

MISSION AND VISION IN THE LANGUAGE OF SUSTAINABLE BRANDS: SOCIOLINGUISTIC ISSUES

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***Abstract.** The article presents the result of the linguistic analyses of sustainable brands' mission and vision. The mission must be emotional to create a sense of faith in the brand in the target audience and encourage it to decision-making. It is important to correctly use linguistic tools to create certain emotions and reflect sustainable brands' values.*

Sustainable development according to the United Nations is the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while at the same time, sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend. There are three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental, recognizing that these dimensions are interrelated and interdependent. The Sustainable developmental goals (SDGs) consist of seventeen universal transformative goals. In the execution of the SDGs, the role of language is also eminent. The brand is a participant in the communicative process being a sender that transmits the information to a recipient (consumer).

The way a brand communicates with its audience is the brand language – a set of verbal and non-verbal tools. The mission statement, being a brand language element, is a clear, concise, and sustainable statement about the reasons for the existence of the brand today. Sustainable brands are brands that undertake sustainable practices in the workings of their business and champion them. They then use brand communication tools to convey these benefits to their end consumer hence enabling them to make conscious decisions while being associated with or buying from that brand. Sustainable brands may use a mission statement to communicate their sustainability approaches. Thus, a mission statement being an emotionally influential communication tool is powerful in achieving sustainable development goals.

***Keywords:** mission statement, vision statement, brand, brand language, sustainability, social impact.*

МІСІЯ ТА ВІЗІЯ В МОВІ СТАЛИХ БРЕНДІВ: СОЦІОЛІНГВІСТИЧНІ АСПЕКТИ

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***Анотація.** У статті представлено результати лінгвістичного аналізу місії та візії сталих брендів. Місія має бути емоційною, щоб створити відчуття віри в бренд у цільовій аудиторії та спонукати її до прийняття рішень. Важливо правильно використовувати лінгвістичні інструменти, щоб створити певні емоції та відобразити сталі цінності брендів.*

Сталий розвиток, згідно з заявою Організації Об'єднаних Націй, є організаційним принципом для досягнення цілей людського розвитку, водночас зберігаючи здатність природних систем забезпечувати природні ресурси та екосистемні послуги, від яких залежить економіка та суспільство. Існує три виміри стійкості: економічний, соціальний та екологічний, визнаючи, що ці виміри взаємопов'язані та взаємозалежні. Цілі сталого розвитку (ЦСР) складаються з сімнадцяти універсальних трансформаційних цілей. У виконанні ЦСР роль мови є провідною.

Бренд є учасником комунікативного процесу, відправник, який передає інформацію одержувачу (споживачеві). Спосіб комунікації бренду зі своєю аудиторією є мовою бренду – набором вербальних і невербальних інструментів. Заява про місію, як елемент мови бренду, є чітким, лаконічним і стійким висловом про причини існування бренду сьогодні. Сталі бренди – це бренди, які застосовують стійкі практики у своєму бізнесі та відстоюють їх. Вони використовують інструменти комунікації бренду, щоб передати цінності своїм споживачам, таким чином дозволяючи їм приймати свідомі рішення пов'язані з цим брендом. Сталі бренди можуть використовувати заяву про місію, щоб повідомити про свої підходи до сталого розвитку. Таким чином, заява про місію як емоційно впливовий інструмент спілкування є вагомим у досягненні цілей сталого розвитку.

***Ключові слова:** заява про місію, заява про візію, бренд, мова бренду, сталість, соціальний вплив.*

Introduction

Sustainable development is considered as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987). The concept of sustainability comes from the tradition of referring to economic development that almost totally overlooks other spheres of life, in particular, linguistics. Researchers are finding ways of transferring the procedures of sustainability to the language field and combining economic, environmental, cultural, and linguistic competencies.

Language always fulfills two functions in society – it enables the members of a society to exchange information, and to express their collective identity (Ehala, 2013: 89). Language as a tool of communication makes it possible for culturally heterogeneous communities or people all around the globe to negotiate over multiple issues and to be tolerant and considerate for different opinions. The constitutive potentiality of language, in this way, facilitates social development, cultural evolution as well as sustainability (Toppo, 2020: 90).

To find the bridge between economics and linguistics, specific touchpoints should be found for the synergy. These can be brands and brand language, as “the great brands don't belong to any single language – they're part of a new global tongue, the Esperanto of the check-out stand. We're all drawn together under the international lingua branda” (Nunberg, 2009: 189). Current approaches to the brand study reveal its communicative essence and indicate the possibility of linguistic analysis. In the brand communication paradigm, the brand acts as a source of information about the company or its products (sender), and this transmits this information to the consumer (receiver) through the brand language – a common system of symbols or code. From a multimodal perspective, the elements of the brand language are combined into verbal, visual, aural, and sensory modes (Ushchapovska 2017: 117). From an interdisciplinary perspective, sustainable brands can become the ambassadors of sustainability.

Brand language is a system of signs (words, and other expressive means) used to communicate information about the brand. Studied from different perspectives due to its social and cultural influence, complex structure, and integrative communicative essence. Sincere brands are associated with adjectives like genuine or honest. Hence, sustainable brands should highlight this brand personality trait to attract sustainable consumers (Paetz, 2021: 3). The verbal elements of the brand language have been determined as the name, tagline, slogan, mission statement, storytelling, and descriptive text (Ushchapovska 2020: 64-65).

Sustainable development is about intentions to live and function for the future and to express and possess certain values to comply with Sustainable development goals. Thus, the intentionality and axiology of the brand are represented by mission and vision statements, which function to proclaim the intentions and values of the brand.

The relevance of the research is determined by the need to explore the possibilities of linguistic contribution to sustainable development through such elements of the brand language as the mission and vision statements.

The object of the research is mission and vision statements of sustainable brands.

The purpose of the research is to define the features of mission and vision statements of the language of sustainable brands; to consider the social impact of sustainable brands' mission and vision.

Materials and methods

The material of the research was the mission, vision, and value statements of sustainable brands.

The research uses general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis in dividing the issue into its components, and analysis in determining the meaning of terms. The method of continuous sampling was also used in the study.

The main methods of linguistic research used in this work are descriptive to observe, generalize, interpret, and classify language units; abstract analysis was carried out for analytical processing of primary sources and selection of information relevant to research, determination of the main areas of brand research, language brand and multimodality, the method of analysis of dictionary definitions – for determination of the primary meaning of language units; we used structural analysis, which allows, on the one hand, to analyze the elements and their connections in the statements; method of contextual analysis to study the impact of non-linguistic factors on the specifics of brand language implementation in a certain context.

Results of the research

Branding relies heavily on language, and consumers often come to know a brand through language (Carnevale, 2019: 1). Language is a strategic tool for managing a brand's communication to target customers and for building brand equity. Ideally, a brand's use of language aligns with its overall communications strategy, resulting in coherent communications across all channels to its target consumers. The relationship between

brands and consumers has evolved significantly over time. Companies that own successful brands have the power to modify the existing system of values and behaviors in society and even create a completely new lifestyle. This power is derived from the mass of loyal consumers who permanently follow their favorite brands and often strongly identify with them.

Sustainability is a balance between the financial, human, and environmental. It is about living your values and acting with integrity, responsibility, and generosity. It is about being in a community of discussion, dialogue, and action – because no person or company is an island, and everything is interconnected (Sprinkel). Given that successful implementation of the concept of sustainability demands changes that trigger mass rather than individuals, such a power of brands is invaluable (Grubor, 2016: 408).

In this regard, the definition should be made of what a “sustainable brand” is. Sustainable brands are brands that undertake sustainable practices in the workings of their business and champion them. They then use brand communication tools to convey these benefits to their end consumer hence enabling them to make conscious decisions while being associated with or buying from that brand. There are several techniques to communicate this. A sustainable brand must truly integrate its claims into its business plan and practice them. According to Olivia Sprinkel, A sustainable brand has a meaning or purpose that goes beyond making money, instead seeking to increase the well-being of humanity and all life on our planet. It sees people as creatives, not consumers. And it understands the lifecycle and environmental impact of all its activities so that it can seek to continuously innovate and reduce its impact to a minimum (Sprinkel). This definition emphasizes the communicative nature of a brand to influence the target audience and thus pragmatically change their behaviour.

Strong sustainable brands have the power to initiate deeper changes in peoples’ lives and ensure the balance between multiple interests of three usually opposed sides – consumers, companies, and society. The brand is a unique blend of functional and emotional characteristics perceived by consumers as an additional value, unique experience, and fulfilled promise (Lynch et al., 2004: 405). Branding has become “the story of belonging and pervasion”, as it enables consumers to express their interests, attitudes, preferences, and overall personality through the brands they use (Grubor 2017: 79-80).

As far as sustainability is about the future that should not be compromised for the sake of the present, such future intentions are expressed in the brand’s mission statement, which functions to describe the brand’s goals. Each brand has a current goal – a mission and a future goal – a vision. The mission is a clear, concise, and sustainable statement about the reasons for the existence of the brand today: *Our Roadmap starts with our mission, which is enduring. It declares our purpose as a company and serves as the standard against which we weigh our actions and decisions* (5). Vision is a description of the future goal that provides a mental picture of aspiration to the position that the brand seeks to achieve: *Our vision serves as the framework for our Roadmap and guides every aspect of our business by describing what we need to accomplish to continue achieving sustainable, quality growth* (5). Brand values are ideals and principles that guide the thoughts and actions of the brand (company) and determine its character and current and future goals: *Our values serve as a compass for our actions and describe how we behave in the world* (5). Combined, the mission, vision, and values create a sustainable coherent message for the optimal communication of the brand with its audience.

Although mission, vision, and value statements possess strong communicative and pragmatic features in terms of persuasion and influence on the recipients, they have not yet been broadly studied from a linguistic perspective. The results of their analysis are presented in the works of L. Gregory, R. Fox, J. Fox, P. Mamet, J. Rathbun, J. Swales, and P. Rogers.

A mission is defined as follows: it is a statement of a company, corporation, or organization that defines its basic principles and intentions. Although the statement may be short, it is a guiding principle that regulates the behavior and policy of the organization in

the foreseeable future (IDM, 2002: 244); an official statement about the goals and objectives of a business or organization (CED, 2008: 551); sometimes called a creed statement, a statement of purpose, a statement of philosophy, a statement of beliefs, or a statement of business principles, a mission describes what and for who the brand wants to be (David, 2007: 44)

The most comprehensive definition of the mission is proposed by S. Brown, according to whom, the mission contains three aspects, namely: future views (vision), goals (mission), and philosophy (values) of the brand (Braun et al., 2002: 431). The mission statement describes the possible actions that are currently being taken to achieve the goals. It defines the company's goals and how they will be met. The mission should be quite simple and concise, preserving the style and vocabulary of the language of a certain brand. It is a coherent statement of purpose that differentiates one brand from others like it. The mission is a declaration of the brand's reason for existence. A clear formulation of the mission is important for the effective establishment of goals and strategies (Drucker, 1986: 59).

J. Swales and P. Rogers define the mission statement from a linguistic standpoint as a selective class of genres that primarily act as carriers of ideologies and corporate culture (Swales, 1995: 230). P. Mamet claims that the mission statement often has the structure of a discursive colony (Mamet, 2014: 190) – a type of text, the components of which perform the same functions, can function independently, and are not based on a sequence, but are united by the framework of the context (Hoey, 1986: 13). R. Fox and J. Fox believe that the most noticeable sign of corporate public discourse occurs precisely in the mission, which is permeated with hyperbolic language (Fox, 2004: 171).

From a pragmatic perspective, when creating a mission, it is necessary to determine the target audience of consumers to whom the mission statement is directed, to obtain high sales and concentration of marketing resources. However, the application should be universal to attract different recipients to ensure a sustainable source of income (Horwath, 2005: 4). The mission must be emotional to create a sense of faith in the brand in the target audience and encourage decision-making. It is important to correctly use linguistic tools to create certain emotions and reflect brand values.

In an organizational context, a mission statement promotes ideology and provides a portrait whereby members make sense of their experience within its contextual structure (Rathbun, 2007: 552). It is worth noting that in terms of business organization, each brand has its mission, but not all of them have it documented or set out in writing.

In internet sources, the writing of hypertexts with the use of appropriate stylistic means and their translation is aimed at reaching a larger audience and exerting a stronger influence (Haman, 2022: 176). Thus, appealing to the digital preferences of the target audience, most brands post written mission statements on official websites in the “*About us*” or “*Our mission*” sections. Besides, this verbal element can be found in advertising booklets, postcards, or on the packaging. A mission statement can be both a separate element of the advertising text or completely coincide with the tagline or slogan. There is an agreement between the outcome of the linguistic research indicated above and research of mission statements from the managerial point of view that a slogan is one of the major generic forms of mission statements (Mamet, 2013: 98).

A mission statement as well as a slogan or tagline, can be comprised of only one sentence: *Our mission is to be an authentic community of artists and musicians who create out of wholeness and inspire the world into connection with God* (2) or a text: *Our mission is to make diversity, equity & inclusion our way of doing business. We will advance our culture of belonging where open hearts and minds combine to unleash the potential of the brilliant mix of people, in every corner of Johnson & Johnson* (3).

Considering the above-mentioned, a mission statement is emotionally hyperbolic to appeal to consumers, spark interest, and motivate action. To fulfill the functions and achieve the goal of the mission statement, certain linguistic tools are used. To positively represent the activity of the brand, nouns with a value implication are used: *goal, principle,*

values, culture, environment, sustainability, relationship, standards, experience, perfection, quality, and respect. Verbs and predicates that characterize productive discursive processes, such as: *inspire, try, strive, seek, respect, create, nurture, discover, serve, believe, focus, provide, be dedicated to, be committed to, be aware of, do one's best, etc.* are immanent part of effective mission statements. The most influential tool is the use of the determinants *we, us, our* to motivate the target audience by engaging in their community and emphasizing inclusiveness.

The Sustainable Development Goals are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice. The seventeen Goals are all interconnected, and to leave no one behind, we must achieve them all by 2030 (Harding-Esch, 2017: 7). Language, be it indigenous universal, or politicized, can effectively shape the future of global sustainability by engaging audiences on both factual and emotional levels (Ploof, 2016: 2). Language informs the thinking of the mind of the individual and by extension, the community, given that beliefs are thoughts. Without language, the idea of the SDGs cannot be conceived (Ezeh, 2020: 59). There are various criteria for establishing successful a sustainable brand strategy, like uniqueness, innovativeness, co-creation of sustainable value, and accurate and clever communication (Danciu, 2015: 53).

Thus, a mission statement being an emotionally influential communication tool is powerful in achieving sustainable development goals. In a mission statement, a brand assures consumers that it acts sustainably for the future life of the planet and society: *Our purpose is to make sustainable living commonplace... We strive to do more good for our planet and our society – not just less harm. We want to act on the social and environmental issues facing the world and we want to enhance people's lives with our innovative, sustainable, and high-quality products* (8).

Using the words of inclusiveness, a brand makes a powerful social impact on consumers through its mission statement: *OUR MISSION. To inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup, and one neighborhood at a time. OUR VALUES. With our partners, our coffee, and our customers at our core, we live these values: Creating a culture of warmth and belonging, where everyone is welcome. Delivering our very best in all we do, holding ourselves accountable for results. Acting with courage, challenging the status quo, and finding new ways to grow our company and each other. Being present, connecting with transparency, dignity, and respect. We are performance-driven, through the lens of humanity* (4).

Healthy food being one of the SDGs, brands can show a better way of eating thus involving people in a healthy lifestyle: *We believe there's a better way to feed our future. By shifting from animal to plant-based meat, we can positively affect growing global issues such as constraints on natural resources and animal welfare. After all, the positive choices we make every day – no matter how small – can have a great impact on our world* (1).

Taking care of the earth and environment is for sustainable development is about. Therefore, sustainable brands strive to emphasize their mission by proclaiming their environment-friendly actions: *EarthwiseTM products are designed with the planet in mind. For a product to be considered EarthwiseTM, at least one of its main components must contain more sustainable materials, and at a minimum percentage* (7). *We strive to create products from sustainable sources and build relationships with our communities* (6).

By using sustainable language, brands can win the market, attract sustainable-conscious consumers, and make an impact on society. We should not, though, forget about the so-called “greenwashing” a form of advertising or marketingspin in which green PR and green marketing are deceptively used to persuade the public that an organization's products, aims, and policies are environmentally friendly.

Conclusions

Upon the analysis of the brand language, we can conclude that in the mission statement, it is implemented to affirm the brand's intentions and values. A mission statement is a clear, concise, and long-lasting statement about the brand's reasons for existence. The mission contains three aspects: goals (mission), future views (vision), and the philosophy (values) of the brand. A sustainable brand is one that has a meaning or purpose that goes beyond making money, instead seeking to increase the well-being of humanity and all life on our planet. The mission statement of sustainable brands is emotionally hyperbolic to appeal to consumers' minds, generate interest, and motivate action. It is an emotionally influential communication tool, powerful in achieving sustainable development goals.

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