

From Identity to Reputation in the Online Environment: A Comparative Analysis

Andreea Sicoe

Abstract: *Building an image is the key element of a company, contributing to its development by differentiating itself from others. Thus, the paper From Identity to Reputation in the Online Environment: A Comparative Analysis seeks to identify the constitutive elements of the image from the visual identity manuals of companies active in the oil and gas industry, elements which contribute to building the credibility of a company. In order to see how credibility is built through visual identity manuals, the analysis will look at common and distinctly constant elements, from the point of view of both written and visual messages.*

Keywords: *identity, verbal message, visual message, information, virtual speech, credibility, oil, gas.*

1. Introduction

Companies, irrespective of their nature and their specific activity, are not only affirmed by their specific features, but also by their social image and credibility in front of their audiences. In this situation, a very important role is played by the information managed in the

online environment, an environment accessible to most of the people these companies try communicating to.

The visual identity created in the online environment through specific elements must contribute to the creation of a credible image that is recognised by everyone and to present the institution professionally and objectively.

Building a visual identity also draws the need for a dedicated manual, i.e. a document that clearly and thoroughly indicates the ways in which the company's identity elements can be used.

The visual identity manual helps precisely for the usage of visual identity elements on both printed and online media. At the same time, the identity manual contributes to achieving a coherent, harmonious visual communication, thus impacting the credibility of the company's image.

The subject of this paper is therefore the contribution of visual identity manuals to the process of shaping the credibility of companies in front of their audiences.

The purpose of this paper is to identify, both by theoretical aspects and through the analysis of visual identity manuals, the main constitutive elements of these textbooks that contribute to the realization of the visual identity, as well as the role of these elements on the credibility of the companies.

Therefore, this paper contains a theoretical part represented by key concepts used in the construction of visual identity and an applicative part examining the elements of the visual identity manuals using the analytical model, all of which are followed by the conclusions, illustrating the results that ensure the fulfillment of the research goal, and the bibliography.

2. The research method

The theoretical part will include relevant theoretical information that will help extract the constants to be traced in the analysis, information referring to:

- online communication, general aspects, information on electronic text and online messages;
- organisational communication, organisational reputation in Public Relations;
- organisational identity.

In order to carry out the applicative part, I have used comparative analysis as a method of comparison, comparing four visual identity manuals, available online, from oil and gas extraction companies in Romania and abroad:

- S.C. OMV Petrom S.A.;
- S.N.G.N. Romgaz S.A.;
- Dana Petroleum P.L.C.;
- S.C. Conpet S.A.

In the analysis, I have looked at some common and differentiating pre-established elements in an analysis grid, elements that refer both to written information and to the visual message.

This comparative analysis has the role of highlighting the elements that contribute to building the credibility and the public image of those companies.

The research method used includes a pre-analysis, a material exploitation phase, and then data processing and interpretation.

The pre-analysis aims to operationalise start-up ideas and to carry out the analysis plan. At this stage, I have chosen the visual identity manuals that needed to be researched and I have formulated the hypotheses and objectives of this research.

Exploiting the material is the actual analysis. This phase includes enumeration, encoding or counting operations.

The processing of the obtained results and their interpretation involves the transformation of the raw information previously extracted into valid and meaningful information in order to formulate the conclusions.

3. Analysis grid

The comparative analysis is applied to the analysis grid made up of the following constants:

1. The written message - for this constant we follow:
 - the register in which the message falls (e.g., serious, ironic, etc.) ;
 - the language register of the message (e.g., standard, professional, jargon, etc.) ;
 - the type of the written message (e.g., affirmative, negative, ambiguous, generalising, punctual, exact, etc.) ;
 - the tone of the message (e.g., neutral, subjective, etc.) .
2. The visual message that includes the colours used and their meanings, their implications, the logo, the type of font and its size, the arrangement of the images within the structure of the visual identity manuals.
3. The final part of the comparative analysis follows the combination of text and image, the coherence, respectively, between the text and the images used, the role or the impact of the text on the images and vice versa, the images on the written message, the quality of the images and their role, their clarity and their size.

Example:

S.C. OMV Petrom S.A.

In the visual identity manual of S.C. OMV Petrom S.A., the information on the new visual identity is provided from the outset, a defined image after Petrom joined the OMV Group, which wants to inspire power, confidence and stability. These things are passed through the brand logo, the names of the companies, and the symbol used to create the logos, namely the wolf.

As a structure, the visual identity manual includes an introductory part summarising the new OMV Petrom identity and the company philosophy along with its values.

Subsequently, included are chapters on the basic principles of the logos and colors used, rules for the use of the logo, fonts and sizes, as well as information on logo design and different design principles.

This manual also includes information on how OMV Petrom's visual identity elements need to be integrated into various types of promotional materials, presentations, websites, etc., as well as some actual examples of how to use these materials.

As for the written text, throughout the entire visual identity manual, the message is built into a serious register, also being an affirmative text. The information is well-structured, being accurately mentioned on a number of well-defined aspects that respect the planning method mentioned in the table of contents.

The types of language used are the standard and the professional ones. The standard language is used to convey information on more general aspects that contribute to the formation of visual identity, such as the presentation of the image and company philosophy. Professional language is used to present elements that help to shape identity, such as the description of the logos, font types, colour types, and provide technical details specific to the domain from which these concepts originate.

The tone of the message is a subjective one that shows involvement from the first personal, plural forms of the verbs "we were doing", "we should be", "we believe", "we explore", etc. from the presentation of general information and a neutral one in the chapters where the technical details are presented using forms of the third person of the verbs.

The visual message is built through the company logo, through the colours and images used by OMV Petrom.

The logo brings together the two visual elements representative of the two entities: the Petrom and OMV wordmarks, highlighted with a green line. This creates a brand-independent identity.

The Petrom symbol, the wolf-head framed by the "P" is not joined to the logotype, and they are used on various OMV Petrom applications aligned horizontally, but at a distance from each other.

The logo shows a four-coloured version, red, yellow, green, blue, and will be framed on a white background whenever it is used. OMV Petrom's visual identity manual presents the exact specification for each colour as well as alternative versions of the OMV Petrom logo.

The information about the logo design is followed by indications about the layouts and types of images supported in the campaigning materials. Each specification is accompanied by demonstrative and explanatory images that reinforce the written message.

The text-to-image relationship is a coherent one, the images having the role of explaining, reinforcing the information presented by the written message.

The quality and clarity of the images used in the manual demonstrates once again the professionalism of OMV Petrom, being of good quality, their size is appropriate, their presence does not give weight to the reading nor load the aspect of the page, thus being a suitable tool for presenting the information necessary for a visual identity manual.

The visual identity manual used by OMV Petrom is thus a complete guide that positively contributes to shaping brand identity and is an important tool for building the credibility of the company in front of its audiences. This credibility is due to the information presented in a clear way, due to the fact that this manual includes all the aspects necessary for building the brand identity, being done in a neat manner.

4. Conclusion

The present paper, through the theoretical part, has helped me identify the ways in which the image and the identity of an organisation is constructed, the online forms of communication used by organisations and their impact on them.

Then, the applicative part concretised in the comparative analysis helped to the discovery of the visual identity manuals' elements as a means for building the visual identity.

Also, through the comparative analysis the role of these elements in the credibility of oil and gas companies has been identified.

This was accomplished by identifying constant elements within the structure of the visual identity manuals, their description, establishing their contribution in the process of creating the image of the organisation and its reputation.

In fact, visual identity manuals contain both elements that positively contribute to building the company's image and credibility level, as well as negative elements that impede the development of credibility or diminish its level built by other online or printed media. Therefore, it is particularly important to highlight the two types of categories of elements so as to build directions to improve things that negatively contribute to the company's credibility.

Bibliography

1. Agabrian, M., 2008, *Strategii de comunicare eficientă*. Iași: Ed. Institutul European.
2. Cabin, P., dortier, J. F. (coord.), 2010, *Comunicarea*, Iași: Editura Polirom.
3. Chiciudean, I., 2002, *Gestionarea crizelor de imagine*, București: Editura Comunicare.ro.
4. Cismaru, D. M., 2008, *Comunicarea internă în organizații*. București: Ed. Tritonic,
5. Cucoș, C., 2011, *Învățarea asistată de ordinator*, disponibil la www.constantincucos.ro/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/IAC.doc, vizualizat la data de 09.01.2017.

6. Danilă, A. B., 2014, *Comunicarea organizațională. Studiu de caz: Compania X-trade Brokers – filiala din România, lucrare de licență nepublicată, Universitatea ecologică București*
7. Floyd, K., 2013, *Comunicarea interpersonală*, Iași: Editura Polirom, 2013.
8. Goddard, A., 2002, *Limbajul publicității*, Iași: Polirom.
9. Grunig, J. E. and Hung, C. F. (2002) 'The effect of relationships on reputation and reputation on relationships: A cognitive, behavioral study', lucrare prezentată la PRSA Educator's Academy 5th Annual International, Interdisciplinary Public Relations Research Conference, Miami, Florida, March – disponibil https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247855482_The_effect_of_relationships_on_reputation_and_reputation_on_relationships_A_cognitive - accesat la data de 20.05.2017
10. Kress, G., 2003, *Literacy in the New Media Age*, Routledge, London..
11. Niculae, T., gherhiță I., gherhiță D., 2006, *Comunicarea organizațională și managementul situațiilor de criză*, București: Editura Ministerului Administrației și Internelor.
12. Rindova, V. and Kotha, S., 2001, 'Continuous "morphing": Competing through dynamic capabilities, form, and function', *The Academy of Management Journal*, 4 (6) 1263-1280 - disponibil https://www.jstor.org/stable/3069400?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents – vizualizat la data de 15.05.2017
13. Russu, C., 2001, *Comunicarea organizațională, volumul Sistemul informațional managerial al organizației*, București, Editura Economică.
14. Suci, L., 2014, *În căutarea sensului: de la analiza discursului la design-ul comunicării*, Orizonturi Universitare Timișoara, Casa Cărții de Știință Cluj-Napoca.
15. Zaballa, I., et. al, 2005, 'Corporate reputation in professional services firms: Reputation management based on intellectual capital management', *Corporate Reputation Review*, 8 (1) 59-71 - disponibil <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/palgrave.crr.1540239> – vizualizat la data de 15.05.2017
16. Ungureanu, E. 2011, *Philologia*, Institutul de Filologie Chișinău (Mai-August): 63-74.