

R.D. RIZEA

A.R. MUNTEANU

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucuresti, Romania

DEFINING A COHERENT ORGANISA- TIONAL VISUAL IDENTITY – A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Keywords

Organisational visual identity

Logo

Communication strategy

JEL Classification

M14, M19

Abstract

In today's competitive environment, any organisation should carefully design its communication strategy as it reflects on its overall image. On one hand, this article aims to define what a good visual identity means by highlighting the elements of a good visual identity through a qualitative analysis of more than three dozen visual identities documents from organisations from different industries, private companies, governmental agencies and NGOs. Moreover, by observing different perspectives on what organisations consider as a desired visual identity, the article suggests directions for improving the visual identity documentation. Finally, as the most common elements of visual identity are identified, the authors briefly draft a strategy for creating a visual identity.

INTRODUCTION

Problem statement

In today's competitive environment, any organisation should carefully design its communication strategy as it reflects on its overall image. A good visual identity helps an organisation to be perceived as competitive, both by internal and external stakeholders. The organisation's logo and colours, layout of documentation and presentation templates, all help create the organisation's visual identity and prove important when communicating within and outside the organisation.

Structure of the article

Section two, theoretical backgrounds, goes over the theoretical frameworks and defines the concepts used in the analysis. Section three of the article presents the methodology used while the next two sections give an overview of the findings of the qualitative analysis. The last two sections present the conclusions and the suggestions for further research.

Theoretical backgrounds

Multiple approaches for the study of organisational identity. Since the 1970s there has been an interest in the topic of corporate identity and corporate image in both academic and practitioners' circles. The concepts and models evolved over time, from simple to quite complex, even though there is not much consensus at the moment regarding the definitions of several concepts. The diversity and creativity in model design is explained by the fact that the topic was approached from multiple disciplines like psychology (Kiriakidou and Millward, 2000) management (Balmer and Sonen, 1999; Wescott Alessandri, 2001; Bick, Jacobson and Abratt, 2003), communications and public relations (Stuart, 1999; Cornelissen and Elving 2003).

As the topic of corporate identity was discussed by both practitioners and academics, whilst there is no variance between their points of view, the differences in the approaches of the two groups are

reflected in the components of the mix that define the organisational identity (Melewar and Jenkins, 2002). The approach taken by practitioners is generally more process-orientated on the management of the corporate identity (Balmer, 1998) and with focus on visual aspects that define an identity and overlooking other areas (Balmer and Soenen, 1999). From an academic perspective, the studies focus more on defining and conceptualising a greater number of the mix components (Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2005).

Defining corporate identity. Some studies focus on concepts and terminology while others describe and improve the model of managing corporate identity. The study of van Rekom (1997) appreciated that corporate identity was a general concept that serves as an alibi for a variety of activities such as designing a new logo, interior decoration, sales force training, including also the changing of corporate culture. Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2005) in their exploratory study define fundamental concepts of corporate identity among practitioners and elaborate an operational definition of the concept by 32 in-depth interviews with managers from different organisations. Their conclusions state that different participants in the study had a different perspective on corporate identity and the importance of the concept is increasing. Most of the interviewees associate the concept of identity with design, behaviour and strategy (page 862) while there is no unanimity regarding corporate culture (whether is part or not of corporate identity).

Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2005) also suggest that companies can use the model of managing corporate identity they proposed in their study to manage their corporate identity, however they should also address issues like the sustainability of corporate identity in providing both competitive advantage; the existence of

subcultures and also the complexity of the issue.

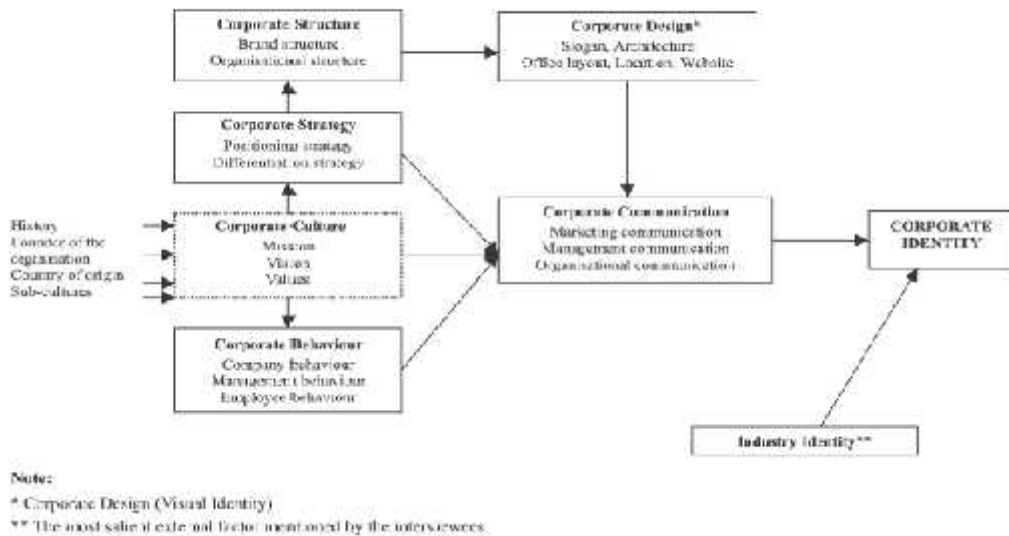


Figure 1 - The revised categorization of corporate identity dimensions and their sub-items according to Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2005) – page 865

Managing corporate identity. One of the studies that explain and comment on the evolution of the models for corporate identity is the one of Stuart (1999). This study reviews models from the late 1970s to this late 1990s, mentioning over eight types of models of corporate identity management process.

Other extensive literature reviews on the topic are those of Bick, Jacobson & Abratt (2003) which try to both define concepts and also upgrade the Abratt model; and the study of Westcott Alessandri (2001) that does a thorough job in revising the models of managing corporate identity. Moreover, Westcott Alessandri (2001) does an extensive literature review and draws a relatively simple model of

how corporate identity works (compared to others) focusing only on corporate mission, visual presentation and corporate behaviour which lead to corporate identity, which is the basis for corporate image and corporate reputation.

Cornelissen and Elving (2003) introduce a conceptual framework that links dimensions of corporate identity management to situational context factors – to provide a systematic perspective of the considered topic and identity relevant factors. The framework presented includes constructs of strategy, structure and culture, and management processes and environmental characteristics as determinants of corporate identity management.



Figure 2 - Conceptual framework for the study of corporate identity management according to Cornelissen and Elving (2003) page 117

Balmer and Soenen (1999) developed the RED ACID test framework in order to audit an organisation's corporate identity and to devise an approach to corporate identity change programmes on the basis on the numbers and types of identities the project is dealing with. They define four terms: the **Actual Identity** (what the organisation is) the **Communicated Identity** (how the organisation is perceived by its publics and how the organisation communicates), the **Ideal Identity** (the optimum positioning of the organisation in its market or markets understanding its strengths and abilities in addition to environmental considerations) and the **Desired Identity** (the identity which the chief executive and management board wish to acquire). The RED ACID test means to **R**eveal the four identities, to **E**xamine the six interfaces between these identities and **D**iagnose the problem.

In response to this framework, **Consulting, S. E. C. O. R., & Fox, T. Corporate** (2001) present the **REDS AC²ID Test** which has evolved to include a double "C" splitting the **Communicated Identity** into two parts **the Communicated Identity** (How the organisation communicates its identity, internally and externally) and the **Conceived Identity** (How the organisation is perceived externally and internally as a result of both its actions and communications). By adding one more type of identity, the number of interfaces between identities rose to ten. A second improvement of the model was the introduction of a fourth stage that seeks to manage the identity change programme that has been diagnosed by including the **Strategy** element in the process, creating the REDS AC²ID Test Process™.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CURRENT ARTICLE

As competition is becoming more and more thought, organisations must constantly improve their image and consolidate and improve their reputation. For this

purpose, the organisational identity and more specific the visual identity need to be managed and therefore organisations create guidelines that define and recommend the correct use of their visual identity elements.

The current study tries to identify the elements that define a good visual identity of organisations by looking at the visual identity documentation of an organisation, irrespective of its industry and size, whether private or governmental in nature. To the best knowledge of the researchers there are no studies applying the same methodology and a similar type of qualitative analysis on the visual identity documents of organisations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The review of the literature on organisational identity revealed that there is a plethora of studies and opinions of both practitioners and academics over time about this subject. Therefore, the researchers decided to do a qualitative analysis of the organisational Visual Identity Documents (Manual or Guidelines) in order to identify the most common elements used in practice. For this reason the documents were analysed using thematic content analysis. We examined the corporate identity documentation looking for patterns in order to define the most common elements in our sample and then refer back to the literature findings. In this research, the visual identify documentation serves as a proxy for the Desired Identity of an organisation.

The researchers considered more than three dozen visual identity documents of organisations from different countries, industries and of different sizes, and scored them according to a set of defined criteria. The criteria that were used to assess each visual identity document were developed on the basis of an extended thematic content analysis of several visual identity manuals, and a detailed literature review. The qualitative analysis that will

be describe in the paragraphs below comprises of 14 elements that organisation tend to incorporate in the visual identity documents.

The score scale was a zero, one and two scale – zero was awarded in case the criterion was not mentioned at all in the visual identity document, one if was mentioned and two if the criterion was described better than average.

The sample was composed by the visual identity documentation available freely on the websites of companies, NGOs or the governmental agencies.

FINDINGS: ASSESSING THE DESIRED IDENTITY OF AN ORGANISATION

Certain elements are characteristic for an efficacious organisational identity including reputation for high quality goods and services, robust financial performance, adequate work environment for employees or reputation for social and environmental responsibility (Einwiller and Will, 2002).

As this study focuses only on the visual identity of an organisation, the following paragraphs present the assessment of the desired identity of an organisation according to its visual identity documentation, with focus on: the logo, tagline, typography, colour palette, layouts, publications and signage.

Moreover, from the sample of organisations one was selected for a more detailed investigation and is presented as a case study. This organisation registered one of the top three scores based on our criteria.

ANALYSIS OF THE SAMPLE OF VISUAL IDENTITY DOCUMENTS

Type of organisation. The sample of visual image documents analysed contains 37 documents, 12 public institutions, 19 private companies, five NGOs and one public private partnership. The researchers actively searched for visual identity docu-

ments for NGOs in order to have a balanced sample by randomly choosing international NGOs, which seemed more likely to have such visual guidelines. It was notice however that NGOs are less likely to have such guidelines.

Geography. The sample is dominated by international organisations (43%), meaning companies that are active in more than one country, followed by organisations from the UK (24%) and USA (14%). The researchers admit that the sample is biased, as English is that language of almost all the visual identity documents in the sample, except one (OMV Petrom) which was available in Romanian.

Name of the visual identity document. The name of the document reflects most of its intensions that is why we shortly analysed the terminology used by the organisations to refer to this document. We give an example as proof for this point.

This manual will help ensure consistency by providing standards and specifications for the use of Alberta's corporate identity in a variety of situations. Alberta Government, Canada (page 5)

The most common term in our sample is *identity* (31 out of 37cases) while the expression *visual identity* is less common (16 out of 37 cases). Another common word is *guide/ guideline* in 21 out of the 37 cases. *Manual*, which is a term suggesting details and recommendations on how to use the elements, is used only in 12 cases while *standard*, which suggest a stricter approach to the use of elements, is employed only in three cases. Only six organisations refer to *brand* in the title of their visual identity document.

Version of the visual identity document. For more than half of the investigated visual documents, the information regarding the date of the manual or the version was not available. Nine of the analyses manuals were written after 2010 while seven were written between 2003 and 2009.

In the next paragraphs are presented the 14 criteria against which the visual identity documents were scored.

Vision of the brand/ identity. The researchers looked for the connection of the visual identity with the organisation's overall vision, mission, and also if the organisation has defined a vision for the brand or the visual identity. In our sample, 13 companies did not make such statements, while 24 did mention the vision. What most of the organisations did is to integrate the visual identity, more specifically usually the logo, into the overall vision and mission of the organisation. Some organisations state that the visual identity guide is a tool designed to help project the values and vision of their brand.

"The AT&T brand is not simply our logo or name, but it is one of our primary tools for expressing the corporation's business strategy to all audiences. The brand reflects the experiences that people have with AT&T, our products and services, as well as our employees." AT&T Brand Identity System, International ITC company (page 3)

Moreover, three organisations did a better than average job in defining the values of the brand, defining a brand identity system or brand guidelines, even specifically defining many details regarding the advertising, ticketing and packaging.

Logo. All the organisations in the sample have a logo. However, more than half (20 out of 37) offer a great deal of attention to it, stating clear measurements and dimensions, technical drawing requirements (shape and distances), proper and improper use of the logo (referring for example to its colours, backgrounds used).

The AT&T brand is one of the company's most valuable assets. The AT&T Masterbrand and the AT&T Corporate Logo are important components that help to energize and differentiate the brand. AT&T - page 8

Moreover, AT& T defined specific recommendations for different media use of the various AT&T Corporate Logos on

specific applications via a chart that applies to all versions of the AT&T Corporate Logos: preferred, horizontal and centred in both positive and reverse. (page 17)

"The centrepiece of our identity is our mark, a symbol of the vision. It is styled to suggest accuracy, speed and brilliance rather than aggression and tradition." Emirates General Petroleum Corporation, oil & gas company, The United Arab Emirates (page 3)

"The unique Symantec symbol stands for balance and harmony, and our commitment to quality and wholeness." Symantec, International software company, page 6

The company logos are important and that is easily observable because most visual identity documentation considers the logo. This is the case because studies such as Peter (1989) proved that logos are facilitators to speed up the recognition of a company or brand. For the purpose of this article we define brand as the "name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's product distinct from those of other sellers" using the definition of the American Marketing Association Dictionary.

However, logos alone have little power and they must be carefully chosen to express "appropriateness to be used within a specific category" – and this is better tested before the launching of the logo (van Riel, van den Ban, and Heijmans; 2001).

Legal guidelines referring to the name or logo. 12 out of 37 organisations mention the rules of referring to the organisation: use of the correct legal name for (e.g. Cisco Systems, Inc. – International company); use of the full name (e.g. Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey - USA); use of the name of the programme and the financing source (ESPON Name and symbol of the EU and financing statement – EU governmental programme); use of the trademark symbol (™) as a legal component (e.g. Symantec).

The colours. The colour palette is a very important visual identity element as it is underlying in all other elements as they define most layouts of the organisation. In the sample, eight companies scored a zero for the colour criteria as the researchers could not identify the exact codes (irrespective of the system) of the used colours. Moreover 15 organisations briefly define the palettes they use and 14 organisations adopted more than one colour palette and described the situation to adequately use each of them, the proper use and the not recommended use of colours. In addition, organisations such as European Space Agency defined a primary palette, a secondary palette, a neutral palette and suggestions for matching colours while Cisco Systems defined complex palettes for different departments, creating for each of the nominated departments a unique colour mix.

For many of the organisations in the sample there are two sections referring to colours: one for the colours of the logo and one for the colour palette that is to be used in other occasions as part of the visual identity of the organisation.

“Color plays an important role in the Axeda identity program. The colors at right are recommendations for various media.” Axeda Identity Guidelines, software company, USA (page 13)

Typography. Typography is a strong extension of the brand and plays a major role in creating a consistent look of an organisation across all communications and promotional materials. This is the reason why 34 out of 37 of the organisations in our sample clearly defined the typography that is to be used as part of their visual identity.

“Typography is fundamental to Harrods distinctive brand identity. It is an art. [...] It is also a powerful brand signifier in its own right, bringing personality and consistency to all communication and infusing everything it touches with the essential Harrods look and feel”. Harrods, luxury retailer, UK (page 33)

Moreover, 16 of 37 organisations defined more than one typeface, a primary typeface and at least a secondary one and also the conditions when each is to be used, scoring two points.

Some organisations such as European Space Agency, Emirates General Petroleum Corporation and OMV Petrom just to give some examples, decided to have their own font.

“Notes ESA’ – the corporate font, from the font designed by the Typefoundry Primetype of Ole Schäfer; ‘The Sans’ and ‘Reykjavik One’ and ‘Meta Serif’ – complementary sans serif and serif fonts”. European Space Agency, EU governmental agency (page 45)

“The Emarat typeface is unique to us. It has been designed to complement the mark, and is available in both Arabic and English. - It should only be used for sub-brand names or added value services.” Emirates General Petroleum Corporation (page 7)

Tagline. In our sample it is much more common not to have a tagline (23 out of 37), however the 7 out of the 14 organisations that do have a tagline chose a catchy one that is connected to the vision of the organisation or its visual identity.

“Cisco believes that the Internet is fundamentally changing the way people work, live, play, and learn. To communicate this vision, Cisco is strengthening and evolving its corporate branding efforts, with a new corporate tag line, “Empowering the Internet Generationsm”.” Cisco Systems (page 5)

The organisations that scored a two for their tagline was due to an appropriate tagline, e.g. *Saving lives* – St John Ambulance Services, *Pure.Rare.Eternal* Platinum Guild International, a retailer for jewellery, turning clicks into customers - Conversion Rate Experts or *Inspiring Capital*- Edinburgh City Region.

Layouts. We defined as *layout* any exact definition for an item such as letters, letterheads, fax cover sheets, envelopes, business cards, news release forms,

memos, invoices, positioning of logo in the page, number of columns per page, established set of rules regarding proportions and applications for combining the various elements on a page.

Moreover, some organisations define a philosophy for their layouts. Some examples below:

Layouts should be clean and simple. To achieve this you should avoid combining too many sizes of text. On portrait 'A format' layouts use a simple 4 column grid. Edinburgh City Region, public private partnership, Scotland (page 27)

This page shows a typical layout for an A4 letterhead as an example. Actual size: 210 x 297mm. Shown here at 55% of the actual size. The letterhead must always be printed in full colour. Stock: Conquerer Brilliant White, 100gsm. Only use official digital artwork. Sacu Corporate Identity, Southern African Customs Union (page 8)

In our sample 10 organisations did not define any type of layout (scoring zero), ten defined less than three different types of layouts (scoring one) and 17 defined more than three (scoring two).

Presentations. Organisations might decide, if it is relevant for them, to have standardised templates such as a PowerPoint Template in order to deliver presentations with a consistent brand image. Customized presentations for all the audiences of an organisation represent a convincing way of characterising a brand. Moreover, a clear structure and a unified design build the visual identity as they focus the attention on the content of the presentation.

Presentation templates are less common in this sample, as only 14 out of 37 organisations have them defined (scoring one). The researchers checked to see whether the drafting of presentation templates is somehow correlated with the governmental or private nature of the organisation. This correlation does not hold as in the current sample there are seven private companies and NGOs and seven governmental organisations.

Rules for photography. We live in an era dominated by visual communication and therefore the part photographs play in the communications of an organisation is significant. Photographs attract the attention, generate emotions and send a message connected to the brand and therefore, the rules about using photography as part of an organisation's communication are relevant.

In the current sample, 17 of the 37 organisations mention rules for the photos used in the communication media. Moreover, 11 organisation give a philosophy for the use of images and more details on the topic such as an introduction to image use, information graphics, or rules for colour with photography (scoring a two).

The general rule about photographs mentioned in OMV Petrom's Identity Manual is that the three key values - „professionalism, pioneering and partnership” must be reflected in the visual content of the photographs used in the communication media (page 18). Moreover, a set of six defined rules regarding the communication through photography are mentioned: picturing and authentic situation, presenting a modern, European company, natural lighting, inspiring optimism, involving the viewer and communicating dynamism (pages 18-20).

In the case of AT&T, the selected photos and images should reflect the diversity of the served customers and the role played by the company in achieving their goals and therefore the images used must show product and services for the customers' everyday needs. (AT&T Brand Identity System - page 28)

Adobe Corporate Brand Guidelines (page 23) define the brand imagery creation as a system that involves the combination of aspirational, conceptual imagery and dynamic lifestyle photography that is authentic, meaningful, and immersive. Moreover, an organisation's three-tier imagery system is comprised of 1. Abstract metaphor for high concept, program identity 2. Reportage lifestyle photography to

document the customer/ employee experience and 3. Conceptual imagery to illustrate benefits or solutions.

Co-branding. The term 'co-branding' is used to reflect in this study the wide range of marketing activity involving the use of at least two brands. The purpose of this is to combine the strength of two brands, in order to increase the premium consumers are willing to pay (e.g. Harrods & other strong brands sold by the retailer) or make the product or service more resistant to copying (e.g. Cisco Systems with AT&T). Another purpose is mere presentation of logos together to suggest association or inclusion, like in the case of Alberta Government and another Institution, or in the case of the logo of the University of Albany and a department, the logo of Edinburg City and the one of a Museum, the logo of the Rotary Club and an associate organization in case of a specific project.

Moreover, the European Space Agency Brand Identity Guidelines presents a *“model for the ‘sub-brands’ within ESA’s brand architecture has been developed that guarantees and reinforces ESA’s Corporate Image and the structure of the various sub-brand identities is divided into distinct areas that represent establishments, missions and programmes”* (page 103).

Outdoor communication. Outdoor communication is used to reflect in this study any type of banners, signage, posters but also brochures, leaflets and annual reports. The decision to include both posters and brochures in the same category, which might be unusual from a marketing perspective, is that in the current sample there are included different types of organisations, from quite different industries and moreover, for the purpose of this qualitative analysis a further split into two categories did not bring additional value.

Most organisations (26 out of 37) have at least one type of an outdoor communication as defined above. Moreover, 14 organisations have mentioned and defined

requirements for at least three types of outdoor communication elements (scoring a two). For example, the Alberta Government define requirements for signage, project signs; project size and scope; generic signs; fence scrim and highway signs, all coherent to the visual identity and presenting the logo and specific colours.

Such outdoor communication in the sense of physical signs is quite important in the retail business. Kontinental Kids, a brand of clothes for kids, has a design for the shop interior, specific signage, packaging and advertising, poster and banners. On the same line, Harrods has defined very specific requirements for leaflets, packaging and advertising in magazines.

Regarding the paper publications, two examples of visual identity documents that give very detailed requirements are the European Space Agency for the brochures and leaflets; and the University of Manitoba for ads, posters, and brochures.

Internal communication. Internal communication is used to reflect in this study any type of communication with the employees of the company/ members of the organisation either as paper based or via intranet networks.

In contrast to the case of outdoor communication, less than half of the organisations in the sample (13 out of 37) have detailed requirements in terms of visual identity for their internal communication, while two of them gave more than average attention to this element (scoring a two).

St John Ambulance Services defined visual requirements through online templates for brochures, kit folders, internal newsletters, and training materials. In addition, National Grid presents the templates for internal journals, brochures, and internal literature.

Promotional items. Promotional items represent the physical support of an organisation’s image and therefore the quality of these items is essential, as it directly communicates about the brand in a palpable manner. Promotional items are either

branded merchandising or gifts which have the organisation's logo and eventually the tagline.

In the analysed sample, 13 organisations use the inscription of their identity elements of different promotional material, offered as either gifts or sold as branded merchandise. The most commonly branded items are pens, pencils, memory sticks, clothing (such as hats, T-shirts, jackets, sweatshirts) and agendas. Moreover, EPSON 2013 Programme mentions that for better visual impact, printing the visual elements on both sides of the promotional items is recommended (Corporate Identity Manual of the EPSON 2013 Programme - page 99).

Visual identity elements on the organisation's assets. Vehicle livery is important in identifying the organisation and also presents another opportunity to communicate the message of the organisation. 10 out of the 27 organisation decided to have visual identity elements on their assets, and the most common case is of vehicles (Rutgers, Edinburgh City Region Brand, OMV Petrom SA, St John Ambulance Services, AusAID, Emirates General Petroleum Corporation and Sacu) and tableware (Vertigo Lounge and Yi-Ban restaurant and bar).

THE BEST VISUAL IDENTITY DOCUMENTS

In the following paragraphs will be presented things that caught the attention of the researchers and that we recommend as improvements for all companies.

After the consideration of all criteria mentioned above, the organisations that stand out as the best are the following: Cisco Systems on first place, Harrods as second place and on the third spot AT&T.

First, regarding the Cisco Systems Standards manual the researches want to mention that it is clearly structured, extensive and detailed, and it provides very good communication guidelines, especially

on how to communicate what Cisco Systems tries to be and represent.

Secondly, Harrods Brand Identity Guidelines clearly stand out by their exquisite design and elegance. However, even if not explicit and detail as the two above mentioned documents, this guideline expresses more by many visual examples.

On third spot is AT&T Brand Identity System is also clearly structured and quite detailed with respects with the criteria mentioned above and also other elements of visual identity. However, what caught the eye of the researcher is the very well documented naming form for the AT&T products, services and offers. By using "descriptive" and "suggestive" names to identify the products, AT&T tries to differentiate from the competitors by helping customers make choices for their personal and business needs maintaining at the same time the communicative focus and emphasis on the AT&T brand.

CASE STUDY: HARRODS

The researchers choose to assess the way organisations design their visual identity by looking at their visual identity document. For one of the highest rated companies in term of visual identity elements taking into consideration our qualitative analysis, we chose to do a more thorough analysis and develop short case studies.

Harrods, a rare and precious brand, is an upmarket department store located in Brompton Road in Knightsbridge, in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, London. One of the world's famous names in the luxury retail industry, its reputation has been built on extraordinary glamour and vision. Harrods has set the gold standard for service, for quality and for consistency. The shop's 330 departments offer a wide range of products and services. Products on offer include clothing for women, men, children and infants, electronics, jewellery, sporting gear, bridal

trousseau, pets and pet accessories, toys, food and drink, health and beauty items, packaged gifts, stationery, housewares, home appliances, furniture, and more than 1.3 million customers visit Harrods every year from 134 countries all over the world because visiting Harrods is not merely a shopping activity it is a retail experience. Every year 2.9 million carrier bags are used and 16 tonnes of cupcakes are sold during the Christmas period.

In examining the visual identity manual for Harrods, the researchers observed that all the following elements: logo, tagline, packaging, co-branding, advertising and imbedding the visual identity elements on company assets – are important in creating a coherent, strong and easily recognisable visual identity in communication within and outside the company.

Graphic design of the company logo has exerted a powerful influence on Harrods corporate image because this is the way in which the organisation communicates its image through its icon. For Harrods, the graphic design of the logo experienced an interesting evolution over time since 1849. Harrods became recognized as a rare and precious brand as it always offered constant innovation, service and quality to the people they have always tended to.

The Harrods logotype is the visual essence of the brand identity, refined and distilled over the years. This is why over the decades, starting with 1849 and till 2006 Harrods has experimented ten re-branding processes which could be appreciated as state of the art at the moment of their design. Harrods logotype has a rich and well-documented history that has reflected fashion, practicalities and events for more than 150 years. The current logotype is handwritten, expresses personality and sophistication and this is the reason why it received the maximum score for the logo in our qualitative analysis.

Throughout our analysis of visual identity documents it was observed that all the companies that aim to respect the logotype

integrity and legibility have clear guidance and rules for dimensions, positioning, and colours of the logo. Harrods has strict rules sizes regarding the logotype mostly because for the brand it is of the utmost importance to be clean, clear and of the highest possible quality even in the smallest sizes. Regarding the positioning of the logotype Harrods has also a strict request: it must always be centred wherever possible. In this way the visual identity is well maintained in all the publications. Another very important aspect when talking about visual identity is the colour of the logo. For Harrods this is very clear: always green and gold. Using these two colours gives the logo a very distinct and elegant look.

Other characteristic that we analysed in our qualitative survey is the typography. Harrods has also clear types for typography which have been chosen to work across a spectrum of applications and styles. Harrods received the maximum score for this criterion too, as from their Brand Identity Guideline it is clear that the company chose to use the right font as it sends a message with a great impact. The most important thing in retail is to be able to communicate with every type of customers in different ways.

Advertising is crucial in improving the visual identity of any company. Harrods has been renowned for outstanding advertising throughout its history, because it is a department shop that sells luxury items also the advertising should represent all those things. All the advertising should bring Harrods brand values to life with style and imagination. The logotype is often the only basic element used in corporate advertising and must work hard to communicate the brand identity. For this Harrods has a well-positioned advertising and also co-branded advertising in every magazine that it appears. For a retail industry this counts a lot and without a good advertising the visual identity is null.

Taking all criteria into consideration, Harrods Brand Identity Guideline received

one of the highest scores. This visual identity document stands out of all in the sample for its overall design, readability, insights and aspect.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The visual identity guidelines have as main purpose the support of the uniformity of the company logo that is why the lot of attention to this element of design. Many companies also link the organisation's values with the logo and explain the choice of the logo as it is meant to reflect the values of the organisation. The thematic content analysis of the visual identity documents reveals that an organisation is more likely to have a very well structured approach to visual image if it is a larger company or a public one.

The findings mentioned in the previous section have strong practical implications. From practice it is observed that the main points of focus of identity documentation of a range of organisations were identified, considering both the case of companies that design the visual identity concept internally or decide to externalize it with specialised consulting companies. Moreover, all the analysed visual identity documentation demonstrate the importance of understanding how organisational identity is designed, interpreted and enacted at high level in an organisation.

Taking into account all our findings, the study proposes in the following paragraphs a short strategy to design an organisational identity concept and some tips for improving an existing one.

STRATEGY TO DESIGN A VISUAL IDENTITY

First of all, the vision of the visual identity management should support the organisation's vision and mission. Integrating the values of the organisation and the desired identity of the organisation gives the visual identity concept coherence

and makes it easily to differentiate form other organisations.

The elements we advise to include in the visual identity concept expressed in a visual identity manual of an organisation that plans to create one are:


- Vision of the brand in connection to the overall vision, mission, and strategy of the organisation;
- Logo which should be clearly defined, corresponding to the vision of the organisation, matching the organisation's colours, accompanied, if adequate by a tagline which needs to be catchy and relevant, expressing the desired identity;
- Legal guidelines stating the correct usage of the name of the organisation in potentially foreseeable situations;
- One or more colour palettes that are in line with the overall vision, and guidelines as to when such colour are expected to be used;
- Typography which should be chosen to support the type of desired communication of the organisation; presenting cases of the recommended uses of the fonts.
- Layout, as they are the backbone or written communication (letters, business cards, email signature, printed communication) which include the logo, colours and other relevant visual elements;
- Presentation templates, as a specific type of layout, which include the logo, colours and other relevant visual elements; adequate to the foreseeable audience of the presentations held in the name of the organisation;
- Rules for photographs as they are often used to support all types of communication of an organisation, in order to ensure that the used photograph express in a non-verbal manner the values and attitudes of the organisation;
- Co-branding / sub-brands guidelines for all the cases when the main logo of an organisation is to be associated with a different logo (either also belonging to the envisaged organisation or to a distinct one)

- Guidelines for communication through various outdoor elements such as posters, signs, flags, or printed documents (brochures, flyers, magazines)
- Guidelines for internal communication media (internal magazine, newsletters, intranet)
- Guidelines for designing promotional items (branded gifts & merchandising) as they help to promote the identity of the organisation.
- Guidelines of applying the visual elements on the organisation’s assets.

All the above elements should be designed keeping in mind the industry specifics and best practices, the targeted consumers/ clients/ business partners.

TIPS FOR REMARKABLE VISUAL IDENTITY DOCUMENTS

Identity Matrix. The organisation that got the fourth place, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey presents in its Visual Identity Manual, an Identity Matrix (see Figure 3 below). This is an example of a very efficient way to communicate the way the logo should be used. Because this approach was unique in the visual identity documentation that was analysed, we decided to present it as a way of improving the visual identity documents as it was noted that several other organisations need to structure the presentation of the logo usage.



	EMBEDDED LOGOTYPE	SIGNATURE (MANAGED BY ITC)	SHORT URL STATE UNIVERSITY	SHORT URL STATE	SIGNATURE (M)	LOGOTYPE (OFFICIAL) (OFFICIAL)	LOGOTYPE (WITH SEAL) (OFFICIAL)	OFFICIAL SEAL (OFFICIAL) (OFFICIAL)	OFFICIAL SEAL (OFFICIAL)	SPORTS AND RECREATION (OFFICIAL)
Business Cards	•	•	•	•	•					
Letterhead	•	•	•	•	•					
Envelopes	•	•	•	•	•					
Signage	•	•	•	•	•					
Website signage	•		•	•	•					
Marketing Materials										
Brochures	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Posters	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Advertisements	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Flyers	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Posters	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
News Releases			•	•	•					
Internal Materials										
Postings/Signs	•				•					
Facilities	•				•					
Memoranda	•	•	•	•	•			•		
PowerPoints	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Merchandise										
Clothing	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Gift items	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Athletics										
Uniforms										•
Promotional										•
Gifts										•
Service Uniforms	•				•					
Government										
Note Cards/Invitations	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Signage										•

*Alternative announcements only.

Figure 3 - The Identity Matrix for Rutgers (from the Rutgers Identity Manual, page 80)

Other example of document in which an overview of which logos should be used is AusAID, where this information is presented as a table, giving the case when the logo should be used and the alternative logos recommended. Although easy to follow, the tabular display has the disadvantage of redundant use of the same logo.

Contact details. Some of the visual identity documents contained the information available for the reader to be able to contact the editors of the document and clarify any type of questions, for example AusAID. This clearly facilitates communications of comments and improvement suggestions.

Templates availability. In the Visual Identity Manual of St John Ambulance Services and of AuAID Visual identity guidelines are presented many examples of templates that are available on the intranet of the respective organisations. We want to suggest that this should be a generalised practice as it has the advantage of facilitating not only the current visual identity but that could also support the process of change of it.

Visual identity of sub-organizations. Another finding is that separate divisions or functional departments may have distinct sub-organizational identities, as it can be observed in case of universities (Albany and Manitoba) and international companies (Adobe). This practice is recommended in the case of larger organisations where the need to create sub-identities emerges.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study tried to define from an exploratory perspective what the essential elements of a coherent visual identity are. A scoring method was developed and used to assess the visual identity documents of organisations from different industries, of different sizes and irrespective of their legal status. In conclusion, for a good visual identity created for a better communication within and without the company, an organisation needs a strong logo, a nice and significant tagline, good advertising, impeccable layouts for all documentation and communication means, branded gifts and branding of company assets.

Further research

At this point, a natural continuation of the research would point in the direction of trying to quantify the impact of substantially improving a company's visual identity and its reflection in dynamics of its revenues. Such studies however are better to be aimed at one industry at a time, in order to be able to control for other factors that impact the evolution of the revenues

of a specific company, as much as possible.

References

- [1] **American Marketing Association Dictionary (2013)** - http://www.marketingpower.com/_layouts/Dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B [accessed May 2013]
- [2] **Balmer, J.M. T. & Soenen, G. B. (1999):** "The Acid Test of Corporate Identity Management™", *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15:1-3, 69-92
- [3] **Bick, G.; Jacobson, M. C. & Abratt, R. (2003):** The Corporate Identity Management Process Revisited, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 19:7-8, 835-855
- [4] **Consulting, S. E. C. O. R., & Fox, T. Corporate Identity Management: A Tale of Two Companies. (2001)** A White Paper by CRM (UK Ltd & SECOR Consulting Tricia Fox Customer Relationship Management (UK) Ltd A SECOR Consulting Company
- [5] **Cornelissen, J. P. and Elving, W. J.L. (2003)** "Managing corporate identity: an integrative framework of dimensions and determinants" *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* Volume: 8 Issue: 2
- [6] **Einwiller, S. and Will, M. (2002)** "Towards an integrated approach to corporate branding: findings from an empirical study" , *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* Volume: 7 Issue: 2, pp. 100-109;
- [7] **Kiriakidou, O. and Millward, L. J. (2000)** "Corporate identity: external reality or internal fit?" *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* Volume 5 . Number 1. pp. 49-58
- [8] **Melewar, T.C. and Jenkins, E. (2002)** "Defining the corporate identity concept" *Corporate Reputation Review*, Vol.1, No.1, pp. 76-94.
- [9] **Melewar, T.C. and Karaosmanoglu, E. (2006)** "Seven dimensions of corporate identity: A categorisation from the practitioners' perspectives" *European Journal of Marketing* Volume: 40 Issue: 7/8
- [10] **Peter, J. (1989)**, "Designing logos", *Folio*, No. 18, July, pp 139-141.
- [11] **Stuart, H. (1999)** "Towards a definitive model of the corporate identity process" *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* Volume: 4 Issue: 4
- [12] **van Rekom, J. (1997)**, "Deriving an operational measure of corporate identity",

- European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 31
No. 5/6, pp. 410-22.
- [13] **van Riel, C. B.M. and van den Ban, A. (2001)**, “The added value of corporate logos”, European Journal of Marketing Volume: 35 Issue: 3/4
- [14] **Westcott Alessandri, S. (2001)** “Modeling corporate identity: a concept explanation and theoretical explanation” Corporate Communications: An International Journal Volume: 6 Issue: 4
- [15] List of consulted Organisation & Visual Identity Documents
- [16] **Adobe Corporate Brand Guidelines (2010)**
http://brandcenterdl.adobe.com/Corpmktg/Brandmktg/Campaign_Assets/guidelines/corporate/corporate_brand_guidelines.pdf
- [17] **Alberta Government Corporate Identity Manual (2013)**
<http://corporateidentity.alberta.ca/>
- [18] **AT&T Brand Identity System (2005)**
<http://www.brandebook.com/index.php?brand-manual-download/summary/55-free-trail/2205-att-brand-identity-system.html>
- [19] **AusAID visual identity guidelines (2011)**
<http://www.brandebook.com/index.php?brand-manual-download/summary/55-free-trail/2206-ausaid-visual-identity-guidelines.html>
- [20] **Axeda Identity guidelines (year n/a)**
http://www.designerstalk.com/uploads/corpid/Axeda_style_guidelines_.pdf
- [21] **Check Point Usage Guidelines (2008)**
http://www.checkpoint.com/presskit/downloads/Corporate_Usage_Guide.pdf
- [22] **Cisco Systems Standards manual (year n/a)**
http://www.designerstalk.com/uploads/corpid/CISCO_Standards_manual_.pdf
- [23] **Conversion Rate Experts Corporate Identity Guide (n/a)**
https://s3.amazonaws.com/CRE_Media_Kit/cre-corporate-identity-guidelines-jan13.pdf
- [24] **Delta Zeta visual standards manual (year n/a)**
http://www.deltazeta.org/aspnet_client/FreeText-Box/upload/documents/Visual%20Standards/Visual_Standards_Manual.pdf
- [25] **Edinburgh City Region Brand BRAND IDENTITY GUIDELINE (2005)**
<http://www.brandebook.com/index.php?brand-manual-download/summary/55-free-trail/2207-edinburgh-city-region-brand-identity-guidelines.html>
- [26] **Emirates General Petroleum Corporation Identity guidelines (year n/a)**
http://www.designerstalk.com/uploads/corpid/_emarat_brand_guidelines.pdf
- [27] **European Space Agency Corporate Visual Identity Manual (year n/a)**
http://download.esa.int/ci/media/pdf/ESA_CVI_Manual.pdf
- [28] **Gift Angel Visual Identity Guidelines (year n/a)**
http://www.google.ro/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCsQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fourletterword.co.uk%2Fpdf%2Fpdf.php%3Fsrc%3Dflw_energy.pdf&ei=k9O2UZbVFaeu4ATS94G4Cg&usg=AFQjCNFsRF4z0nSFo9bndQTZm7177zMbIw&bvm=bv.47534661,d.bGE
- [29] **Greenpeace Identity guidelines (year n/a)** <http://ebookbrowse.com/identity-guide-pdf-d140672799>
- [30] **Harrods Brand Identity Guidelines (year n/a)**
<http://harrodscreative.com/downloads/Harrods%20Brand%20Guidelines.pdf>
- [31] **KENT FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE Corporate Identity Guidelines (2003)**
http://www.designerstalk.com/uploads/corpid/KFRS_Guideline_Manual.pdf
- [32] **Kontinental Kids Visual Identity Guidelines (year n/a)**
http://www.google.ro/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CDEQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fourletterword.co.uk%2Fpdf%2Fpdf.php%3Fsrc%3Dflw_portfolio.pdf&ei=eNO2UbvKEaK34ATXkoDoBw&usg=AFQjCNFY0D3qrcGGpJjurjZgZLHDh4q15Q&bvm=bv.47534661,d.bGE&cad=rja
- [33] **National Grid Visual Identity Guidelines (2010)**
http://www.google.ro/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCsQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fourletterword.co.uk%2Fpdf%2Fpdf.php%3Fsrc%3Dflw_energy.pdf&ei=k9O2UZbVFaeu4ATS94G4Cg&usg=AFQjCNFsRF4z0nSFo9bndQTZm7177zMbIw&bvm=bv.47534661,d.bGE
- [34] **Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Brand book (year n/a)**
<http://www.designerstalk.com/uploads/corpid/HOguide.pdf>
- [35] **OMV Petrom Visual Identity Manual (2011)**
http://www.petrom.md/sites/default/files/pdf/Corporate_Design_Manual_ro.pdf
- [36] **Platinum Guild International Visual Identity Guidelines (year n/a)**

- http://www.google.ro/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCsQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fourletter-word.co.uk%2Fpdf%2Fpdf.php%3Fsrc%3Dflw_portfolio.pdf&ei=jNS2UZX1KcTo4QTM2IHgAQ&usg=AFQjCNFY0D3qrcG GpJjurjZgZLHDh4q15Q&bvm=bv.47534661,d.bGE
- [37] **RESCOOP20-20-20 Visual Identity Manual (year n/a)**
http://www.rescoop.eu/sites/default/files/visual_identity_manual_rescoop_20-20-20.pdf
- [38] **Rotary Club Visual Identity Guide (year n/a)**
http://www.rotary.org/RIdocuments/en_pdf/547en.pdf
- [39] **Rutgers Visual Identity Manual (year n/a)** <http://identity.rutgers.edu/guidelines-use/rutgers-visual-identity-manual>
- [40] **Sacu Corporate identity (2006)**
http://www.sacu.int/about/corporate_id.pdf
- [41] **Sleek Hair Visual Identity Guidelines (year n/a)**
http://www.google.ro/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCsQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fourletter-word.co.uk%2Fpdf%2Fpdf.php%3Fsrc%3Dflw_energy.pdf&ei=k9O2UZbVFaeu4ATS94G4Cg&usg=AFQjCNFsRF4z0nSFo9bndQTZm7177zMbIw&bvm=bv.47534661,d.bGE
- [42] **Spotify Identity Manual (2008)**
<https://spotify.com/wp-content/uploads/spotify-identity-manual.pdf>
- [43] **St John Ambulance Services Visual Identity Manual (year n/a)**
http://www.sja.ca/Canada/PDF%20Documents/180299_SJA_VIM.pdf
- [44] **Symantec Brand identity standards (year n/a)**
http://www.designerstalk.com/uploads/corpid/1_Brand_Guidelines.pdf
- [45] **The ESPON 2013 Programme, the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion Corporate Identity Manual (year n/a)**
http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/HowToApply/CallsAndProcurements/OpenProcurements/Online_Map_Finder/Annex-D-Corporate-Identity-Manual.pdf
- [46] **University of Albany Graphic identity manual (year n/a)**
http://www.designerstalk.com/uploads/corpid/Albany_Graphic_Identity_Manual_2.0.pdf
- [47] **University of Manitoba Visual identity guide (year n/a)**
<http://www.brandebook.com/index.php?brand-manual-download/summary/55-free-trail/2208-university-of-manitoba-visual-identity-guide.html>
- [48] **Vertigo Lounge Visual Identity Guidelines (year n/a)**
http://www.google.ro/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCsQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fourletter-word.co.uk%2Fpdf%2Fpdf.php%3Fsrc%3Dflw_portfolio.pdf&ei=H9S2UbjDDorw4QTI8YGgDQ&usg=AFQjCNFY0D3qrcG GpJjurjZgZLHDh4q15Q&bvm=bv.47534661,d.bGE
- [49] **Witsa Corporate Identity Manual (year n/a)**
http://www.witsa.org/news/newsletter_Q309/img/WITSA_CorporateIdentityManual_v1.0_20091023_Final.pdf
- [50] **World Fish Corporate Identity (year n/a)**
<http://www.worldfishcenter.org/sites/default/files/CI/sec/Corporate-Identity.pdf>
- [51] **Yi-Ban restaurant and bar Visual Identity Guidelines (year n/a)**
http://www.google.ro/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCsQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fourletter-word.co.uk%2Fpdf%2Fpdf.php%3Fsrc%3Dflw_portfolio.pdf&ei=jNS2UZX1KcTo4QTM2IHgAQ&usg=AFQjCNFY0D3qrcG GpJjurjZgZLHDh4q15Q&bvm=bv.47534661,d.bGE
- [52] **Zone Residential Visual Identity Guidelines (year n/a)**
http://www.google.ro/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCsQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fourletter-word.co.uk%2Fpdf%2Fpdf.php%3Fsrc%3Dflw_energy.pdf&ei=k9O2UZbVFaeu4ATS94G4Cg&usg=AFQjCNFsRF4z0nSFo9bndQTZm7177zMbIw&bvm=bv.47534661,d.bGE