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**BUILDING VISUAL IDENTITY OF SCIENTIFIC  
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OF VISUALIZATION IN COOPERATION  
WITH BUSINESS**



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## BUILDING VISUAL IDENTITY OF SCIENTIFIC AND RESEARCH UNITS AND THE ROLE OF VISUALIZATION IN COOPERATION WITH BUSINESS

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### Summary

The need for commercialization of scientific research leads to the necessity of changing the orientation of scientific-research units to marketing orientation, which is characterized by, among others, conducting research aimed at learning the clients' needs and building better communication with the recipients. What is an important element of a unit's marketing communication is its visual identity system, which the recipients use to build their opinion and their picture of the unit.

The goal of this article is an attempt to define the key rules of designing visual identity of scientific and research institutions, as well as presenting the role of visualization in their cooperation with business.

In the article the notions of image, identity, corporate identity and visual identity are subject to analysis. The article also presents the significance of visualization in the functioning of research and scientific units, elements of visual identity system and the rules of designing visual identity of scientific and research institutions. An analysis of chosen research-scientific units was carried out with regard to visualization.

**Keywords:** corporate image and identity, corporate identity, visual identity

## Introduction

The way in which an organization presents itself, its philosophy, achievements, products is called corporate identity. It is formed by three main elements: visual identity system, corporate behaviour and corporate communication. Corporate behaviour creates the philosophy and organization culture of a company and corporate communication covers the company's communication with the environment. In this article attention is drawn to the deliberations concerning visual identity system also called "company visualization" or "corporate design".

Visual identity system consists of various graphic elements based on uniform colour and graphic making it possible to identify a company and distinguish it from the competition. Also musical, or typographic elements together with guidelines concerning their utilization can be components of this system<sup>1</sup>. The creation of a correct visual identity system constitutes an important element of marketing communication of every company and makes it possible to distinguish a company and its offer on the market, strengthen the desired image of a company, to raise the recognisability of a company and brand.

Visual identity system, as opposed to classic instruments of marketing communication in form of advertising, personal selling, promotion of sales, public relations, is characterized by the possibility of exerting constant influence on the environment and one-off expense brings long-term effects in form of building the identity of an organization. Visual identity system is a kind of link between a company and its surroundings, which is characterized by the dualism of generated benefits. On the one hand it enables the identification (recognisability) of a company in the environment - among its clients, suppliers, agents, rivals and on the other hand shapes the personnel's feeling of membership and integration with the company<sup>2</sup>.

The significance of the visual identity system is perceived to a large extent on the market of consumer goods as it contributes to better identification of products and is one of the tools of creating brand image. In the recent years visual identity has been used well by banks (eg. Alior Bank, PKO BP), thanks to it the services provided by banks gain a higher degree of materiality. Also retail chains are appreciating the role of visual identity creating a clear communication message. Biedronka and its colours — red, black and yellow — are clearly associated with the chain of supermarkets under the same name and the green-yellow-red logo of Żabka is easily noticeable and distinguishes the chain from other small shops.

The problems of competition, fighting to attract a client and satisfy his needs, building a good image are nowadays experienced also by scientific units. The goal of this article is an attempt to define the key rules for designing visual identity of research and scientific institutions and presenting the role of visualization in their cooperation with business.

### **Image, identity, visual identity — concepts and relations**

Image is the picture of a company in the eyes of its internal recipients, that is, employees and shareholders and external recipients, that is, clients, suppliers, rivals, agents, local community<sup>3</sup>. Image is an idea of a company, its products, offer, organization culture, rules functioning within it, As L. Białoń points out, the image of a university (as well as similarly of other scientific and research units — added by A. Kamińska) can be defined as the totality of ideas and knowledge about it. The ideas have been formed on the basis of the influence of means of communication passed on to the environment. What constitutes the basis for the creation of image is identity understood as a system of traits and qualities characteristic for a particular unit<sup>4</sup>, which distinguish it on the market. The image is defined by all components of identity, but doesn't constitute a mirror image of its content. Identity is fully controlled by an organization, a company can decide on the elements distinguishing it from the environment. However, image is an idea, a collection of the recipients' thoughts about a company and the company can influence the image only indirectly to a particular extent.

Thanks to good, strong image and good reputation a scientific institution finds it easier to attract clients, as well as good employees. Good opinion also has a positive impact on the quality of cooperation with local authorities and all kinds of stakeholders, at the same time, the recipients tend to trust the institution's advertising more.

Visual identity, along with the attitude of an organization, its behaviour and communication with the environment, constitutes one of four pillars of the corporate identity system<sup>5</sup>. Visual identity is the "materialization" of the values that an organization wants to be associated with and its essence is distinguishing a company through the creation of an appropriate system of identifiers referring only to this and not to any other organization. The image of a company is built based on visual identity and other elements of identity,.

Visualization is an important element of the communication of every organization, also of scientific-research units. A thought-out visual identity system consistent with the mission and goals of a unit shapes its image, creates the conviction that it is a professional, trustworthy institution open to cooperation. Professional utilization of visualization boosts the possibility of the presentation of the offer and makes it possible to attract partners.

### **Elements of the process of visualization in case of a scientific-research unit**

Visualization of research-scientific units gains high significance in light of the characteristics of their offer, which often involves industrial product, or service, which can't be sold by means of an attractive packaging and the utilization merchandising rules.

The basis of a visual identity system are the name of a unit, the adopted colour system of the unit defined by CMYK, PANTONE and RGB values, as well as graphic symbol, that is, logo<sup>6</sup>. All these elements can be registered at the patent office as a trademark protected by law.

Apart of the above-mentioned elements, the visual identity system of a research-scientific unit is formed by, among others:

- set of colours used in elements of decoration and on Internet website and in advertising materials of a unit, adapter to the kind of activity,
- the kind of font applied in the logotype and company materials (corporate typography),
- graphic design and information contained on the Internet website of a unit,
- layout of advertising materials (leaflets, catalogues, press advertisements, boards and other forms of advertising),
- layout of business stationery (paper, envelopes, all kinds of prints),
- elements identifying employees: uniforms, badges, business cards,
- internal and external decoration of a unit,
- markings on means of transport,
- markings on the headquarters of a unit and its divisions,
- company seals,
- company gadgets<sup>7</sup>.

Visual identification is one of the elements improving the position of a scientific unit on the market. Opinions about a unit and its offer are formed on the basis of, among others, our visual experiences shaped to a large extent by the distinguishing graphic mark, which includes a symbol, or a sign. It is image — material and non-verbal carrier of information, which in a short and fast way conveys condensed information about a unit, which would normally have to be conveyed in form of long verbal messages.

Visual identity system transposes the identity and personality of a unit to the external and internal environment. Naturally, it cannot replace a good product, service, verbal contacts with the client, but it can significantly support the efforts of a unit aimed at attracting clients. Among the most important benefits from the utilization of a professional visual identity system are:

- distinguishing a unit and the services it offers,
- strengthening the desired image of a unit in the environment and building a completely new image,
- securing efficient communication with the environment. It is necessary to emphasize that the associations related to the optical code influence the recipients faster and more often than occasional advertisements.
- raising the recognisability of a unit and better awareness,
- facilitating the introduction of new products to the market through transposing positive associations from the current offer,
- building the trust of recipients,
- facilitating the acquisition of new clients,
- reducing costs and saving time thanks to the utilization of ready standards included in the book of visual identity,
- integrating employees<sup>8</sup>.

Based on the visual identity of a scientific unit, recipients form their opinion about it, initially identify its innovativeness, readiness for cooperation, adaptation to the needs of the labour market. It is possible to conclude that consistent application of a good system of visual identity is eventually reflected by the financial condition of a scientific-research unit.

## Rules for designing visual identity of scientific and research institutions

The projection of an efficient visualization of a unit requires from its authors learning the mechanisms and rules of reception of graphic information by the message recipients. The starting point for the preparation of a visual communication system is defining the appearance of the logo and the colour reflecting the identity of the company.

Logo should have several characteristics. It should be easy to remember. It should be possible to recreate it in various sizes (eg. on big format advertisements and on business cards) and techniques. It should be easy to associate the logo with the positive characteristics of a company.

In order to make the logo easy to remember and efficient, it has to reflect the branch in which a scientific unit operates and the branch of clients. It should have a comparably simple shape and limited colour palette and at the same time it should be original. It is necessary for the logo to evoke positive associations among the recipients.

The foundation of the visual system is colour palette, which has a strong impact on perception, awareness and emotions of the recipients. Colours can be used to steer the reactions of the recipients. For example — as research shows — yellow colour gives the impression of lightness and warmth, the combination of yellow and blue guarantees high awareness. In order to create the image of a competent company, it is worth using: dark blue, grey, brown, burgundy and violet; to create the image of a dynamic company it is worth using: orange, red, or other intense colour<sup>9</sup>.

Universities often use strong colours such as navy blue, emerald-green, which are associated with professional approach and experience. Logos of research-scientific institutions should reflect their area of science. An example of an excellent logo referring to the tradition, history and the presented sphere is the logo of the University of Oxford (Picture 2). What is used to emphasize the stability and experience is displaying the date of establishment of a unit. On Picture 1 an example of an unsuccessful logo is presented. The intention of the designers of the logo was to include oriental elements. However, the logo evokes undesirable associations. Designing a visual system it is necessary to take into consideration a series of other important issues, among others, the kind of material on which the colour will be displayed, the kind of lighting, as well as the costs associated with printing.



The decision on the choice of the font is also determined by a whole series of recommendations. For example, narrow font is associated with change and wide font is associated with stability; round shape of letters symbolizes harmony, safety and comfort and letters which are sharp in appearance symbolize dynamism, energy, strength; a font shaped like hand writing is more individualized and calligraphic font symbolizes gentleness and elegance<sup>10</sup>.

Picture 1. An example of an unsuccessful logo of Instituto de Estudos Orientais of a university in Brazil



Source: <http://www.yorkgraphicdesigners.co.uk/top-ten-logos-gone-wrong/> [accesses in November 2014].

Picture 2. An example of a good logo of University of Oxford



Source: [http://www.ox.ac.uk/images/hi\\_res/2258\\_ox\\_brand\\_blue\\_pos\\_rect.png](http://www.ox.ac.uk/images/hi_res/2258_ox_brand_blue_pos_rect.png) [accesses in November 2014].

Detailed information about the shape of a logo, company colours, types of used fonts should be collected in the so-called book of visual system, called "CI Book, Corporate Identity Guide, Corporate Design Manual, which provides instructions for designers and producers of all kinds of advertising materials. Corporate design manual may also include layouts of advertising materials, layouts of packaging, Internet websites, business forms etc."

Having noticed the importance of visualization more and more scientific units in Poland prepare Book of Visual Identity, presenting it on its Internet website. There are a few examples: Gdańsk University of Technology, which has a 59-page-long Book defining the colour variations of the logotype, guidelines concerning its application (protective field), rules of construction, forbidden modifications as well as typefaces<sup>11</sup>, Adam Mickiewicz University with even more detailed guidelines concerning visualization<sup>12</sup>, Building Research Institute<sup>13</sup>, Institute of Ceramics and Building Materials<sup>14</sup>. Vast majority of scientific units do nothing apart from putting on their website their logo in various formats (eg. PNG, JPG, DOC, Adobe), which can be used by all interested in it, including the media.

Among the most important features of a correct visual system of scientific and research units there are:

1. Compliance with the characteristics of the unit, uniformity and consistency with the whole system of marketing communication.
2. Internal consistency and compliance with the comprehensive identity system.
3. Distinguishing the unit from competition, originality and being up to date.
4. Adaptation to the expectations of clients.
5. Simplicity, transparency, facility of noticing and remembering.
6. Conveying positive information through symbols, associations, lack of negative connotations.
7. Versatility (possibility of using in various countries, on various advertising materials).
8. Building trust in a unit through continuity of contact with the same symbols, signs.
9. Compliance with the rules of visual arts<sup>15</sup>.

### **Uniformity and consistency with the marketing communication system**

A modern scientific unit should have a visual identity system constituting an integral part of marketing communication. As already mentioned earlier, proper visualization of a units should make it possible to associate the units with a particular branch. Designing a visual identity system it is necessary to also take into consideration its integrity with the mission and strategy of a unit and other marketing tools. Only such a system can help a unit achieve its goals.

### **Internal consistency and compliance with the comprehensive identity system**

The strength of influence of a visualization system depends on its internal consistency and correlation with the remaining elements of a comprehensive identity system. Only a logically constructed, internally consistent system makes it possible to achieve its correct reception and achieving significant benefits.

### **Distinguishing a unit from the competition, originality, being up to date**

The key task of visualization is distinguishing a scientific unit from its competition. This means that when a visualization system is introduced, or modernized, it is necessary to create an original system, different from the currently functioning systems. New, non-standard approach to visualization is needed especially for the creation of base elements. Sometimes, it is desirable to break the current rules of design.

There are fashions also in the area of visualization systems. However, adapting a project to the aesthetics and atmosphere of a given time has to be balanced. It is necessary to remember that we are creating a logo which will be associated with our unit for many years and small corrections in course of logo modernization (so-called lifting) are necessary and commonly used by organizations.

### **Adaptation to the expectations of clients**

What determines the efficiency of a visualization system are its recipients. They should have the decisive say in the process of making a decisions concerning the choice of logo, colour palette, typeface, etc. According to the rules of marketing orientation, it is necessary to first precisely define the group of our clients and only later conduct marketing research among them.

### **Simplicity, transparency, facility of noticing and remembering**

In order to be easy to notice and remember, particular elements of a visual system should be characterized by simplicity and unambiguity. This concerns, above all, the graphic symbol and the tagline. This feature will be very useful during printing, as it makes it possible to use many forms of carriers and various printing techniques. Research shows that we remember better not what we like, but what we find simpler

and what evokes an association meaning the fact that a sign is associated with the traits, ideas that a unit identifies itself with.

### **Conveying positive information through symbols and associations, without negative connotations**

In a well-prepared system of visualization, logo, the applied colour palette, kind of font, slogan, should evoke a defined, pre-programmed associations among the recipients. In case of a research-scientific unit these associations can concern such attributes as modernity, reliability, innovativeness, dynamism, prestige.

### **Versatility (among others, the possibility of utilization in various countries, on various advertising materials)**

Broadly understood versatility means, first of all, the possibility of using a visualization system on various continents, at every latitude. Designing a system it is necessary to remember that symbols, colours have different meanings in particular countries. Thus, it is necessary to take into consideration a unit's plans with regard to the scope and area of activity.

Versatility can be understood also as adaptation to the changes taking place in the environment. Utilization of IT technologies and Internet websites has brought about a new view on the rules of creating a visualization system. Currently the system of visualization has been expanded and includes also guidelines concerning the utilization of the logo in various technologies and visual identity book contains elements helping design advertising leaflets, markings on buildings, e-mails, materials in electronic form and others. The already mentioned Visual Identity System of Adam Mickiewicz University can serve as an example here, as it meticulously defines the rules of designing communication materials including, among others, presentations prepared by employees<sup>16</sup>.

### **Building trust in a unit through continuity of contact with the same symbols, signs**

Elements of a visual system should function in a unit over a long period, so that the image of a unit is imprinted in the memory of the recipients. Consistent utilization of the same design in all forms of communication and various kinds of media builds trust in a unit as a stable business partner.

## Compliance with the rules of visual arts

One of the rules of designing visualization systems is compliance with the rules of visual arts. There may be situations making it necessary to decide on changing visualization. This can happen, among others, in case of changes in design.

The attributes of a good visual identity system presented above point to the need for cooperation of many people forming an interdisciplinary team on the design of such a system. People forming the team need to have knowledge and skills from the area of marketing, psychology, economics, computer science, philology and visual arts. Thus, it is worth hiring a professional agency, which knows all secrets of good visualization, to design an efficient visual system.

## Conclusions

The goal of every organization should be consciously creating a good corporate image complying with its identity. Scientific-research units can shape their image in various ways — by means of the quality of provided services, a whole range of promotional and public relations activities, participation in fairs, sponsoring, organization of meetings, exhibitions, as well as utilization of a visual identity system facilitating marketing communication with the recipient.

Despite significant progress in the area of utilization of visualization for building a good company image, there is still low awareness of the significance of the system for building the value and success of a company.

At the same time, visual identity system, due to its significant communicational-persuasive potential, is an unquestionable, important element of contact between a scientific unit and clients and tool for building image.

The efficiency of a visual identity system is determined by its attributes — among others, consistency, originality and at the same time simplicity, being easy to remember and evoking positive associations.

Good visualization communicates professionalism, competence, good management of a scientific unit, as well as care about clients and employees, who want to identify themselves with the company.

Research projects carried out in Poland over the recent years are pointing to still insufficient level of cooperation of science and business. An appropriate visual identity system prepared by a scientific unit is one of the elements which can help establish better communication with business practice and as a result contribute to the

establishment of cooperation and broader diffusion of knowledge. The effect of such cooperation will be the growth of the level of companies' and economy's innovativeness, as well as better financial condition of research units.

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