

The Coat of Arms of the Present Age – The Brand

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Abstract: *This paper provides a comparison between the Coat of Arms and the Brand. In order to outline the characteristic features of the Coat of Arms and the Brand, it is important to look back at how communication developed throughout history. The Coat of Arms was used in chivalry and by the aristocracy as a representative tool. Today, Brands show features which are very similar to those that are inherent to the Coat of Arms and serve the same purpose. This paper explains and clarifies why these two presentation and communication instruments were established at different times in history, what purposes they served and why they are so similar, at least from a historical point of view.*

Keywords: *Brand, Logo, Heraldry, History, Brand Identity, Communication, Presentation*

1. PEOPLE AS COMMUNICATORS AND TRADERS

The Logo came into existence with people's desire to communicate. The most important elements of the Logo are symbols (including the alphabet) and signs which developed and were used over millennia. People and their communities used various identifiers to differentiate themselves from others through signs, signatures and emblems (logos) over centuries, and millennia. A modern society, representing itself through Logos, different colour combinations and slogans, is not much distant from the Royal Courts of the 15th century that created the Coat of Arms, uniforms and religious symbols as their presentation tools.

Since ancient times, property and goods have been marked mainly for differentiation purposes. The first Brand, as we see it today, was the mark used in livestock Branding (cattle and sheep were first marked with paint, later with a hot Branding iron) and also for the Branding of slaves and criminals. The victims of Nazi persecution were Branded in concentration camps with a number placed on their bodies. However, as time passed, the Brand started to take a different direction. Merchants started to create their own Brands to distinguish their enterprise, services and products from others.

2. HISTORY OF COMMUNICATION

A symbol is a sign which carries a comprehensive and easily understandable meaning. It can take a material form or the form of an idea. We think of it as the most convenient means of communication, which can only take place when all participants (recipients) perfectly understand its content and meaning. Symbolic artefacts of a material nature include, for example, a company logo, a colour that the company prefers, or architecture. Symbols can be classified as follows:

- **Artefacts:** human-made objects of a material or immaterial nature. Immaterial artefacts include the working environment, correspondence and email-correspondence language, greetings and the form of communication during meetings and reunions, telephone conversations, and the way we receive visitors.
- **Status Symbols:** These symbols include traditional and obsolete names of jobs and functions, e.g. inspector.
- **Anecdotes:** Stories and narrations: embellished "information or accounts" of company events that occurred in the past and are considered significant.
- **Myths:** Explain the standards and values adopted by a particular corporate culture; they form part of corporate traditions and habits.

The history of the Symbol has to be seen within the context of communication development. A symbol, from the historical point of view, can take the form of a letter that we use to communicate.

The following sections give an overview of the various stages of communication development up to the present day:

- **Petroglyphs:** Carvings (paintings on a rock face are also called pictograms) created on the surface of a rock by the use of a stone chisel and a hammer stone. When the surface of a desert rock whipped by extreme heat is treated, the rock's surface is removed showing its lighter face. The word petroglyph comes from the Greek – Petros meaning "rock", Glypheing meaning "to carve". Petroglyphs date back to prehistory, around 10,000 or 12,000 years ago. Many different theories have tried to explain the purpose of petroglyphs. According to some of them, petroglyphs served as astronomical maps, a means of communication, ritual objects or for cultural purposes. Researchers found that some petroglyphs are similar in appearance and suggestions were made claiming that people used them to portray real life, while they also might evidence the migration of certain groups of people at that time.
- **Pictograms:** The earliest written symbols were based on pictograms or pictographs (images that resemble the physical objects they represent) and ideograms (symbols representing ideas). Ancient societies already used pictograms around the world 9000 years ago, when tokens marked with simple pictures were used to identify agricultural production. Their popularity grew between the years 6000 – 5000 BC. Pictograms later became the basis for the creation of cuneiform writing in hieroglyphs and developed further into logographic systems around the year 5000 B.C. Equally interesting are the fragments of the Mohenjo-daro vase from the third millennium, which bear patterns very similar to the cave paintings found at Lascaux, with the logo of a puma with astonishing likeness. This fact supports the theory claiming that people at that time already used a unified communication and presentation system across large distances.
- **Cuneiform writing:** A mode of writing that was used over a large period of time with various developmental stages. The writing was invented in the 34th century BC and remained in use until the 2nd century AD. The system was finally substituted by the alphabet.
- **Ideograms:** They are meant to represent the abstract perception of real life, rather than to portray material objects. Through the use of their combinations or when used in a more advanced form, they represented abstract concepts such as the dark (starry sky). Ideographic elements were found in written communication systems in the Middle East area (Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Hittites and Egyptians) in the Bronze Age around 2500 BC and until the first century BC. At that time, cuneiform writing was based on characters imprinted on clay tablets.
- **Logograms or logographs:** They represent words and morphemes (a meaningful unit of language). Logograms are different from other systems of writing, such as the alphabet, where each symbol (or a letter) represents a given spoken sound or sound combination. The earliest logographs were Chinese characters invented 3500 years ago in China. The legend says that Chinese writing was invented by Cangjie, an officer working for the legendary Chinese emperor Huangdi, around 2650 BC.
- **The Phoenician system of writing:** the Phoenicians, who lived in the territory of present-day Syria and Jordan, were known as sailors, traders and travellers. The Phoenicians selected from the Egyptian hieroglyphs those characters which represented speech segments and attributed to each of their own speech sounds one sign. In this way, they created the first Phoenician alphabet containing 22 speech sounds. This writing system was developed in the 14th century BC.
- **The Roman alphabet:** The origin of the Roman alphabet has not been clearly determined. The oldest West-European alphabet was found on an Etruscan tablet with 26 characters that comes from the turn of the 8th and the 7th centuries BC. In fact, the real development of the Roman system of writing started about 300 years BC.

Thanks to the invention of the Printing Press by Johannes Gutenberg, mass printing was initiated on February 23rd 1455, which enabled a more extensive distribution of Brands. The first printed advertisement emerged in 1625 in England. Although it was just a simple announcement, from the historical point of view, it represented a milestone in advertising and Branding. In 1700 protected trademarks and stamps appeared and, along with them, patents. The first copyright act was adopted in the same year (1700).

3. THE COAT OF ARMS AS A DISTINGUISHING TOOL

The first insignias were used by the Romans in the period between the 7th century BC and the 5th century AD to identify military units. The Norman invasion of England in 1066 is evidenced by the Bayeux Tapestry, of which the first written record comes from 1476.

Coats-of-Arms can be found on buildings and structures, tombstones, rugs, drapery, paintings and other objects. In the 14th century, written records depicting Coats of Arms emerged. The most important of these were the Grants of Arms, letters patent that conferred the right to bear a particular Coat of Arms or to ameliorate the already granted Coat of Arms for special merits. The first Grant of Arms in our country was bestowed by King Charles Robert of Anjou. Some Grants of Arms consisted of a written description of the Coat of Arms; others also included their graphical illustration. The Grants of Arms were carefully registered to prevent forgery, misuse and duplicates. The Royal administration made records of them in special books; they were also collected in registers and books of tournaments. Similar documents have been preserved in our country since the Renaissance.

In the Middle Ages, the use of the Coat of Arms was governed by legal customs and standards, commonly known as the Laws of Heraldry, which provided several basic guidelines. These included the ancestral right according to which Coats of Arms were passed by inheritance, which was a common practice in the 12th century. Initially, the bearers could decide which emblem to use. Later, Coats of Arms were granted according to strict rules and criteria. Their bearers could not make any changes to them by their own decision; modifications could only be made with consent granted by the Emperor or the King. These changes are called “amelioration” or “improvement” of the Coat of Arms and were bestowed upon the bearer for special merits. The colours used in the Coat of Arms were governed by strict heraldic rules and could not be changed by the sole bearer’s decision. Only pure colours were allowed, without mixing or shading. Coats of Arms were granted to either natural or legal persons. Once granted, even the King was not allowed to change them at his own discretion. The Coat of Arms could only be granted to freemen.

Under certain circumstances, abandonment of a Coat of Arms could occur, e.g. when all members of a particular family line had died. The Emperor had the authority to confer it to close family relatives or a completely new family line. The Coat of Arms could also be abandoned provided that its bearer stopped his active discharge of the function for which it was granted. If a bearer committed a crime, the Coat of Arms was withdrawn from him.

A medieval Coat of Arms consists of the following essential elements:

- Escutcheon with insignia – Initially, a shield was used for defence. In the 12th century, heraldic figures started to be placed on the shield, thus the escutcheon became the basic element of the Coat of Arms. At first, figures were attached to light wooden shields, later they were printed.
- Helmet – A heraldic helmet served for attachment of the crest (ornament).
- Crest – This heraldic ornament was not used in battles, otherwise it would make the knight’s armour even heavier. The crest usually copies the pictorial emblem from the shield but in some cases it can be completely different. The crest may represent any of the pictorial signs on the shield and heraldic figures. In order to fix the crest and other ornaments firmly to the helm, heraldry allowed the use of so-called supporting crests, on which insignia were applied. These included plates, horns, wings, arches, caps, flags, and even human and animal torsos. If the crest is not identical to the figure on the shield, we call it a separate crest.
- Mantling - Pieces of cloth which originally served practical purposes. They protected the knights against bad weather and dust and decreased the effects of sword-blows. Mantling was of the same colour as the shield insignia, without applying the colour-metal rule of alternation.
- The Coat of Arms also consists of additional elements, namely:
 - Attendants or supporters, coats and tents, banners, standards and pennons,
 - Coronets, hats, caps, honours and badges,
 - Mottos, family or rallying mottos,
 - Other complementary elements.

The escutcheon with insignia are the essential elements of the Coat of Arms, other elements are additional and can be omitted.

Coats of Arms can be classified into groups according to various criteria. From the legal point of view, they can identify a family, state, county, municipality, guild and order. Apart from this most common division, there are other approaches as well. The most extensive category is represented by the Coats of Arms belonging to noble families.

4. FROM A LOGO TO A BRAND

A Logo is a short identification mark of provenance. People have used logos widely since the earliest times (family Coat of Arms, stamps, etc.). Today, we are surrounded by a world of logos representing Brands. They consist of name words (Coca-Cola, Google), symbols (“a swoosh” for Nike, the rings of the Olympic Games, “an apple” for Apple Inc., etc.) and their combinations (Yahoo!). A Logo is characterised by both, the rational and the emotional function. Therefore, in order to design a logo, we need to identify what emotions are to be evoked and what message is to be conveyed, so that the Logo remains consistent with the particular corporate culture and corporate identity. A Logo should be unique (to perform the distinguishing function), easy to remember (to perform the promotional function), compatible with various materials and it should clearly identify the company’s business. Colour is equally important, since each colour bears a unique psychological content that is inherent to individuals and across cultures.

By the term corporate image we understand an overall public idea of a particular subject created according to its behaviour, ideas, approaches, opinions, information and experience. Image can be seen simply as a specific evaluation element with two possible evaluation outcomes – positive and negative. Corporate image and corporate identity are very much alike. “*Corporate identity can be defined as a “strategically planned idea covering several overreaching areas that in the interaction and the same direction slipped each entity an uncommon character, thus distinguishing it from similar entities on the market”*¹ For the purposes of this work, we will only operate with the term “corporate image” as a product of the communication between an individual (subject) and its surrounding (the public). It affects the attitudes and behaviour of the public (purchasing and other) with a heavy influence. Building the modern, unique visual identity of a city is similar to creating the identity of a country. Any logo used by a specific country or city draws the attention of professionals and is widely discussed among the public. These discussions often bring the same question: “Do we really need a logo and, if the answer is yes, what should it express?”

The Brand (mark) and the Logo are often used interchangeably. In fact, the Logo only represents the symbol of a company. Creating a Logo is just one step towards Brand creation. As has already been mentioned, marks are most commonly associated with cattle branding. There is more behind the concept of the Brand, apart from the name and the symbol that are carried by it. The Brand also reveals your values, the way you communicate your ideas and emotions to attract customers and the form and quality of interaction between customers and your company. The Brand embodies the personality of your business; it is what people say about you when you leave the room.

A good Brand can:

- Improve the recognisability of your company and business by giving it “a face” and “a personality”.
- Establish trustworthiness and credibility
- Impress customers through advertising
- Guarantee repeat business and subsequently increase financial value
- Define your mission
- Generate new customers and encourage the existing ones

1 K. Ďurková and T. Huszár, Corporate identity, in Teoretické a praktické východiská marketingovej komunikácie II., D. Petranova & M. Solik (eds.), Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Trnava, 2012, p. 42.

Creating a Brand takes a lot of hard work. The work consists of several steps (however, their implementation leads to further steps):

1. Research: Market identification and research
 - Audience – Different people want different things. Find out what the audience expect from your company within the specific industry, as this is crucial for Brand building.
 - Competition – What makes your company unique and distinguishes it from competitors?
 - Mission – Set a clear vision and goals. Learn about the real mission of your company.
 - Personalisation – Choose your own colours, emotions, voice and face.
 - SWOT analyses.
2. Design: Design will help you bring your Brand to life.
 - Logo: The best known part of a Brand (mark).
 - Package: What the products look like and how the services are presented.
 - Uniform style: Uniform communication through emails and letters, business cards, etc.
 - Rules: Record the ways how your Brand is used and establish rules for its communication.
3. Integration: Use high-quality content and communicate your Brand through.
 - Specific language
 - Stories and emotions
 - Advertising
 - Social media
4. Prevent mistakes
 - Do not communicate vague and ambiguous information
 - Do not imitate your competition
 - Maintain the balance between online and offline
5. Monitor your Brand

Conduct research, analyses, and discussions and monitor the way your Brand is used. It will help you find out what people say about it and how they communicate with you.

5. COMMON FEATURES

Therefore, what are the differences between the Coat of Arms and the Brand? In fact, the Coat of Arms is something that really resembles the Logo; however, Coats of Arms were invented at times when very few people were able to read and so they became an identification tool used in the battlefield. They used symbols and their combinations that defined their nature and formal structure in order to serve a communicative purpose. Later they were used to identify cities and persons. Logos are, at present, used to identify companies and organisations through symbols and their combinations.

Thus, Coats of Arms served as personal Brands telling stories about the bearer – a person or a family line (as it later developed). As time passed, Coats of Arms changed into the flags and Logos of high-society families in Europe and were passed down from generation to generation. Later still, they developed and started to be used by business companies, which gave birth to the modern Logo as we know it today. Flags turned into business cards and shields into social network profiles.

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