PHILOSOPHY

Brands as a universal means of communication

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Abstract. In this article, the author examines the place and role of brand in the information society. There also shown how in today's ever-changing and multi-cultural world brands are taking on the role of universal means of communication, deliberately or indirectly translating it to the general public.

Keywords: brand, informational society, communications, brand-communications, recursive, brand-ecosystems, personality

Informational society does not provide only for functional satisfaction – on the contrary, consumption is based on hidden contents, and brands are used as symbolic resources for broadcasting various, sometimes even contradictory, information. Extensive globalization changes together with accelerated pace of cultural diffusion cause the necessity of development of subject multicultural dialogue in order to seek mutual understanding and extend intercultural relations. It is brand that is able to provide intercultural communicative process as publicly available and clear value-symbolic system. Today brands are "guarantees" of market stability; they serve for socio-cultural integration at national and cross-cultural levels, declaring individualistic desires only for positive social changes.

The goal of this article is to understand the phenomenon of brand as a special means of communication, capable to establish relations both between individuals, social groups and between entire cultures.

Paying proper attention to research in the field of branding (H. Featherstone, D.B. Holt, D.A. Aaker), it should be noted that the studies devoted to the analysis of brand's nature, are focused mainly on key aspects of their development and support on local and international markets. But it is obvious that scientific literature reveals the place and role of personal brands in today's information society not widely enough, giving undeservedly little attention to this problem.

One of the major characteristics of information society is the predominance of communication component that is able to exert a significant influence on the masses, by modelling various manipulative techniques that are used in particular in branding practice.

The concept "communication" is widespread in modern scientific literature. There are a lot of contexts where it is used.

According to the "Etymological Dictionary of Ukrainian Language" by A.A. Potebnya Institute of Linguistics, the word "communication" is borrowed from Western European languages: German – communication, French and English – communication, which in their turn adopted this lexeme from Latin (communicātio, comunico), which means "make common, inform, unite".

As the same time the "Dictionary of Ukrainian Language" defines this word as: 1) in a special sense –ways of connection, connection lines, etc.; 2) in linguistic

sense- akin to communication, but it is not quite accurate because, as the known Russian philosopher A.M. Kagan notes, "communication has practical, material and spiritual, informational and practically-spiritual character" and "communication... is purely informational process – transmission of certain messages" [4, p. 144-145]. Moreover, nowadays communication is firmly connected to the conceptual apparatus of social and humanitarian knowledge, and in Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary it is defined as "a specific form of human interaction in the process of cognitive-labour activity" [3, p. 233].

Doctor of Philosophy V.G. Korolko rightly remarks that dissemination of information is often confused with communication. For communication process feedback is of particular importance. Communicator has to know the reaction of recipient to be sure that information was received, to find out exactly how it influenced, and to change the nature of further communication if it is necessary [5, p. 186-196].

Summarizing different interpretations of the word communication, A. Bykov identifies four main meanings: 1) the transfer of information in civil society in the process of social activity of people; 2) communication as biological interaction; 3) ways of notification, form of communication, and other technical systems; 4) exchange of information in inanimate nature [1, p. 86-97].

Communication – universal heritage of humanity and universal reality of social existence. Real communication exists for everyone without exceptions. No social affair of universal meaning is possible without the collective – communicative, indirect public discussion – recognition, that is, in other words without its legitimization. Democratically organized community has to achieve unity – consensus – through discourse. To be universal – of universal meaning – communication must also be reasoned, rationally grounded and self-conscious [8].

Conducted analysis allows to state that communication – is a two-way process of social interaction between the communicator, that is the initiator of communicative process, and recipient, that is the addressee of information.

It provides for exchange of views, information and ideas; transmission of this or that meaning from one consciousness (collective or individual) to another by means of signs, fixed on material carriers; it is considered as

universal deliberately designed form of any social interaction as the main way of organization of society.

Having defined the term "communication", we can proceed to the consideration of specific communication patterns, which are actively used today in the process of branding. Particular attention should be paid to the R. Jakobson's theory, where communication is understood as a concrete action, directed by one participant (in the context of branding – brand developer and brand carrier) to another (brand consumer). Communication takes place in the form of transfer of signs, and it is held only when all participants have a common code. We can talk about communication only when there is a result, which means that communication is the result of some process. At the same time, R. Jakobson [11] identifies six components of communication: 1) addresser (sender), 2) addressee (receiver), 3) message 4) context, 5) code and 6) contact. Each of these components according to Jacobson corresponds to particular communicative function. Moreover, the differences between communicative acts are exactly in the degree of manifestation of this or that functions, present in every act of communication.

It is easy to build an analogous scheme in the centre of which will be located brand, as a means of communication, and at the opposite sides – the addresser and the recipient, that is brand developer/brand owner, and, respectively, consumer.

It should be noted that both the original developer of the brand and brand carrier, who have purchased this brand or have joined it, are addressers, because they both send messages and implement branding communication in relation to the recipient, person, who still did not become the owner this brand.

The whole functional set, proposed by R. Jacobson, is typical for branding as a process of communication. It performs: 1) expressive function, placing particular accents in massages, sent to existing and potential consumers of brands; 2) conative function, focusing on consumers, encourages them to be involved in the process of finding and purchasing of brands; 3) phatic function, designed to maintain communicative contact, and create lasting friendly attachment to the brand; 4) metalingual function, delivering necessary information in available coded form, often on the basis of commonly understood logos and short slogans; 5) poetic function, designed to draw consumers' attention to the form, but not to the essence of brand, thus evoking their sympathy; 6) referential function, oriented on context, rapid capture of attention.

Besides, "on more abstract level two types of communication channels can be distinguished, and only one of them will be described by the classical model, that was applied until now", – says Y. Lotman [6] in his book "Inside Minded Worlds." Then he identifies two possible directions of message transmission. First direction – is the "Me – It" direction, in which "Me" is the subject of the transmission, the owner of the information, and "he" is the object, the addressee. It is meant that before the communication primary massage is known to "me", but not known to "him."

"The domination of communications of this type in familiar to us culture hides another direction in the transfer of information that could be schematically described as direction "Me – Me". The case when the subject sends the message to itself, in other words to the one, who already knows about it, seems paradoxical. However, in reality it is not so rare and plays an important role in general system of culture...These are all cases where a person applies to him- of herself, including diary entries, which are made not for the purpose of remembering certain information, but, for example, to clarify the internal state of the author, which is not possible without records. Self-operation with texts, languages and thoughts is a significant fact, not only in psychology, but also the history of culture "[6].

In the system "Me – He" variables are elements that frame the model (addresser is replaced by the addressee) and permanents are code and message. Communication and information that is in it are constant, only the carrier of information is changing. In the system "Me – Me" information carrier remains the same, but the message in the process of communication reformulates and obtains a new meaning. [6].

In the context of branding, "Me – Me" communication is quite widespread. Becoming the owner of the brand, the consumer turns to the carrier of information, which he sends not only to other people, but also again to himself. Thus, the initial message encoded in its brand by its developer, is repeatedly read, recoded and acquires new, often controversial features. Most common example of this model of communication can be joining of a person to any club, where he or she gets a membership card, symbols and other branded items of this organization. Every time using branded things or consuming purchased services (reading coded information) a person repeatedly reminds values that he or she decided to follow.

Also we shouldn't forget about the concept of "auto-communication", which we understand as the "priority of internal world over the external", in other words the movement to yourself via the recess in the inner world, or saying in semiotic language – using autocommunication.

U. Eco also devotes his attention to the notion of auto-communications or autoreflexivity. He associates autoreflexivity with the ambiguity of text, with the inability of its "translation": "To gain an understanding of how the message is arranged enforces the ambiguity of message or so-called autoreflexivity" [10], writes Eco. The appearance of two equal terms in the field of semiotic research indicates a serious scientific interest in this problem.

How is autocommunication manifested through the use of brands? Brand itself is a kind of communication, but in its minimal, folded form. Brand is a social phenomenon that is formed to influence the consciousness of the individual in the process of transforming a particular name in a complex pattern, which is known and perceived by the subject on the basis of a range of sensory stimuli. The specific of its perception is determined by many social and psychological factors, which include motivational.

Also interesting is such concept of social philosophy as "recursivity" which indicates repetitive nature of any social phenomenon as such, and which establishes a certain difference from that with is already repeated. Niklas Luhmann in his fundamental work "Reality of mass media" [7] gives his interpretation of the phenomenon of recursion in modern communicative process. According to Luhmann, mass media are constantly creating such

objects of mass communication (topics) that could continue to exist in the future. Thus, certain informational background is formed, which is easily learned by the audience and through which becomes possible further communication to this audience.

In the process of entry of new elements (texts, audiovisual design elements, etc.) in already formed rows of information, which are easy recognized, arises situation where every next item of the row is included in the previous items and thus it begins to belong to the entire series. Accordingly, infinite communication, wherein the structure of media is no place for anything fundamentally new, becomes possible. Everything "new" that channels offer to public by mass media, somehow relates to previous versions of messages. "Public recursivity of topics' discussion, preconditions of previous knowledge and need for further information – condition for continuation mass media communication" [7] – sums up this process German sociologist.

Analyzing communication within the theory of systems, N. Luhmann considers it from the position of transformations taking place in contemporary social space: "Information is not a stable substance, which can be transferred and stored. It is, rather, an event which loses the nature of information while actualizing. Accordingly, although the information is created by knowledge, it should be distinguished from knowledge (which can be transferred). The interest in information is connected with desire to unexpected. Information is a difference between what could be and what is happening or reported. Typical quality of information is the lack of measurements, within which it could vary, and the location, where it could be always found. We can only allocate the system that deals with its processing. This in no way denies the possible effectiveness of information". [7]

It should be noted that the term "recursivity" borders on the concept of "brand-ecosystems", developed by Sven Bergvall and Agnieszka Winkler. Under the brand ecosystem is understood the full range of information that is reacquired and rebroadcast via brands, this is a system of close relations between existing and created brands. Each of already existing brand occupies a niche in eco-system and the importance of one does not diminish the importance of others. At the same time, the presence of only one new agent in the system is enough to affect it as a whole and each of its elements in particular. On practice,

we can observe gradual implementation and merging of "new" with existing information flows.

Typical feature of modern social and cultural situation is the search of qualitatively new forms of communication between cultures, nations, states and people. Within the scientific paradigm of postindustrial society in the end of XX century has spread the idea of a steady movement of humanity to consolidation, globalization and interaction of different political, cultural and economic systems.

Linguists E. Vereshchagin and V. Kostomarov [2] consider intercultural communication as an adequate mutual understanding of two participants of the communicative act, belonging to different national cultures. It should be added that this mutual understanding can be achieved also by brands as communication tools. But as S. Ter-Minasova points out in the book "Language and Intercultural Communication", [9, p. 123] such exchange of information should be based on three "whales" – Patience, Sufferance and Tolerance.

The rapid changes of cultural situation in the world require organization of intercultural dialogue that would establish close relations in multicultural environment. And branding, with its all historically formed, publicly available and comprehensive value-sign system is already partly provides intercultural communicative process.

Consequently, one of the most important characteristics of information society is the dominance of communication component, able to make a significant influence on the masses through modelling various manipulative techniques, which are in particular used in the practice of branding. Branding as a process of communication and brand as its means completely fit into the models of communication proposed by R. Jacobson, N. Luhmann, Y. Lotman and other scientists. Moreover, brand communication is a socio-psychological space that, which affects both communicator and recipient, consists of a set of discourses, is based on the mechanism of persuasion and generates sign system of modern cross-cultural space.

High rates of changes of cultural situation in the world require the establishment of such a dialogue, which was able to establish close relations in a multicultural environment and create such common values, which would have warned cultural conflicts between communicants. It is brand that, as historically formed, publicly available and easily understood value-sign system, is already partly provides intercultural communicative process.

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