

## CONVERGENCE OF BRAND LANGUAGE ELEMENTS

**I. V. Ushchapovska**, *postgraduate*  
 Sumy State University,  
 2, Rymyskogo-Korsakova St., 40007, Sumy, Ukraine  
 E-mail: irynaushch@gmail.com

*In the attempt to find a solution for the successful brand formation, scientists have developed different approaches to brand studying. In the article, brand is considered from the linguistic perspective. In particular, brand language, the way brand communicates with the audience, is the object of the study. Therefore, the aim of the article is to identify brand language as an integrative linguistic feature; to state the convergence of verbal and non-verbal elements of brand language when forming a successful brand language.*

*Brand language refers to the words, signs, sounds and other expressive means used to communicate the brand. Brand language comprises verbal and non-verbal identities, meaning it is developed on the verbal and non-verbal levels. Brand's verbal identity is the words, phrases, and terms used to describe the brand. Non-verbal elements of brand language can be divided into visual and audial identities. Visual identity or visual brand language contains the graphic components that together provide a system for identifying and representing a brand. Audial identity can be described as the unique, proprietary music and sound that emotionally convey a brand's essence and values. Being perceived, brand language elements blend in the minds of the audience, providing interaction of the words, colors, graphics, and sounds. In the article, we suggest brand language be an example of the convergence of verbal and nonverbal elements.*

**Key words:** brand, brand language, convergence, verbal identity, visual identity, audial identity, brand communication.

Globalization combined with the economic crisis, force brands to search for effective tools to ensure their popularity and competitiveness. In search of stability and certainty, consumers rely on brand's recognizability, symbolism, and significance. Practitioners, market consultants, and scientists have researched and developed many detailed brand concepts. However, despite a large amount of literature on this issue, the questions of what brands actually mean to consumers, why consumers like particular brands, and what makes these brands outstanding and competitive still remain unanswered.

**The relevance of this paper.** For a long time brand has been the object of predominantly economic studies. It has been considered an economic phenomenon with its specific features and functions. At present, linguistic brand studies are becoming more popular and rather contributing for building strong brands. In Ukraine, quite a few scholarly works are concerned with the linguistic essence of brand and only separate elements of brand such as name, logo or copy are studied. There is no distinct definition of brand language as a linguistic phenomenon, which is the **object of the study** of this article. There is no clear system and definitions of brand language elements. The interaction and convergence of the verbal and non-verbal elements of brand language have never been considered.

**The purpose of the study** is to identify brand language as an integrative linguistic feature of the brand; to study the convergence of verbal and non-verbal elements of brand language. To achieve the goal we have to fulfill the following **tasks**: 1) to state the socio-linguistic essence of brand; 2) to define brand language, distinguish its elements; 3) to show the convergence of brand language elements.

We got used to the word "brand"; it became a part of our active vocabulary. However, there are some issues to be cleared and questions to be answered. How can we defined the term "brand"? What are its etymology and semantics? What is its position in the fields of

science? Can brand be considered from by linguistics? How does brand communicate with its audience (consumers)? Therefore, in this article, we will try to answer these questions.

The word brand comes from the Old Norse *brandr*, meaning to burn. Its pre-history lies in fire marking the cattle, branding also existed in the ancient civilizations where potters made their marks on the wares they made. Brands were reintroduced during the Industrial revolution to recognize geographical origins, producers, and distributors of goods. *Brand*, in its modern usage, is rather confusing. Conversations about brand and branding are so steeped in so much mythology, terminology, and pseudo-expertise that few marketing people and even fewer senior managers can make any sense out of the babble. And that's the problem [1, p. 11]. The term is given a variety of contrasting meanings with different implications to consumers' perception of what *brand* actually is. There have been a number of definitions enriching the business vocabulary. Most of them stick to the point that it is an economic term. However, very few sources consider it from the linguistic perspective. Collins Dictionary identifies brand as a particular product or a characteristic that identifies a particular producer [2, p. 96]. The American Heritage Dictionary gives the definition of brand as a trademark or distinctive name identifying a product, service, or organization [3].

Market researchers and marketers take a practical approach to the definition of the term. The American Marketing Association describes a brand as the name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's goods or service as distinct from those of other sellers [4]. Steve Yastrow takes an opposite look at the brand, stating that brand is not simply the message the marketer intends to send to a customer. A brand is a message the customer perceives about the product, which may be something altogether different from the message the marketer intended to send [5, p. 8]. Jean-Noel Kapferer though claims that brand is not a product. It is the product's essence, its meaning, and its direction and it defines its identity in time and space. [6, p. 11]. A brand is a mark, a sign that, by producing various meanings, generates pragmatic effects on subjects and objects: it identifies, transforms and gives them value. A wide roster of social phenomena are rooted in brands as signs: communication strategies, production, and reception of discourses, inter-subjective dynamics, changes in a collective imaginary, identity construction processes, forms of life [7, p. 46]. Considering the above-cited statements, we can draw a definition of brand from a semiotic perspective. Brand is a set of meanings and associations about a sign created at an individual level due to some definite communication situations that uses meaningful semiotic resources to generate cognitive, affective and behavioural changes on the target audience.

There is no doubt that brand is a not a purely economic phenomenon. We can distinguish such approaches to the brand studying as 1) business-oriented; 2) historical; 3) socio-cultural. Brand was studied by such marketers as Jean-Noel Kapferer, Steve Yastrow, John Bennett and Sandra Moriarty, Kevin Lane Keller, Brian Sternthal and Alice Tybout. Although the business oriented approach is considered a dominating one, brand and its attributes should be further studied by sociology, philosophy, cultural science, social communications, political science, and linguistics. A powerful political point about brands is their ability to cross borders, and potentially to bind people and cultures together more quickly and effectively than national governments, or the bureaucratic wheels of international law, ever could [8, p. 4]. We can interpret brand as a socio-cultural phenomenon, a specific semantic object, which expressive means are built around a semantic core and pose the basic values as a subject of communication. The content and meaning of individual attributes are revealed and get their certainty in the context of a symbolic space of the brand. Brand acts as a marketing modification of the image, concentrating in its communicative and creative possibilities and socio-cultural meanings. Rather few sociologists and linguists took brand as an object of their studies. We can mention Judy Delin, Wally Olins, Syugo Hotta, Ivana First and Shawn M. Clankie.

Brands convey ideas, emotions, and desires by using meaningful systems of signs. Meanings are communicated through a specific language of brand that uses all five senses. Using a certain system of signs, brand creates its own way to express its semantic universe,

by using a particular way of exposing ideas, a way that becomes the language of the brand [9, p. 2]. Pictures and logos, taglines, copies, and content can be the means to communicate a company's brand. Every day we use language to remove ambiguity and uncertainty in our communication with one another. Language is a shared thread used to build our socio-economic interests and enhance our cultural value system. The way we use language is extremely important. Language connects people to each other and to brands. Building a strong brand language could be the key to its success [10]. Brand is a part of the communicative process, it has speakers and listeners and its language has syntax and semantics. Brand language has signs, symbols, and interpretation tools the same way languages and other forms of communication do. As far as a semiotic system is a set of patterned relationships among three elements of a "triangle of meaning": referent, concept, and symbol, a successful brand integrates all the three elements. There is the brand itself, the idea we have about the brand, and the ways we can express our idea of the brand, verbally, visually, audially or through other means of perception.

Brand language refers to the words, terms, signs and other expressive means used to communicate the brand. Every form of information says something about the brand. Developing and encouraging a positive brand language can help a company distinguish itself from competitors and create strong associations with its products. Everybody communicates on two levels, namely verbally and non-verbally. Thus, brand language comprises verbal and non-verbal identities, meaning it is developed on the verbal and non-verbal levels. Brand's verbal identity refers to the words, phrases, and terms used by a company to describe itself or its products. Verbal identity's "basic elements" aim to make a brand's language distinctive [11, p. 3]. They comprise the following: name, tagline, slogan, tone of voice, descriptors, and storytelling.

Verbal identity is also a marketing strategy used to help consumers identify and find connections between specific words and a given product. Creating a strong verbal identity ensures awareness for the brand; and differentiates it from the competitors and similar products. We are certain to say that words cause emotions. Verbal linguistic means may have a very strong persuasive influence on the target recipient audience (consumers). Verbal identity is sure to carry emotional weight, and the consumers' feelings are most likely to be affected by the brand language. The use of language is increasingly important, especially when creating international brand names and developing a cross-cultural advertising campaign.

Verbal identity of brand language plays an important part in producing the persuasive effect. It helps consumers choose products relying on the information transmitted by the brand language. Consumers' choice very often does not depend on the previous experience or knowledge about the goods or services but mostly on the specific semantic properties of the language that describes the features associated with the goods or services. Verbal identity is important for consumers to perceive, remember and connect words with brands. Some examples, like *Starbucks's "We proudly serve"*, *Maxwell House Coffee's "Good to the last drop!"*, or *Lavazza's "Espress yourself"*, prove that the brand put into words has the face, the spirit, and the viewpoint.

However, verbal communication, or the spoken words, represent a very small portion (less than 10%) while non-verbal language represents over 50% of our overall message. Mastering the language of non-verbal communication becomes more and more an art and has an impact on our outcomes. The non-verbal message will always be a more accurate representation of the person's feelings, attitudes or beliefs [12, p. 2]. Same with brands. Any company will make little progress if it cannot show why its brand is different. This means taking specific approaches to creating both verbal and non-verbal identities, using linguistic and extra-linguistic means, which is the creation of logos and symbols, the selection of colours and typography, the individual way of illustration and photography, pattern, music style and the use of specific recognizable language.

Being perceived, the brand language elements blend in the minds of the audience, providing interaction of the words, colors, graphics, and personalized attributes. This also

proves brand's creative potential, involvement in the sign system and its communicational capabilities. Verbal and non-verbal elements of brand language cannot exist or function separately. They co-operate, emphasize and interchange each other's communicative functions. Whereas convergence has been defined as a strategy, whereby individuals adapt to each other's communicative behaviors in terms of a wide range of linguistic-prosodic-nonverbal features [13, p. 7], we may suggest that brand language is a bright example of the convergence of verbal and nonverbal elements.

Non-verbal elements of brand language can be divided into the visual and audial identities. Since humans are visual creatures, a large portion of our brain is devoted to visual information processing and we are accustomed to dealing with large amounts of visual information at any given time. In contrast, verbal information is perceived more slowly and more sequentially than visual information. Different people are likely to have different definitions for each verbal attribute. Visual identity or visual brand language contains the graphic components that together provide a system for identifying and representing a brand. The basic elements of a brand's visual identity comprise the following: logos, symbols, colours and typefaces [11, p. 2].

Visual brand language is the branding terminology for a unique "alphabet" of design elements, which directly and subconsciously communicate a company's values and personality through compelling imagery and design style. This "alphabet", properly designed, results in an emotional connection between the brand and the consumer. Visual brand language is a key ingredient necessary to make an authentic and convincing branding that can be applied uniquely and creatively in all forms of brand communications. Successful visual brand language creates long-lasting memories for the consumers, promotes and sustains the brand's unique personality.

At a pragmatic level, the use of colours in branding can be motivated by the fact that colours are able to captivate the public attention. Typically, brands are associated with a colour or colour combination used everywhere in their visual identity, but also in all forms of communication. Thus, the automatic colour is associated with a brand differentiation and as a recognition element [9, p. 6]. Colours are powerful weapons of branding and they are rich with meanings. For example, *Starbucks* makes good use of green, which symbolizes ideas of refreshment and the Nature and is connected to the ideas of healthiness. Brown is wholesome and connected with the Earth, often associated with natural materials like wood. *Costa Coffee* brand develops these meanings, along with the obvious link to the coffee itself, to create its homely atmosphere. Visual language cannot exist apart from the verbal language, as there is the tight integration of words and visual elements and having characteristics that distinguish it from natural languages, as a separate communication tool is a distinctive subject of research. It has been called visual language although it might well have been called visual-verbal language [14, p.2]. Therefore, we are observing the convergence between the visual and verbal elements of brand language as an effective tool to communicate ideas and values of the brand.

One more important converging element of brand language is audial or sound identity, also known as sound branding, sonic branding and acoustic branding. Audial identity can be described as the unique, proprietary music or sound that emotionally conveys a brand's essence and values [9, p. 7]. Its basic elements are jingle and sound logo. Audial identity efficiently affects the perception and the reminiscing of the commercials and the brand message in the consumers' mind. It provides a rich and memorable tone to the brand identity. Sound is a very strong sense; it can trigger memories and emotions. Sound has the semiotic power of generating mood, creating feelings and emotions. In branding, sound can be deployed and perceived both musically and in terms of phonology. Musically, the sound may be a recognition of a brand [15]. Using sound logos in branding is closely linked to the symbolism of sounds, meaning that sounds are associated with certain ideas. Thanks to modern technology inventions, we are surrounded by the sounds on a daily basis. Sounds and music literally touch the soul; unique sounds identify brands more than any other brand language element can do. The

biggest effect is achieved when music is accompanied by the verbal text (some catchy words or sentences) to leave the customer singing or reiterating it. Therefore, the convergence works here to emphasize brand language in order to make it the most distinct, recognizable and competitive.

As we have mentioned above, brand language uses all the means of perception to convey the idea and essence of the brand. These may include odor, taste, and texture as the elements of brand language. These three elements are more commonly used in product design, so they are considered accessory in brand communication and are verbalized, if necessary, to increase the persuasive effect. A good example of such verbalization may be the coffee taste and flavor descriptors.

**Conclusion.** Considering brand from the linguistic perspective, we can describe it as a set of meanings and associations about a sign created at an individual level due to some definite communication situations that use meaningful semiotic resources to generate cognitive, affective and behavioural changes on the target audience. The way brand communicates with its audience is brand language – a set of verbal and non-verbal elements used to identify brand essence and values. Brand language elements can be grouped into verbal, visual and audial identities, each having a specific form of transmitting the information about the brand. Verbal and non-verbal elements do not exist separately; they converge that is adapt to each other's communicative behaviour. Being perceived, these converged elements interact in the mind of the audience producing a strong lasting persuasive effect.

Brand language is a rather confusing phenomenon from a linguistic point of view. We see **the prospects for further research** in a more detailed study of brand language, its elements and applying the multimodality as the semiotic method of the brand language analysis.

#### КОНВЕРГЕНЦІЯ ЕЛЕМЕНТІВ МОВИ БРЕНДУ

*І. В. Ущановська, аспірант*

*Сумський державний університет,*

*вул. Римського-Корсакова, 2, м. Суми, 40007, Україна*

*E-mail: irynaushch@gmail.com*

*У пошуках рішення для формування успішного бренду, вчені розробили різні підходи до вивчення бренду. В цій статті бренд розглядається з точки зору лінгвістики. Зокрема, мова бренду, спосіб, у який бренд спілкується з аудиторією, є об'єктом дослідження. Таким чином, метою статті є визначення бренду як інтегративного лінгвістичного явища; встановити конвергенцію вербальних та невербальних елементів мови бренду, при формуванні успішної мови бренду.*

*Мова бренду означає слова, знаки, звуки та інші експресивні засоби, що використовуються для спілкування бренду. Мова бренду включає вербальну та невербальну айдентики, оскільки вона розвивається на вербальному та невербальному рівнях. Вербальна айдентика бренду - це слова, фрази та терміни, що використовуються для опису бренду. Невербальні елементи мови бренду можна поділити на візуальну та аудіальну айдентики. Візуальна айдентика або візуальна мова бренду містить графічні компоненти, що разом надають систему для ідентифікації та репрезентації бренду. Аудіальну айдентичку можна описати як унікальну власну музику та звук, які емоційно передають сенс та цінності бренду. Під час сприйняття, елементи мови бренду переміщуються в свідомості аудиторії, забезпечуючи взаємодію слів, кольорів, графіки та звуків. В статті вважається, що мова бренду – приклад конвергенції вербальних та невербальних елементів.*

***Ключові слова:** бренд, мова бренду, конвергенція, вербальна айдентика, візуальна айдентика, аудіальна айдентика, бренд комунікація.*

#### КОНВЕРГЕНЦІЯ ЕЛЕМЕНТОВ ЯЗЫКА БРЕНДА

*И. В. Ущановская, аспирант*

*Сумский государственный университет,*

*ул. Римского-Корсакова, 2, г. Сумы, 40007, Украина*

*E-mail: irynaushch@gmail.com*

*В поисках решений для формирования успешного бренда, ученые разработали различные подходы к изучению бренда. В данной статье бренд рассматривается с точки зрения лингвистики. В частности, язык бренда, способ, с помощью которого бренд общается с аудиторией, является объектом изучения.*

Таким образом, целью статьи является изучение языка бренда как интегративного лингвистического явления; установление конвергенции вербальных и невербальных элементов языка бренда при формировании успешного языка бренда.

Язык бренда означает слова, знаки, звуки и другие экспрессивные средства, используемые для общения бренда. Язык бренда включает вербальную и невербальную айдентики, поскольку он развивается на вербальном и невербальном уровнях. Вербальная айдентика бренда - это слова, фразы и термины, используемые для описания бренда. Невербальные элементы языка бренда можно разделить на визуальную и аудиальную айдентики. Визуальная айдентика или визуальный язык бренда содержит графические компоненты, которые вместе предоставляют систему для идентификации и репрезентации бренда. Аудиальную айдентика можно описать как уникальную собственную музыку и звук, которые эмоционально передают смысл и ценности бренда. При восприятии элементы языка бренда перемешиваются в сознании аудитории, обеспечивая взаимодействие слов, цветов, графики и звуков. В статье считается, что язык бренда - это пример конвергенции вербальных и невербальных элементов.

**Ключевые слова:** бренд, язык бренда, конвергенция, вербальная айдентика, визуальная айдентика, аудиальная айдентика, бренд коммуникация.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

1. Schulz, D. and Schultz, H. F. Brand babble: sense and nonsense about branding; 1-st edition, Mason, Ohio: Thomson South-Western, 2004, - 156 p.
2. Collins English Dictionary. Editors: J. Crozier, A. Grandison, C. McKeown, E. Summers, P. Weber. — Glasgow : Harper Collins Publishers, 2008. — 1040 p.
3. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language [Online]. - Available : <https://www.ahdictionary.com>.
4. American Market Association Dictionary [Online]. - Available : <https://www.ama.org/resources/pages/dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B>
5. Yastrow S. Brand harmony: achieving dynamic results by orchestrating your customer's total experience. New York : Selection books, Inc. -2010. - 176 p.
6. Kapferer J.-N. Brand forever: creation, development, and promotion of the brand value: per. s angl. E. V. Vinogradovoy / pod obshch. red. V. N. Domnina. - Moscow : Verzhina, 2007. - 448 p.
7. Rossolatos G. Handbook of Brand Semiotics. - Kassel : Kassel university press GmbH, 2015. - 457 p.
8. Clifton R. Brands and Branding. – London : The Economist in association with Profile Book Ltd, 2003. - 256 p.
9. Culache O. Brand building in a semiotic age: developing meaningful brands with creative multimodal tools. - Journal of inventics. Vol. 17, № 88, 2014. - P.1 – 10
10. Brand language examples: what do Google and Disney have in common? [Online]. – Available : <http://www.ondemandcmo.com/blog/brand-language-examples>
11. Visual and verbal identity [Online]. – Available : [http://edunano.ru/download\\_file.html?file\\_id=6210346515167728601&sid=6770111238701077465](http://edunano.ru/download_file.html?file_id=6210346515167728601&sid=6770111238701077465).
12. Vintean A. Non-Verbal Communication in Business Life [Online]. - Available : <http://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/6732/> MPRA Paper No. 6732. January 2008 - 11 p.
13. Giles H. The Contexts of Accommodation: Developments in Applied Sociolinguistics. — Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1991. - 68 p.
14. Horn R. Visual language and converging technologies in the next 10-15 years (and beyond). National Science Foundation Conference on Converging Technologies (Nano-Bio-Info-Cogno) for Improving Human Performance. Dec. 3-4, 2001. - p. 11
15. Audio Branding Language [Online]. - Available : <http://inspireentertainment.com/language/>

*Received: February, 7, 2017*