

# SOME ASPECTS OF THE ROLE OF VISUAL IDENTITY IN THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY

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*This paper wishes to emphasize the necessity and importance of the communicational capital of a business, in the midst of fierce competition and 'bombarding' of all clients with a great deal of data through classical methods of advertising. The overcrowding of media channels with information about different products, the excessive advertising through classical methods (e.g. TV, radio, media) has led to a negative attitude of potential clients towards such items. Hence, a boomerang effect has occurred as a result of the above-mentioned excess of advertising products and services. Furthermore, marketing specialists have come to the conclusion that the single promoting of a product through TV, radio, media will not make the consumer choose a certain product / service or a brand. But the integrated concept of communication will...*

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## 1. Context

Given these circumstances, the question „Why to communicate ?” is considered out-of-date. The importance of communication between organizations and different categories of public was emphasized and demonstrated a long time ago. Nowadays, the real question, which is an issue for most marketers who understand the importance of communication is: „How to communicate ?”

Communication is closely linked to the marketing activity and, mainly, to the promotion concept. Not once or twice the two notions have been confused or dealt with as a single identity. There are authors who treat the concept communication – promotion as a whole – part type.

Philip Kotler, the famous American professor, defines marketing communication with the help of the total communicational mix of a company. According to him, it consists of „*a specific combination of advertising, distribution channel, sales promoting and public relations, which a business utilizes in order to meet its advertising and marketing goals.*”<sup>877</sup>

Corporate communication has *the mission of determining the position of a given company*, of building itself an acknowledged personality and a distinct identity from its competitors’. Communication within a company defines its characteristics relative to other enterprises. This communication is of two different types:

- *external communication*, namely the relations of a business to the market, its business partners, distributors, banks, financial community, media, etc.,
- *internal communication*, which grows among the human resources department: employees, managers, share-holders, etc.

The marketing strategy is the path a company chooses to take in order to reach its marketing objectives.

<sup>878</sup> It is represented by the whole of the concrete objectives an organization is bound to reach in a given period of time, of the means and methods by which these objectives are practically made use of, in accordance with the tendencies and requirements of the throughput, which is measured with the help of economic indicators such as: stock market, sales, profit.

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<sup>877</sup> Kotler, Ph., Armstrong, G. – „Principiile Marketingului”, Ediția Europeană, Editura Teora, București, 2000.

<sup>878</sup> Botezat, Elena- „Bazele marketingului”, Ed. Universității din Oradea, Oradea, 2006.

In the light of the current situation of the market, at a time when, for the majority of products and services, supply exceeds demand, it is a must for companies to communicate with their present or potential clients. Most companies have the tendency to approach promotional strategies such as „pull strategy” (sales promotions). Such strategies involve marketing activities, especially advertising and promoting on the consumer market, aimed at the final user and meant to make him / her ask intermediaries to provide additional products, and determine the latter to order those specific products from the producers.

As to the external communication, apart from promotional activities, one must take into account a series of supporting communicational elements, such as: brand, image, marking and packing of a product / service, employees' attitude and behaviour, the aspect and the environment of workplaces (registered or head offices, shops, warehouses, etc.) All these elements have brought about the building up of communicational capital.

**The communicational capital** of an organization is the total amount information disseminated within and outside the company, to different categories of public.

**Global image of a business** results from the totality of its expressions: corporate (institutional), commercial (company reports about products or brands) and internal (communication with people from within).

There are two distinguishable types of marketing communication:

- promotional communication (namely, communication techniques used in an temporary advertising campaigns);

- continuous communication (around the clock communication with the target public).

Due to the large number of companies, marks, products lingering on the market and to their advertising campaigns, customers often feel confused or even have the tendency of ignoring and rejecting from the very beginning any new piece of information in the field. It is for this very reason that marketing specialists have started to become more and more aware of the importance of a continuous communication and to concentrate all their efforts in this direction.

## **2. Visual identity**

In close relation to the concept of communicational capital, we may refer to the **visual communication** of a company. The success on the market of any given company relies on the way in which it manages to distinguish itself from its competitors and to mark a particular spot in the mind of the target market. Hence, the creation and development of a suggestive and steadfast visual identity are essential. The instrument which deals with all the information about the **visual identity** of a business is the **identity manual**.

Talking about visual communication, Marie - Helene Westphalen mentions three elements:

- a) A logo and a system of visual identification (Logo or „specific mark” represents the association of a graphic image with its symbolism and colours).

- b) Visual communication applied to the product itself (industrial design and communication through package designs).

- c) Communication through environment or environmental design (devising work spaces, commercial and exhibition areas)<sup>879</sup>.

Visual identity gives us information about the values and principles of a organization, about its quality and domain of activity. All these information are perceived in a matter of moments. The creation of a coherent and strong visual identity represents the turning point of a successful brand. Visual identity of good quality must accurately reflect the business and its founders, render credibility and trust to the brand customers.

Creating a visual identity is not an easy task. It has to follow a few basic steps:

- to reflect its domain of activity, its personality or a definite characteristic of the business;

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<sup>879</sup> Westphalen, Marie- Helene- Comunicarea externă a firmei, Ed. C.H. Beck, București, 2008.

- to be able to hold good in the long run (altering its visual identity would result in a series of material and emotional costs) ;
- its logo must be clean-cut, easy to understand and to tell the story of the company;
- to be able to adapt itself to various graphic supports and to evolution, as well;
- its slogan has the purpose of deriving benefits for the client.

“On a competition market, where one must struggle with experienced companies and corporations, you must always be a step ahead. Unlike a few years ago, when only a few companies understood the importance of visual identity, at present it is absolutely necessary to understand and make a profit out of this issue”, thinks Georgiana Radu, managing partner and co-founder of full service [Brandaffair Advertising](#).<sup>880</sup>

### ***Promotional communication***

Freidmann Schulz von Thun, a German psychologist and specialist in communication sciences, has worked up a communication model which devises all messages in four groups: fact, self-revealing, relationship and appeal. This model can be applied to promotional communication as well. We may think that a piece of news is the promotional message.

**a) The content of the promotional message:** offers an answer to the question: „What do I give information about ?” A promotional message keeps us informed about a particular product / service, shop, special offer. Its content may be as well: „We have launched on the market the new product X”.

**b) Self-revelation (self-exposure)** is related to the information about the speaker, what s/he actually means through his / her words. In the case of the promotional message the company / organization who launches a product / service is the sender. We could say such things about the company: „Who are they ?”, „Have I heard about it or its products ?” „It tries to adapt itself to the customers’ needs”, „This company is struggling to develop itself”, „This service is useful to me”.

**c) The relationship** – the sender expresses what s/he thinks about the receiver and how s/he gets along with him / her. A certain company wants to sell its product / service to customers. Its target is to convince the receiver (potential clients) to make the decision of buying. In other words, the company wants to tell the receiver: „You need the product I am offering you”.

**d) The appeal** – the sender wants to influence the receiver, to cause a change in the latter’s attitude or behaviour. The companies which communicate have the desire to influence the buying or consumption behaviour of the target market (consumers) and cause changes in making decisions. In the case of the promotional message the appeal of the companies is as follows: „Buy! My product is the ideal solution for you!” „You must buy this product!”, „This is the product you have been looking for and we are offering it to you!”

For the consumer (i.e. the receiver of the promotional message), the task of receiving and proper understanding of a message with so many meanings is not at all an easy one, all the more so as s/he is daily confronted with tens or even hundreds of such challenges.

Each and every day, we all are subject to a series of messages, new pieces information, often very inconsistent. Because of this excess of messages we have the tendency to filter the information, consciously or not, in terms of their sender. Nothing new when it comes to promotional messages: we pay attention and receive only those messages that come from people we know, who have a certain identity and whom we trust.

Up to the present at the base of the pyramid of the promotional mix lied advertising, in which most part of the marketing budget used to be invested. Then, we had sales promotion and personal selling. Public relations used to play a minor part. However, things have taken a reversed turn lately. At present, many of the companies must be aware that, prior to investing money in advertising through the classical media means, they have to introduce themselves to the target public. But, in order to do so, they must be „someone”, they must have an identity of their own. Only after they become „someone” they will have

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<sup>880</sup> [http://antreprenor.money.ro/cum\\_se\\_construieste\\_identitatea\\_vizuala\\_a\\_unui\\_start\\_up-84084.html](http://antreprenor.money.ro/cum_se_construieste_identitatea_vizuala_a_unui_start_up-84084.html).

an identity clearly stated, only then they will be able to send promotional messages on the classical channels.

### **3. Identity manual**

The identity manual is a tool of utmost importance for a company's identity and especially for a brand. It provides all the visual guidelines of the company and the rules for applying them, with both negative and positive examples.

The necessity of centralization of all the elements the visual identity of a company embodies has sprung from the idea that the people who have initially drawn it and taken care of it launch are not the only ones who are responsible for its promotion. It may happen that a customer changes his / her agency or that the agency itself externalizes its services and is bound, therefore, to send its coworkers the exact technical details of the customers' brand.

As a result, in the contents of an identity manual, there are enlisted such aspects as acceptable and unacceptable elements of a logo, multimedia, map colour guide, dress codes, formatting for stationery, acceptable and unacceptable photos. Through this instrument a company manages to implement and keep the consistency, unity and coherence of a brand, from its logo to leaflets, from its web sites to TV commercials.

#### **Components of the identity manual:**

**1. Logo** is the milestone, the basic element of the identity of any given company and, at the same time, the starting point of the creation of the brand, „its signature'. In order to get off on the right foot in creating an identity one must pay close attention to the logo, which must be, first of all, a suggestive symbol for the target of the company, unique and easy to identify. This logo consists of graphic symbols (images), texts (letters) and specific colours. The result of this association must be clear, concise, identifiable and recognizable. As well as the targets of a corporation it has to follow the KISS rule: Keep it short and simple!

When choosing a logo one must take heed to its flexibility, to the implementing possibilities on different promotional materials.

**2. Business cards** – bear business information about an individual and enhance interhuman relationships. By way of them people formally introduce themselves and make the premises of starting anew, rescheduling or developing of an established relationship. In order to fulfill their intermediary role, business cards must reflect in a sincere, clear and convincing way the image of the individual or the legal entity it represents.<sup>881</sup> A business card must include:

- identity: name and surname
- job, professional degree, scientific titles
- company affiliation
- contact address: address, phone number, email, website.

In addition to these, one can include other pieces of information such as: personal information (phone and address), domain/s of activity of the corporation, services his / her company offers, features of the organization or institutios. It is not advisable to add other types of information. But, when it is absolutely necessary, one must make much of the established rules in the identity manual and of the open-minded nature of a business card. A lot of useless information might lead to the loss of essence of this instrument.

The design of a business card must be inspired, original, in perfecy key with the organization personality, must stick to the requirements of the identity manual of the corporation, namely its logo, keeping to the approved space, utilization of the specific colour scheme of the brand, the ordering of materials in the space given, supporting typography and letter sizes, utilization of other graphic elements apart from a customized setting of the name.

The type of paper chosen for printing the card may give them a distinctive feature. In terms of the domain of activity of the organization, of its prestige and reputation, one can choose a common type of

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<sup>881</sup> Graur, Evelina – „Tehnici de comunicare”, Ed. Mediamira, Cluj-Napoca, 2001.

paper or stock, with or without a glossy coat. Business cards in a company may be different depending on whom they are imprinted for (e.g. managers, client service personnel, PR, etc.). They can be either in Romanian or another foreign language (e.g. English, French, German), but never in both languages on the same card.

**3. Stationery:** letterhead design, envelopes, portfolios, catalogues – are all important factors in communicating with business partners (clients, distributors, share-holders, financial distributors, governmental organisms). Using such tools is a proof of professionalism, coherence and unity of communication and helps in strengthening the brand.

**4. Dress codes** – a personalized attire supports both internal communication (employees feel they are members of the same family, building up a sense of affiliation and mutual respect) and external communication (clients associate the employee with the company s/he stands for). Moreover, a particular business attire is another form of promoting the image of the brand.

**5. Promotional materials** (pens, caps, T-shirts, keyrings, etc.) are offered on special occasions or events to coworkers. The right materials must be carefully chosen. They can have a big contribution to the image of the company. The quality of these products must reflect the image the company wants the others to picture. Furthermore, they must be carefully chosen when it comes to special days and events: Christian feasts, national celebrations (e.g. Women's Day, the 1st of May, the 9th of May, etc.), launch of a new product or the company's anniversary, signing of an important contract, the successful completion of a project, a press conference, etc. Special attention must be rendered both to the colour scheme of these materials (which must illustrate the brand) and to the personalization methods: imprinting, inscribing, engraving, etc., in perfect accordance with the 'flexibility' of the logo.

**7. Cars imprinting** - Similar to dress codes, it has two objectives: internal communication among employees and external communication, a form of promoting. The selection of the cars has an important contribution to the improvement of the brand image. The association of the company with the brand image of an acknowledged motor vehicle manufacturer will urge respect and will be a sign of security and financial performance. Likewise, the colours must assent to the brand colours or, at least, to allow the logo to be used in its simple form.

**8. Website and CD presentations** – Nowadays, the development of technology, of the communication system has led to an overall digitizing of the world (including the economic relations). The era of communication on the internet has brought about the development of many interhuman and business relationships. The selection of a particular product / service is usually preceded by a more or less comprehensive research on the company's website, on different search engines or chatting with former or potential clients interested in the same product / service. Thus, we can say that, unless we are on the Internet, we do not exist!

A website with the most important and viable information for the clients and business partners may lead to a better company image, may be a proof of professionalism and especially of being up-to-date with technical evolution.

The website graphics and design require knowledge and careful usage of the company's identity manual. Unpleasant situations might arise: e.g. the usage of another colour or image or font might create a sense of confusion in the client, who may not be able to recognize the brand s/he is looking for or even worse, mistake a particular brand for a similar one.

#### **4. A model identity manual of a private kindergarten („Cheerful little angels”)**

The launch onto the market of a private kindergarten requires a lot of research work and preparation, including the right choice of its name.

The services, as well as the products offered to the children, have names inspired from fairytales or little animals. The nouns usually are used as diminutives. Besides nouns, in the name of the company we might have a number which bears a certain meaning in our literature (2, 3, 5, 7), or an adjective (small, tiny, cheerful, strong, hardworking, happy).

**The logo** we choose for such a company is illustrative of the services we offer to the children, but those who are responsible for their buying are the parents (especially mothers). Hence, the new logo must be



attractive, as colourful and cheerful and playful and friendly as it can possibly be for the little ones, but, at the same time, it must give a sense of trust, security, reliability, care and affection to the buyers, namely to the parents.

**The logo components:** graphic elements: three little angels (two boys and a girl, the idea of friendship) and a little cloud (innocence, dreams, ideals, childhood games).

The text: the name of the company was carefully chosen. The font is cheerful, playful, and the size of the letters highlights it. This font type is not grave, austere or formal. It suggests security, reliability, a long term investment, though.

The colours: the background colour is light blue and white. The little angels and their dresses have various colours, in soft pastels to enrich the palette colours and to attract the children's attention.

**Business cards design.** We need only typical business cards (with information about the kindergarten and manager). The background is pale blue, the text is white to enhance a light, not at all crowded imagery. The logo is placed at the top right corner, according to the rules in the manual.

**Stationery elements** (leaflets, posters and flyers): in harmony with the business cards serve the purpose of drawing children's attention and provide additional information. For each and every child we have prepared personalized labels with their names which have been stuck unto the hall stands. The portfolios, envelopes, letterhead sheets of papers stand for professionalism towards our coworkers: distributors, financial institutions, governmental organisms, etc.

**Dress code:** within an educational institution a decent, but comfortable attire is a must. The teaching stuff must be allowed flexibility when playing with children. Hereby, we have chosen comfortable cotton collar-embroidered shirts for the teachers and personalized, unicoloured logo-imprinted T-shirts for the children.

**Custom - imprinted vehicle:** in which the children are safely driven. Its design has drawn the attention and affection of both the children who see it every day and of potential clients (a personalized vehicle = a promotion vehicle). We have selected a light blue Mercedes Vito van, ideal for our logo.

**Website:** provides information for those interested in our offer service, photo galleries, contact details, etc. The parents of the children enlisted in our facility have the possibility of choosing the daily menu for their child and of watching their children through the video surveillance cameras installed in classes, bedrooms, dining halls, yard, etc.

## 5. Conclusion

The communicational capital, as well as the other types of capital (financial, technological, human) requires financial resources and time in order to continuously develop and improve. Drafting an identity manual is not a cheap financial investment. The bare concept may cost between 1.000- 5.000 EUR, plus the production and personalization costs. But such an investment is to be yearly made up for with every new client. The initial target, of 30 children at the beginning of the school year, has been exceeded. We have 42 children in three different age groups. Once the identity of the company is firmly stated, the manager can think of other effective methods of promoting the kindergarten services. Until then the gained trust and recommendations are the best method of promotion.

**In conclusion, the relevance of the communicational capital** for organizations may be expressed by their capacity of issuing and capitalizing this capital both on corporative and commercial level, in order to reach the marketing objectives of the organization.

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