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THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CORPORATE IDENTITY DESIGN

Abstract. *The purpose of the article* is to compare the theoretical foundations of Corporate identity design in Ukraine and abroad in the chronological limits of the 20th and early 21st centuries. The relevance of the topic is based on the growth of visual studies, the importance of visual identification and graphics sign systems. ***Research methods***. The authors employed the following scientific methods: hermeneutical, systemic-structural, functional and comparative analysis, theoretical generalization, etc. ***Research results.*** It is noted that the main problems currently remain in corporate identity are semantic integrity, laconicity, informativity of corporate constants, artistic-design imagery and stylistic unity of all corporate identity media, including traditional, printed and digital. The benefits of Corporate identity design implementation as the main means of forming a favorable image of any organization are summarized in the study. Stylistically coherent, original and stable corporate identity has a positive impact on consumers, providing the opportunity to make profits and attract regular customers and partners. For the first time, it is emphasized that the psychologically-subjective, associative and semantic properties of colours have a significant impact on corporate identity perception. Hence, when creating corporate identity media, the appropriateness of applying a system of colour-graphic restrictions for faster and clearer understanding of corporate identity and its preservation in the memory of consumers becomes reasonable. ***Conclusions.*** This study identified that there is an insufficient number of substantive publications devoted to corporate identity in Ukraine, yet, they are essential for Ukrainian manufacturers, companies, institutions and organizations of various levels and orientations: state, cultural, public, tourist, environmental and educational. After providing systematical analysis of the available theoretical source base it was found that foreign experience in designing had a significant impact on the development of industrial graphics and design of visual communication environment in Ukraine.

Key words: industrial graphics, graphics sign system, constants of corporate identity, design of visual communication environment.

ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ ОСНОВИ ПРОЄКТУВАННЯ КОРПОРАТИВНОЇ ІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ

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Анотація. *Мета статті* – порівняти теоретичні основи проєктування корпоративного стилю в Україні та за кордоном у хронологічних межах XX – початку XXI століття. Актуальність теми зумовлена зростанням візуальних досліджень, вагомістю візуальної ідентифікації і знакових графічних систем. *Методи досліджен-*

ня. Авторами використано наступні наукові методи: герменевтичний, системно-структурний, функціонального та компаративного аналізу, теоретичного узагальнення тощо. *Результати дослідження.* Зазначено, що на сьогоднішній день основними проблемами залишаються семантична цілісність, лаконічність, інформативність корпоративних констант, художньо-проєктна образність та стильова єдність всіх носіїв корпоративного стилю, як традиційних, друкованих, так і цифрових. Узагальнено переваги, які дає його використання, – це головний засіб формування сприятливого іміджу будь-якої структури. Стилістично витриманий, оригінальний і стабільний корпоративний стиль позитивно впливає на споживачів, даючи можливість отримання прибутку та появи постійних клієнтів і партнерів. Вперше наголошено, що психосуб'єктивні, асоціативні та семантичні властивості кольорів мають вагомий вплив на сприйняття, відтак обґрунтованою стає доречність застосування системи кольорографічних обмежень під час створення носіїв корпоративного стилю для більш швидкого, чіткого розуміння та збереження його у пам'яті споживачів. *Висновки.* Виявлено недостатню кількість ґрунтовних публікацій в Україні, присвячених корпоративному стилю, що є вкрай необхідним для українських виробників, компаній, інституцій, структур різного рівня і спрямованості: державної, культурної, громадської, туристичної, екологічної, освітньої. Системно проаналізувавши наявну теоретичну джерельну базу, з'ясовано, що зарубіжний проєктний досвід вагомо вплинув на розвиток в Україні промислової графіки і дизайну візуально-інформаційного середовища.

Ключові слова: промислова графіка, знакова графічна система, константи корпоративної ідентичності, дизайн візуально-інформаційного середовища.

Problem statement. Corporate identity is the basis of the image that makes any company or institution unique, distinctive and well-known, that is, it provides visual and semantic unity of its products or services of a certain orientation: industrial, commercial, cultural and public. The relevance of the topic is driven by the need for a comprehensive study of corporate identity in the structure of visual communication environment design, particularly, corporate colours. In foreign countries, the terms "corporate identity", "visual identity system" or "identity" are commonly accepted as a shortened version of professional slang in English and Ukrainian-speaking environments. The term "firm style" is used only in post-soviet countries and refers to the problems of system design.

Corporate identity constants are main visual elements that define the essence of the company, create a consistent experience of interacting with it, and the status that eventually becomes a brand. These constants, including mark/logo, colour palette, and typography, help to create a company's identity, establish trust in it, and distinguish it among competitors. The theoretical contribution of J. Balmer and K. Podnar is about deepening modern understanding of corporate branding, emphasizing significant role of visual identity, which provides a solid theoretical basis and key aspects of orientation to the target audience [1].

In our opinion, colour is an important constant that determines visual identification system in general, corporate culture and image, increases the effectiveness of the brand's influence on consumers, causing them to trust brand and have a positive attitude to it [2]. Colour is a powerful visual means and therefore should be used as an essential factor in the construction of symbolic forms (graphic, literal, combined).

In a highly competitive environment and oversaturation of the world market with goods and services Corporate identity is a half of company success due to its design that should be approached with analytical and creative thinking. Only then can you create an effective visual product. With a careless approach, which is still quite common today, it is impossible to develop corporate identity of high quality. This fact is proved by a large number of companies with high quality products, but with an unclear symbolism that hinders the success of any activity.

Analysis of recent publications. According to the chosen topic of the study, we have systematized and distinguished three main groups of sources: 1) professional publications (monographs, articles); 2) educational and methodological support for designers; 3) popular articles by Ukrainian authors, notes on the websites of design studios or advertising agencies, which often contain inaccurate information or subjective statements. Thus, we did not submit them to the list of references (for example, it is claimed that there are more than 200 corporate constants. Actually, there are only three of them: it is a sign/logo, corporate colours, and corporate fonts, but all others are corporate identity media).

1) Most of the authors who have studied the problems of corporate identity and visual communication are foreign specialists – marketologists, psychologists, sociologists and economists. The most memorable are C. Bovee and W. Arens [3], P. Kotler [4], and A. Wheeler [5], who considered corporate identity not only within the aspects of aesthetic expressiveness and company unique identity, but noted the importance of its systematic representation in advertising media. However, issues of colour, colour harmony, and colour semantics are virtually absent in these works.

Ukrainian scientists A. Shapoval, O. Maznichenko, and A. Osadcha substantiated comprehensive approach to the implementation of visual design tools in the process of corporate identity development. The results obtained can be used to arrange educational materials for courses in the history of corporate identity and advertising. Scientists have discovered that design plays an important role in every aspect of corporate identity, whether it's focusing on the strengths of organization, or meeting the unmet needs of consumers, or attracting new customers, or successfully applying new ideas of product extension for business development. Design cultivates identity through branding, from creation and composition of a sign/logo to the choice of colours and brand-related media used to advertise products. Identity cannot be created without visual elements [6].

2) A number of basic publications of educational and methodological nature by Ukrainian authors include the coursebooks by V. Pobedin [7] and V. Siomkin [8]. In addition to the above, there are also some methodical recommendations by A. Zhyrnov [9], S. Pryshchenko and Ye. Antonovych [10], and V. Savin [11] with theoretical information, many illustrative examples, and practical advices for completing assignments. V. Danylenko in the coursebook "Design" draws attention to the importance and power of visual thinking, and its latitude in coverage of the situation reflected [12, p. 191]. Kyiv Edition of Scientific-Research Institute of Technical Aesthetics defined the non-verbal sign system as arrangement, a ratio on the plane of graphic elements having a certain semantic load [13].

The purpose of the article is to compare the theoretical foundations of Corporate identity design in Ukraine and abroad in the chronological limits of the 20th and early 21st centuries. The relevance of the topic is based on the growth of visual studies, the importance of visual identification and graphics sign systems.

Research methods. This study includes the results of hermeneutical analysis of corporate identity as means of non-verbal, visual communication, depending on the areas of the company activities, geographical location and national colouring. Systemic-structural method provided understanding of corporate identity as graphic sign system with its semantic integrity, utilitarianism, informativity and project imagery as a product of system design. Functional method has been applied to the analysis of corporate identity in order to perform functions regarding visual identification, communication and advertising. Comparative method and method of theoretical generalization made it possible to compare foreign and Ukrainian interpretations of the components of corporate identity.

Presentation of the main material. During the 20th century Applied industrial graphics encompassed the process of designing from the fixation of ideas in sketches to graphic images that variously presented and served the spheres of commerce, production and sales of industrial products: product labels, labeling, signs, packaging, clothing, advertising poster, printed advertising (catalogues, leaflets, brochures). Additionally, they served the sphere of Production Management, namely, business documentation, as the prototype of modern corporate identity. At the beginning of the 21st century as a part of visual communication environment design it became an integral part of what we now understand by this term.

Graphic system or graphic style is a complex object which main task is to convey artistic and aesthetic information to the viewer, depending on their purpose (artwork / sign / logo / graphic composition / advertising poster). We stated before that, compared to verbal language, visual elements are perceived faster, easier and more accurately. Any form of communication occurs by means of signs. Sign information has three aspects: *pragmatic* (the influence of visual information on consumers behavior), *semantic* (the relationship of signs with the objects being promoted), *syntactic* (the combination of signs). Corporate identity has to meet important principle of semantic integrity, which we understand as a set of material, psychological and the representational-symbolic factors [10].

Famous scholar P. Meggs in the article for online encyclopedia Britannica notes that architect and artist Peter Behrens played an important role in the history of graphic design not only Germany, but all over the world. Behrens helped to develop the philosophy of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (*New Objectivity*) in design, which emphasized technology, manufacturing processes, and functions, whereas, style was subordinated to purpose. In 1907, E. Rathenau, the head of the electrical engineering concern AEG, appointed Behrens as an artistic consultant, since he believed that industries needed visual order and consistency, which could only be provided by design. For AEG, Behrens developed what can be considered the first comprehensive system of visual identification. He consistently used the same logo, Roman font style and geometric grids to create product catalogues, magazines, posters, other printed materials and architectural graphics. Behrens' work for AEG was a forerunner of systemic design, including

creation of corporate identity with definite design program and using trademarks, fonts, different formats and colours in a consistent, controlled way [14].

Now, corporate identity is defined as the process from idea, planning and design to coordination of selection and organization of a set of visual and textual elements. Collocation "visual communication" goes deeper into the essence of design and relates it to the field of designing visual objects aimed at conveying information in specific messages according to the principles of relevance, structuring, aesthetics and further evaluation of the effectiveness of these objects.

S. Moriarty and K. Smith define main aspects of corporate identity as components of visual communication with media aesthetics, perception, representation, visual literacy, cognition, semiotics, assimilation, narrative (historically and culturally grounded interpretation), ethics and cultural studies. Visual messages are transmitted through sign systems and the result occurs only to the extent that a person understands codes. In different languages, signs are often clearly defined, and the observer simply reacts to them. But the process of deciphering meaning is more complex, especially for graphic signs, where a large variable range of visual perception and interpretation is possible. In the integral process, where information is actively decoded and synthesized, the audience expands and fills the meaning with its own connotations (associations, views, emotions) [15, p. 228–234].

Graphics is the art of visual communication from primitive petroglyphs to modern pictograms and sign forms. We can also define graphic design as a means of encoding information into images and symbols, as an artistic project activity to create a harmonious and effective visual communication environment that contributes innovations to the development of socio-economic and cultural spheres of life.

Visual identification system is submitted to the peculiarities of corporate culture. As known, there are two types of culture in a company – internal and external, although they are linked by common sense and purpose. Important components of internal culture of the enterprise are: team atmosphere, patriotism and group affiliation. The main thing is team spirit among workers, which is set by identity. It unites people under one slogan and idea. According to the basics of group psychology, it is important for people to follow certain idea. Having the ability to share that idea with other people is the foundation of team building. Team spirit for every organization is the most important aspect, because in the only friendly state productivity increases several times. External culture plays an equally important role in the development of a company, allowing it to differentiate itself among other organizations with similar services or products. A company will be competitive if it has its own, professionally developed identity that cannot be confused with others. In this way the company will be able to increase the client base, which will help to establish a positive image and authority.

Soviet planned economy did not recognize market competition, so there was a significant decline in advertising and labeling of goods. Since the beginning of the 1960s, economic relations with foreign countries were in the progress, though, the issues of marking goods and registration of trademarks and service marks were about to be resolved. In the 1970s and 1980s, the process of designing signs was at a fairly high level. Signs were laconic, imaginative and semantically corresponded to the direction of the company's activities [7]. Since the early 1990s, after the collapse of the USSR, the necessity to create a sign (mark) for commercial activities has increased in Ukraine and former Soviet republics. It is worth emphasizing that today the role of a sign is not only identifying and informative, but also promotional.

A sign in design is considered a means of information that exists in two dimensions: as a creative product and as a visual perception. Design is relatively developed and richly saturated with colour shades area of social life, a special form of visual thinking. Design theory defines practical activity and research not as individual parts of the object, but as certain gestalt. Thus, the main requirement for any sign/logo form will be its integrity and colour-graphic laconicism, and also:

• *technological factors* include technology of making and applying signs/logos to the product, packaging (by printing, engraving, stamping, etching, casting, printing, silk printing, etc., which provide a clear image that is well preserved under certain conditions);

• *aesthetics* represents artistic expressiveness and compositional structure of the sign/logo;

• *psychological factors* are based on the fact that the sign/logo will be perceived not only rationally, but also associatively;

• *visuals* are based on the speed and accuracy of sign/logo design perception.

When studied in depth and details, the corporate identity is a very complex process in which it is necessary to isolate, at first glance, insignificant but decisive elements, such as colour (its psychological perception),

stylistics (the presence of artistic style features), the font set for logo and corporate fonts (readability and distinctive features of font sets), the modular design of logo (with indication of acceptable distances), as well as advertising media (their stability and unambiguousness) and market research (to determine competitiveness, etc.). Clear tendency towards simplification and minimalism in sign forms (graphic and letter) is evident at the beginning of the 21st century.

The use of the pre-project stage of corporate identity design is associated with the mandatory study of developed design analogues and the existing situation in the field of a particular company activity. Program of corporate identity designing as a means of visual communication with a specific target audience is also developed. This long-term and meticulous work is carried out within the framework of an integrated approach as a result of perennial international practice, considering specifics of a particular company and the concept of its activity. Main stages of this process with creative and organizational tasks are as follows:

• conducting marketing research (study of the company's field of activity, its products, target audience, demand on the market). It is important to analyze corporate identities of competitors, as well as their particular elements of image, in order not to repeat other people's ideas even in the details. At this stage it is useful to carry out patent investigations (analysis of already registered trademarks);

• formulation of the main idea that corporate identity should carry on and creation of the image that should be appreciated by potential consumers;

• creation of a corporate constants (design of colour graphics based on semantics of signs and colour combinations, as well as reasonable choice of graphic form or logo).

When choosing corporate colours, it is necessary to take into account peculiarities of colour perception based on associations. There is specific correlation between colour scheme in advertising and natural perception of colours by person. It is well established that each colour evokes subconscious associations, and there are certain stereotypes of colour perception. Colours affect nervous system first, and then our senses. However, it is impossible to give advice for colouring that is acceptable in all cases. There is a correlation between consumers colour preferences and their social status. So, bright, vibrant colours are more appealing to manual workers with low incomes, whereas most wealthy, successful, culturally aware people prefer restrained colours and sophisticated colour combinations.

Experts in manufacturing goods, packaging, and advertising support should take into account individual perception of colour by different groups of population: colour affects different groups of consumers in terms of age, gender, social status, education, place of residence, and even habits. For example, the role of environment in shaping a person's psycho-emotional state is decisive in perception of colour. Colour perception in large cities and metropolitan areas is quite different from that in rural areas or district centers. The abundance of information, struggle for survival and competition – all these factors create certain advantages for large cities inhabitants. The most memorable are contrasting colours: combinations of red and black, black and white, green and orange, blue and white, yellow and blue. In small towns, however, colour perception is very different: colours of the earth dominate: brown, green, all shades of hazel, light yellow, and red.

The essential role of colour is based on its attractive function in nature, where you can see a similar colour palette in essence. It is a colour range close to the spectral colours. But modern corporate identity in the context of complex advertising, using computer technologies, often deliberately increases the contrast and saturation of colour combinations or purposefully changes colour range to an unusual one, which instantly attracts attention and arouses interest.

Colour perception in Design and Advertising has psychologically-emotional, associative, and semantic aspects that are based on physiological, archetypal and historic-cultural levels. In the era of emotional buying, colour becomes a powerful psychological tool to influence consumer. In the process of developing corporate identity we recommend taking into account clear hierarchy of colour functions in graphic design: *expressive* – at the attracting attention stage, *psycho-physiological* – at the stage of perceiving objects and generalizing shapes to simple geometric figures, *emotional* – at the stage of perceiving straight and curvilinear silhouettes in tone and colour, *informative* – at the stage of shaping consumer interests, *positive-aesthetic* – at the stage of readiness to purchase [2, p. 125]. During long period of cultural development certain associative links of various colours or colour combinations with phenomena and events of life were established in the humanity's consciousness. In Art, Design and Advertising, associations are visual representations, which details, objects, or decor evoke memories of other important phenomena.

Thus, colour, as one of the constants of corporate identity, plays an important role in facilitating

the realization of communicative function. Colour of corporate identity media has stronger emotional impact on the viewers. Successful colour solution in the overall compositional structure enhances expressiveness, imagery and retainability. Colour solution will have positive effect if the laws of colour harmony are observed, peculiarities of colour perception by specific target audience are taken into account, corporate colours are harmoniously combined with sign and font, corresponding to company's goods and services, colour is carefully thought out from the position of maximum correspondence to the created image of the company. Colour harmonization in modern visual communication environment is necessary not only for the development of market relations, but it is also an important social task, as primarily, it creates theoretical basis and forms professional skills in Ukrainian students of the specialty "Design". In order to strengthen visual identity of Ukrainian manufacturers, companies, structures of different levels and orientation (state, cultural, public, tourist, ecological, educational) corporate identity is gaining more and more importance on the domestic and world markets.

There are some types of corporate identity that are worth considering in more details.

Aggressive corporate identity is suitable for companies; which activities are oriented towards men or women who lead active lifestyle. This corporate identity uses sharp, dynamic shapes, an appropriate contrasting colour scheme and all possible geometric elements. Image of goods and services of such enterprises is designed to associate in consumers with a sense of power, dynamism and freedom.

Positive corporate identity is oriented toward companies, which goods and services are to be marketed primarily to women or children. Round shapes dominate in this corporate identity. Colours are to be warm and in harmonious combinations, the contrast is soft and delicate. Image of goods or services should evoke positive emotions in the consumer up to excitement. Also, there is a feeling of celebration, associated with pleasant purchases, events and trips.

Neutral corporate identity is suitable for companies, which goods and services cannot be clearly associated with any particular group of consumers, as well as manufactures, public and commercial organizations of a broad profile, institutions providing services for business, education, etc.

Corporate identity in this case has to be *a complex advertising*, as current state indicates lack of unity: it is quite common to find corporate printed advertising in the same style, but outdoor advertising with other elements of image, and web resources that are a fundamentally different solution. However, only after corporate concept has been formed, it is possible to proceed to colour-graphic design of individual elements. Stylistic unity of visual media provides "accumulation effect" in consumers and forms general positive image not only of large structures, but also of medium and small businesses. As an example, it is appropriate to cite the visual means of the Coca-Cola brand, which has been a sponsor of the Olympic Games around the world for many years [16]. Corporate constants can be seen in outdoor advertising, posters, and web resources. Coca-Cola's signature red colour, firstly, reflects the continental Olympic symbolism (America), and secondly, it is associated with dynamic movement, activity, and extreme emotionality from victories in competitions.

A striking example of the corporate style is the graphic system of the Swiss Federal Railways (SBB in Germanium language), which is over 100 years old (Fig. 1). The SBB's visual communications were developed under the influence of the Bauhaus style, comprehensively covering objects of industrial and graphic design, and advertising posters were created by famous graphic artists E. Cardino, G. Erni, and H. Leupin.

Famous marketologist A. Deyan noted that corporate advertising, prompting to purchase, visualizes own image to consumers that corresponds to their expectations; but expectations themselves depend on a certain sociocultural environment, and in this way, play a normative role. Advertising appeals, which at

Fig. 1. SBB corporate colouristics: *a* – Joseph Mueller-Brockmann, company sign; *b* – company sign on trains; *c* – Hans Hilfiker, station clock. *1944*. [17]

first glance seem to be innocent toys of advertisers. In fact, they raise not only questions about the sociocultural level of consumers, but also the existing social structure in general [18, p. 10].

The environmental situation at the beginning of the 21st century prompted the development of the International Project "ECO-Culture" to increase social responsibility and develop creative thinking among young people. The first step was taken by Prof. S. Pryshchenko during the 2015 ecoposter competition, which was attended by more than 70 children from different countries living in Munich: from Ukraine, Italy, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Greece, Latvia, Hungary, France, Serbia, India, Kosovo, Croatia, Romania, Iraq also. In 2016, the workshop "Ecological public advertising as a visual-verbal model in the structure of modern media" was held for students of the Munich Ludwig-Maximilian University (Germany), and in 2021–2022 – for the students of Ukrainian art institutions of higher education. The developed emblem associatively combines 4 natural elements in colours: air in blue, fire in yellow, water in blue, earth in green. Graphic elements create dynamic movement and symbolize life on the planet (Fig. 2). Later, this emblem was used as a visual constant in newsletters, exhibition posters, competition participant diplomas, and web resource [19].

Fig. 2. Competition emblem, design by S. Pryshchenko. *2015.* [19]

The influence of corporate brand is expressed in stimulating manufactures and markets, increasing of purchasing power. At the same time, it is a means of manipulating public opinion and behavior. Brand is a social technology of informational action, the purpose of which is to direct mass activity in a certain way. Brand in the context of advertising strategy can be considered as a form of visual communication that seeks to translate the quality of goods and services, as well as certain ideological guidance into the language of consumer needs and requests.

Accessible corporate brand is characterized by being focused on attractive price and capturing high market share, as well as shaping company's profits through increased sales. The strategy for such a brand is to decrease the range of products and focus on promoting only the highest demand products. The main objective is to concentrate on the advantage of low price and increase the level of consumer loyalty to the brand through new emotional content. Maintaining a relatively low price will allow to gain significant market share and earn a corresponding profit. Successful strategy can eventually lead to repositioning of the entire product category, which was presented by those brands into another one, when brands compete no longer for price, but for their own value to consumer. Having formed a sustainable consumer perception of the brand as accessible, obtaining a high level of brand awareness and consumer loyalty as well as significant sales volume, the company has the ability to move into a higher tier segment [20].

Conclusions. So, visual identity of any organization, the integrity of stylistic solution are main tasks for designers who work on creating its image. Visual laconicity, informativity and semantic integrity remain important characteristics of corporate identity, however, outspoken creativity is not an end in itself when developing constants. More important are aspects of practical implementation and functioning in today's conditions.

The authors cited a few Ukrainian publications devoted to the corporate identity and summarized advantages of its application. It is one of the means of forming a favorable image of any structure. Stylistically coherent, original and stable corporate identity has positive impact on consumers, providing the opportunity to generate profits and attract regular customers and partners. Hiring a designer ensures that the company will receive professionally designed sign or logo matched to all the necessary and economically feasible corporate-style media: printed and digital, souvenir products, etc.

Also, the source base and experience of applying corporate colorism to create a certain image of a company or institution were critically analyzed. Since psychologically-subjective, associative and semantic properties of colours have significant impact on the perception of colour. It was substantiated that application of colour-graphic restrictions in creation of corporate identity media for faster, clearer perception and retention in the visual memory of consumers becomes crucial. In conditions of colour overload and disharmony, colourful culture becomes especially relevant in business and everyday life. For further research, we plan an in-depth analysis of Ukrainian ethno-art traditions and colour formation within modern visual identification system: signs and logos on transport, corporate image posters and advertising and information web resources.

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