (2018)

Source: prepared by the authors based on the theorists found 2024).

In Figure 5, we present the concepts that situate the audiovisual object within a historical, cultural, and social context. It discusses its transition between artistic, commercial, and industrial media and traces its evolution up to its integration into the digital realm.

Figure 5: Audiovisual design considerations (context)

AUDIOVISUAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS:  CONTEXT	AUTHOR(S)
Historically, it was born with cinema, developed with television, and reached its peak with computers. Its reason for existing is related from the beginning to its connection with mass media.	Ràfols and Colomer (2003)
It is a social, cultural, and economic mechanism that aims to find solutions to communication problems.	Salinas and Salazar (2017)
Audiovisual design pieces circulate in commercial and industrial circuits, as well as in academic and artistic circuits.	Speziale (2019)





It is the intersubjective space forged by the meaning that design products produce in the discursive practices present in the sociocultural context.	Voto (2019)
It arises from the convergence of the evolution of graphic culture and audiovisual culture, which was born with cinema, developed with television, and reached its peak with computers.	Rodriguez (2020) (cited by Barrera and Morales)

Source: prepared by the authors based on the theorists found (2024).

Most of the works associated with the characteristics and functions of audiovisual design point to an approximation with the field of graphic design, using audiovisual language as a means of expression and communication or the integration of visual and sound elements (Ràfols; Colomer, 2003; Monteagudo, 2014; García Rosales, 2015; Azogue Yanchaliquin; Gullsqui Yunda, 2016; Diaz, 2017; Orellana, 2019; Pairazaman Rengifo, 2019).

Audiovisual design is often framed as a synonym for motion design or motion graphics (Valdivieso, 2016; Diaz, 2017; Cortez, 2011), terminologies commonly used in commercial contexts. However, considering their semantic aspect, these expressions neglect the sound aspect and establish visuality as the main component of design.

Some authors even present a typological perspective. Cortez (2011) divides design into film design, TV design, and animation. Although he doesn't define a categorization, Mayo (2017) considers the existence of different typologies that can be used in favor of video communication. Therefore, there is an incipient and very limited discussion about the possibilities of design in audiovisual design.

However, "design thinking" applied to audiovisual design practice is mentioned by Speziale (2019) and indirectly reinforced by other authors in the idea that audiovisual design should act as a communication problem solver (Ràfols; Colomer, 2003; Swenberg, 2013; Monteagudo, 2014; Mayo, 2017; Pairazaman Rengifo, 2019; Garcia, 2020; Vega Tamaríz, 2021; Salinas; Salazar, 2017; Speziale, 2019), as well as attributed to other specificities of design.

Some specific texts use the expression to describe a design-based project method to be applied to any audiovisual production. Referring to the same methodological proposal of the GPDA called "Audiovisual Design" (Becker; Gambaro; Ramos, 2017; Becker; Gambaro, 2018), the works do not seem to focus on audiovisual design as a domain of the aesthetic and narrative specificities of the design product, but on the analysis and planning of the production, circulation, and consumption cycles of audiovisual works.

It is also worth highlighting how some authors position audiovisual design historically: from the development of culture and the audiovisual industry (cinema and television) to graphic design, especially due to the evolution of computer technology (Ràfols; Colomer, 2003; Rodriguez,



2020). In addition, there is a consensus on its economic role (Ràfols; Colomer, 2003; Salinas; Salazar, 2017; Speziale, 2019) and its social and cultural participation (Salinas; Salazar, 2017; Speziale, 2019; Voto, 2019).

## Audiovisual design: A concept proposal

Based on the findings of the review, we propose some guidelines that help in the conceptual construction of audiovisual design:

1. **Regarding characteristics and functions:** Audiovisual Design considers the area of knowledge arising from the intersection between design and audiovisual. It observes the object and/or product as a complex and hybrid artifact made up of animations, animated graphic elements, and/or moving images accompanied by sound. It understands the possibility of arranging the constituent elements of this artifact in different layers and/or levels. Its objective is to solve functional and aesthetic communication problems based on creating meaning for the intended audience.
2. **Regarding methodology:** Audiovisual Design deals with issues related to the design, production, consumption, circulation, and management of audiovisuals. To this end, it considers the relationship between audiovisuals and users, viewers, and/or consumers, taking into account their repertoires, experiences and motivations. Finally, its structure aims to meet the needs of users based on a methodological proposal.
3. **Regarding context:** Audiovisual Design emerges from the evolution of the audiovisual industry and takes into account the needs and preferences of the public, as well as the social, cultural, and economic scenario. It explores the intersubjective space formed by the shared meanings generated by design and audiovisual elements regarding the discursive practices present in the socio-cultural context.

Based on these guidelines, we attempted to establish a conceptual proposal in line with this review and theoretical discussion. Audiovisual Design was then defined as the area of knowledge and practice of designing virtual pieces formed by the integration of images, sounds, and movement on electronic platforms. It is aimed at users, spectators, and/or consumers with the aim of solving communication problems from aesthetic and narrative perspectives, generated by economic, social, and cultural demands.

This conceptual proposal, however, does not exclude the contextual complexity that exists in audiovisual logic, as some of the results that would fit into this conceptual proposal are not necessarily associated with the field of design.

A television program or a motion picture on their own, for example, may not be associated with design solutions, even though they are images with sound and movement and are part of the

audiovisual industry and culture. However, the opening title (and other titles during the movie) that are part of these pieces can be included in the scope of Audiovisual Design. In an institutional video for the Internet made up entirely of animated graphics, this separation between what does and does not concern Audiovisual Design may be less evident.

It is also important to highlight the fact that audiovisual products start from a physical or digital record and are generally transmitted through screens. This would exclude live and in-person stage shows, whose conception processes tend to be constituted by different means.

## Conclusions

Despite the relatively sparse use and discussion of the concept and domain of Audiovisual Design, this demarcation and semantic deepening seem relevant, given the importance and popularity with which video has become one of the main means of communication and entertainment in contemporary times.

Design professionals who work on audiovisual projects are generally referred to as motion designers. However, this term may not fully capture the breadth of their work, as they often take on roles that involve more than just studying and working with animated graphics.

Therefore, motion design should not be understood as a synonym for audiovisual design, as some of the authors cited above claim, but as a specificity of design associated with the development and application of visual movement, which may or may not be associated with audiovisual design.

Audiovisual design is multidisciplinary and complex, essentially integrating graphic design, title design, movement design, sound design, photography design, production design, as well as other specialties associated with specific demands, such as narrative and interaction design in the case of digital games or any other interactive narratives.

In conclusion, we hope that this work can broaden and deepen discussions and research into Audiovisual Design as an important area of design, both in academic and professional contexts.

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