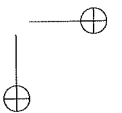
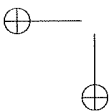
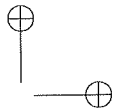
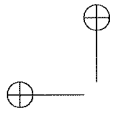


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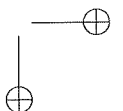
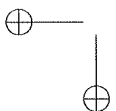
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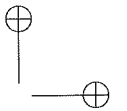
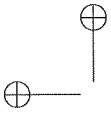


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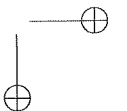
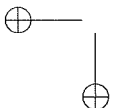




Foreword

In the contemporary marketplace, perceptions about corporations and their products are framed by multiple sources of information. Shifts in media access and consumption, the multiplication of marketing, and corporate messages, along with the demand for more corporate responsibility, have pushed strategic communication into a new paradigm. Today, different interest groups are continuously shaping brand perception and corporate reputations. The various publics are no longer passive receivers of corporate messages. They want to participate in their favourite brands and companies and expect more attention, feedback, and information. To be effective, communication strategies must be planned to develop dialogue within the organisation and with different groups of stakeholders and publics. Each stakeholder group requires focused and continuous attention; it is an organisational imperative to nurture this relationship.

These observations sum up the general theme of the Organisational and Strategic Communication Section (OSCS) Workshop of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA): ‘The Dialogue Imperative: Trends and challenges in strategic and organisational communication’. The workshop was hosted by the Faculty of Arts and Letters and organised by the Laboratory of Online Communication (LabCom), at the University of Beira Interior, Covilhã, Portugal, on 5 and 6 May 2011. About 30 participants from Finland, Germany, Romania, Scotland, Spain, and Portugal took part in the event, promoting rich and inspiring debates. The workshop aimed to analyse how contemporary developments in strategic and organisational communication theory contribute to understanding the dialogic paradigm. Special attention was paid both to theoretical approaches to dialogue and to the new tendencies in strategic and organisational communication



by looking at campaigns, instruments, and messages that promote dialogue with different publics.

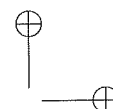
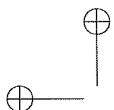
With the collected articles on this volume, we attempt to keep alive the debate initiated in those two-day get-togethers. The book is divided into four main parts. The first part, *Theoretical Approaches on Dialogue*, features articles written by Jordi Xifra, Rui Sampaio da Silva, Gisela Gonçalves, and Laura Olkonen. Jordi Xifra proposes that public relations is, 'the engineering of commitment' by analysing the existing relationship between the management of internal communication and identity and values. Jürgen Habermas is at the centre of both texts from Rui Sampaio da Silva and Gisela Gonçalves. In *Public relations and dialogical ethics*, Rui Sampaio da Silva suggests that Habermas's dialogical ethics can be fruitfully integrated into the theory of public relations due to recent developments attributing an equal status to the interests of organisations and their publics. Grounded in the public relations studies encompassed by the paradigm of 'Discourse Ethics and Theory of Communicative Action', Gisela Gonçalves's text *Who's afraid of social media? A normative approach to corporate discourse on the web*, discusses a theoretical model that reveals discursive elements inherent in the creation of corporate legitimacy, particularly as evidenced by social media interactions. The article that closes the first part of the book is presented by Laura Olkonen, who highlights the importance of *Understanding stakeholder's expectations* from the point of view of organisational communication in the era of social media.

The second part of this book is dedicated to the study of *Dialogue in Media Relations and Crisis Communication*, one of the most important areas of organisational and strategic communication. The collective text of Teresa Ruão, Felisbela Lopes, Sandra Marinho and Rita Araújo, and the text of Naíde Caldeira and Nuno Brandão, are centred in media relations theories as applied to Portuguese case studies. The first analyses the role of media relations strategies and tactics in the construction of news about Influenza A. The latter applies Grunig's bidirectional communication model to the interaction between journalist and press officer in the case of a multinational provider of business services and technology. The following texts enhance the role of dialogue on crisis communication. Jorge Remondes reflects upon the new information technologies' contribution to the efficacy of communication in crisis situations, particularly in small and medium-sized companies in the north of

Portugal Euro-Region–Galicia. Patricia Marcelino and Nuno Brandão essay about the phenomenon of crisis management through the analysis of NATO's negative reflection in national newspapers.

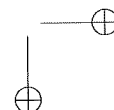
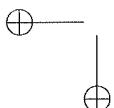
The third part of the book, *Integrated Communication Strategies*, assembles contributions from Portuguese and Spanish researchers. In *Organisational communication and sustainability*, Raquel Evangelista and Teresa Ruão study the sustainability campaigns of four European public organisations. Their analysis is grounded in the Politically Attentive Relational Construction model elaborated by Stanley Deetz. The organisational identity construct is behind the *Identity-based approach to organisational communication* text, where Arminda Sá Sequeira and Teresa Ruão propose a set of elements fundamental to the creation and maintenance of a solid reputation: vision, mission, objectives, cultural values, behaviour, optimal identity attributes, positioning, messages, means, and communication style. In another paper, Paula Nogueira and Teresa Ruão describe the communication strategy adopted by a higher education institution in order to promote science to the public and increase awareness about Portuguese researchers and scientists. Following that, Victoria Carrillo Duran, María García García, Juan Luis Tato, and Guadalupe Melendez present a study carried out on data stemming from a project financed by the Spanish Latin American Cooperation Agency (Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation) to look at Mexican SMEs on the basis of the value they place on communications and to analyse how such strategies can stimulate their development.

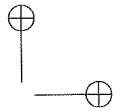
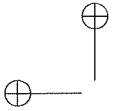
The fourth and last part of the book, *Branding and Interactive Campaigns*, is initiated by Louise Elali, Danielle Keiser, and Ozen Odag with *Logomorphism and liquid logos: An analysis of Google Doodles*. The researchers analyse Google Doodles (the decorative changes made to the Google logo), as a potential influence on the company's corporate visual identity and as a means through which Google connects to and identifies with the public, building a deeper and more personal connection with its users. The following text, *Branding Events: The continuous experience*, written by Herlander Elias, focuses on brands being a 'new star system' and how advertising reflects a branded society. And finally, Ana Melo and Helena Sousa, in *The bad, the bold and the beautiful: The conflicting attitudes towards the role of advertising*, present a qualitative study about advertising professionals' perception of their role and values in the contemporary marketplace.



To conclude, some words of thanks to the LabCom Editorial Team, in the person of its Director, Prof. António Fidalgo, and to Prof. Adela Rogojinaru, Chair of the Organisational Strategic and Communication Section of ECREA who from the first moment supported the organisation of this event at UBI, Covilhã, Portugal.

Gisela Gonçalves
Labcom, University of Beira Interior, Portugal





An identity-based approach to communication

Arminda Sá Sequeira
Teresa Ruão

Communication and Society Research Centre, University of Minho, Portugal

Abstract: The main objective of this paper is to evaluate the key elements in the construction of consistent organisational messages over time. In order to accomplish that, we propose the alignment of several elements: vision, mission, objectives, cultural values, optimal identity attributes, positioning, type of messages, communication style and means, and image. The expected result of this heuristic approach is to obtain a favourable image in the relevant public's mind, which will eventually lead to an excellent reputation and, ultimately, prestige. Considering that an organisation can have a reputation for all the wrong reasons, we propose the concept of prestige as a means of focusing on the positive features of reputation.

Keywords: organizational and strategic communication, identity, image, reputation.

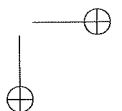
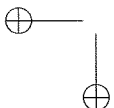
Introduction

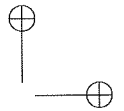
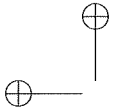
We argue that it is almost impossible to build a credible organisational image if leaders are not willing to establish clearly what the organisation is. This inner path is essential to conveying credible messages. In fact, identity should be the central concept behind any communication strategy, because the identity traits should 'contaminate' all other communicative relevant elements.

The concept of identity is complex and can have different meanings. In order to clarify our thoughts, we have adopted an inclusive formulation as stated by Ruão (2008: 93): 'a set of central, distinctive, enduring and stable attributes of a given organisation, that emerge from the historic legacy such as myths and traditions; from a shared culture its beliefs and values; from the features of personality visible in the business philosophy and vision; from a distinctive name, visual, symbols and other forms of communication; from the organisational behaviour patterns, as well as business actions and social responsibility.'

Having this definition in mind, we propose a set of elements which should be aligned to produce an identity-based approach to communication. These

The Dialogue Imperative. Trends and challenges. . . , pp. 149-154.





elements are vision, mission, objectives, cultural values, behaviour, optimal identity attributes, positioning, messages, means, and communication style.

The identity-based approach

We argue that it is almost impossible to build a credible organisational image, if the organisation leaders are not willing to establish clearly and verbalize who the organisation is. This inner path is essential to conveying credible messages. The next step is to convey internally and externally those features that identify the organisation in the audiences' minds. For the process to be completed, it is essential that the messages, coming from various sources and at different times, are congruent and enhance the same characteristics. Identity is the key element because it rests underneath and is essential to defining who the organisation is and how it wants to be perceived.

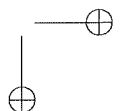
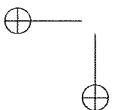
We propose a set of elements that we think will be foundational for a comprehensive identity-based approach to communication:

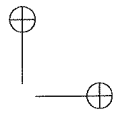
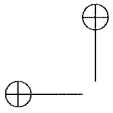
The vision – as a business in someone's dream – if it is clear for both the leadership and organisational members 'what do we want to reach', it will be easier to achieve it; this statement can be used as a motivational tool. The benefits will be felt internally – it sets a direction and frames different actions – and externally shows intentionality and demonstrates leadership.

The mission – to define, 'what we do, with whom, and to whom' is essential – sometimes the mission is very clear in the business owner's mind, but it is not clear for the rest of the 'crew'; differences in the internal perception of, 'who are we, what we do and for whom are we working' are very harmful because each organisation member may convey different messages to the outside, damaging the overall organisational image. A clear internal definition of the mission engages people, rises above any group interests, and clarifies organisational purposes. It also states clearly what the organisation's reason to exist is and rises above any particular stakeholder's interests;

The objectives – a clear definition of the in-between steps to achieve overall organisational goals is crucial as it allows members to have a clear notion of being on the right path. Internally, objectives materialize the mission, provide a focus for action, and allow synergies. Externally, objectives indicate direction and purpose, demonstrate intentionality, and clarify strategy;

Cultural values – the definition of cultural values guide and shape organ-





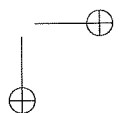
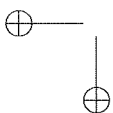
isational behaviour, which is a decisive step to providing the beliefs that make sense for the group, thus influencing the way the organisation is seen from the exterior. The clear definition of organisational values, helps internally to harmonize visions and behaviours and enhance the sense of belonging, cohesion, reciprocity and personal implication. Externally, it induces predictability into action that allows audiences' expectations to be fulfilled as previously;

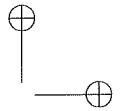
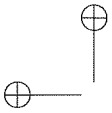
Optimal identity attributes – the exposure of the optimal identity attributes is the central crucial step to organisational differentiation. These attributes emerge from the confrontation between an organisation's defining traits and the ones of the main competitors, emphasizing to the relevant audiences why they should pick the organisation over all the competitors. This phase of the process implies the articulation of the visual identity and eventually a new or renewed corporate brand. The centrality of the concept becomes clear when identity becomes the raw material to shape symbols, behaviours, and communication. Internally, optimal identity attributes make differentiation points – real or induced – visible and raises recognition, support, and loyalty. Externally, for the internal elements enhance the same differentiation points, attract recognition, support and loyalty, help positioning, and increase visibility;

Positioning – the definition of a clear concept in the audiences' minds that allows the organisation to build strong links and cannot be owned by any other organisation. It embodies vision, mission statement, values, etc. in a unique concept consistently conveyed in order to achieve the desired place in the audiences' minds;

Messages, means and communication style – these elements must be carefully chosen. Every organisation is a *communicative body*, that is, everything that it does and shows communicates with its audiences. That can be done either through sophisticated means or through the interaction of organisational members with external audiences. The content of the messages should always meet the audiences' expectations. What is said about the organisation (values, attributes, and positioning concept must be taken into consideration at this point), which words, images, etc. are appropriate to meet that particular stakeholder expectation, is important;

Image – built from every fragment of information that the audiences process. If the messages are coordinated, consistently conveying the same strategic features over time, the expected result should be a harmonious set of in-





formation. From our point of view, it is impossible to build a credible, meaningful organisational image if the messages reaching the audience are contradictory.

This is a crucial step to building a credible organisational image over time, with effort, commitment, and authenticity to achieve a solid reputation, respect and prestige.

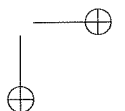
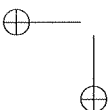
Discussion

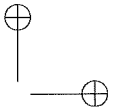
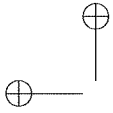
The opportunity to develop the model proposed would engage substantial time and resources, and a multidisciplinary group of professionals. The most important time-consuming part is employee training and the clarification of top management views about the business.

Recently, an important Portuguese holding corporation undertook a process of incorporating new attributes to their visual identity, with its entire internal structure suffering reorganisation. The process took 2 years and was widely reported through specialized media. For those who are unaware of the work that entails, it will appear as a 'simple' change of visual identity or an endorsement of all the business areas under the same brand.

Several authors have drawn attention to the fact that no communication policy is consistent if it is not firmly anchored in organisational identity and integrated, which requires the articulation of all communication means chosen by the organisation to present itself. Authors like Christensen and Cheney (1994) emphasize the need to define identity as an important part of the quest for visibility and credibility in a saturated and sometimes hostile environment. Knowing that the organisational image is located in the public's minds, we may intuit that everything a person receives – coming from several means at different moments, forming a mosaic of information – will be processed and form a meaningful piece of information. If several messages convey contradictory information, it is impossible for the public to build a consistent and credible organisational image.

According to Hatch and Schultz (1997, p. 357), identity has become a great concern in the minds of managers, since it can damage essential dimensions of organisational activity like reputation, recruitment, and performance. More importantly, it may develop an important role in the differentiation of the organisation in a cluttered market. As a result, identity attributes are the





basis for every communication plan, conveying and enhancing organisational uniqueness, bringing a number of potential benefits like adding value to increasingly similar products or services, attracting high quality personnel, improving employee identification and motivation, drawing investor attention, and generating consumer loyalty (Balmer, 1995; van Riel & Balmer, 1997; Fombrun, 1996).

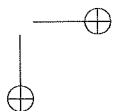
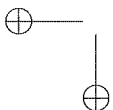
The model that we are proposing needs to be tested in real market conditions. Nevertheless, at this point of our investigation, it is our assumption that the alignment of these elements will bring consistency through the articulation of the proposed elements, and will enhance organisational image.

Conclusions

Cluttered markets demand new approaches in order to build strong reputations that will stand for a unique and credible image. Articulated communication is the key element to assemble and integrate several elements – vision, mission, values, cultural values shaping behaviour, optimal identity attributes, positioning, messages, means and communications styles – that will convey, with clarity, consistency, and stability, both inside and outside the organisation, the uniqueness of the organisation to the market. We think that organisations would be recognizable and visible to the market if they put an extra effort in articulating the messages to their key audiences. In our opinion, identity comprises the fundamentals of all the other elements that will be conveyed to audiences; if the messages are harmonic and articulated, in terms of visibility and notability, they will live longer in the audiences' minds.

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