

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT by André Vrydagh

marketing creates sales, but only imaging creates added value...

While supermarkets promote generic no-brand products and private labels by slashing prices, national brands have to justify their higher price by imaging an attractive added value : Spa Reine mineral water is so pure that it cleans the body and mind; the pearly natural bubbles of Bru spring are like gems on your table; the fruits selected by Materne are so delicious we say "merci", the green forest of Ardennes hide so many springs that one region is branded "blue Ardennes", the capital city of the EU sounds like Washington in media, that's why journalists are invited to discover the "European village" atmosphere and the Brussels art de vivre experienced by the residents...

Nuances ? Maybe, but it is they that have built long-term brands. Those brands that retain consumer preference, as long as they keep their promises.

We can compare these conceptual nuances to the butterfly effect: the beating of wings that can create a tornado. We will see how this effect is decisive in the new application of imaging- marketing for tourist destinations.

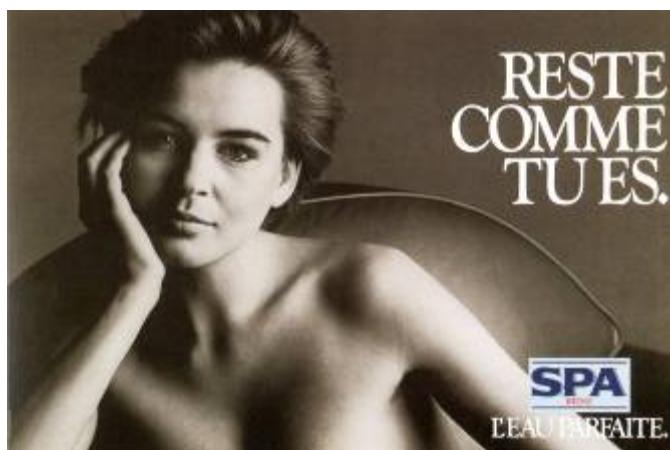


once upon a time ...

... there were corner shops where the owner influenced the choice of his customers and set himself up as king.

Until the self-service store came along, displaying several products on the shelf, giving the consumer the freedom and embarrassment of choice.

The merciless world of consumption killed off products that were unable to rival either big national brands that grew stronger and stronger, or generic products that grew cheaper and cheaper. Their error ? Not to have developed an added value to put their rivals on their wrong foot.



"stay as you are"

For the more sophisticated, perceived **differences** create that special experience : black & white has been the visual vector of pure beauty for 20 years.

How do we create this added value?

For some products, it is the **roots** of their components or ingredients which are brought to life, like the natural sparkle of Bru water which gives the mouth a sensation of fine pearly beads.

For others, it is the **essence** which can generate this value, like the "new harvest" of Materne: a product line offering an alternative to home-made jams, or the blue spring waters flowing under the green pinetrees in the Ardennes.

city imaging

Image has become an essential component because the growing mobility (virtual or real) of individuals is reducing the length of the stay at the same time as it is multiplying the opportunities for discovery.

This image should never be left to the vagary of events. Making the news through parliamentary decisions that inevitably leave many people unhappy, ecological catastrophes or skirmishes between minorities is no longer an option for Brussels. Nor is waiting for the next tennis champion to hit the headlines.

An image is built to fill the mind with the qualities of a product and leave a coherent impression.

Establishing an identity for a city is like squaring a circle and the first portrait after initial consultation is more like E.T. than a pin-up model. For its designers, this identity is called a “development plan” whereas for private investors it is referred to as an opportunity to promote real estate. Local inhabitants on the other hand see it as “domestic and professional facilities” while tourists think of it as just another city: a collection of architectural and cultural attractions to visit.

What is certain is that the image which is going to be born and adopted must carry a shared identity. And in addition, the market demands that this identity-image stands out from competitors.

The job is therefore about positioning, and this requires that we use a brand approach to turn the city into a star.

the touristic market is cyber

Perceived yesterday as cultural destinations, our European cities today are products of the Internet supermarket. They all offer everything - and at low prices - in the hope of attracting tourists. But the battle isn't fair because right from the first click, costs are hitting below the belt : between Vienna and Barcelona, the choice depends more on Ryanair than Klimt or Gaudi.

The first marketing wings started beating in 1992 for Barcelona (Olympic Games) and Prague, after the Berlin Wall crumbled. Brussels awoke in 2000, the year it was declared European Cultural Capital. This gift woke up politicians who at last realized the importance of brand image for the city's future.

The image has to be born from the political / imaging marriage in order to create this added value that will generate local employment and international jealousy.

city marketing

City marketing grew from attempts by the public sector and private partnerships to adapt to Internet surfers needs to propose an attractive offer.

This effort is based on an approach that takes account of the specificities of successful competitors rather than imitating them. The brand must be profiled under its intrinsic values, which are as timeless as its history etched in stone and popular memory.

The brand is neither a label nor an institutional logo. Opinions are always divided when it comes to selecting the added value promise that the city brand makes to its potential customers.

This vision has to be adopted democratically by the city's partners with a determination to make the global image coherent, so that each sector can transmit it to its own target market using the same identity signals.

To make this marriage of political objectives and marketing trends a success, you have to go back to the fundamentals of communication and think of the city as a complex experience endowed with brand values.

A common language will be necessary, enhancing the tribal roots of the city - a dialect that has the taste of the place and *a body language that sketches the differences* so that the city becomes a star.

city star language

If the fundamentals for the success of a consumer goods brand are the 4P's (product, positioning, presence and promotion), in the case of a city we can add two other P's: politics and people.

The City star language is not a clone of classical marketing. Its success does not just depend on an advertising campaign created by an agency team working on a single message and approved by the company.

When you're dealing with a city, each party involved has a different point of view and expresses it in his own way. The citizen says "this is my town", the cultural target sees an exhibition, the resident sees a new "home, sweet home" and the politician a group of potential electors. The tourist, from where he is, imagines a display of postcards as competitive cities cry "we are the greatest".

Success can only come from a language that brings all these points of view together: a sort of Esperanto understood by all the partners so that they talk with one voice about the city they defend abroad.



The city-star language respects rules of grammar and usages.

The grammar rules establish a structure for coherence:

rule 1 : respect the **roots**. To prepare the ground, you have to dig deeply into the city's history and personality to find its true roots: origins, invaders, ancestors, folklore, culture, climate, way of life etc.... These are the elements that will help you determine the identity based on undeniable values and symbols. The next step is to test the perception of this foundation with residents and visitors. Do locals identify with it? For others, is it worth the journey ?

rule 2 : extract the **emotions** linked to the city's values and symbols. Brussels and Art Nouveau (Prague has its own as well) ...sure, but take a drink under the steel helices on top of the musical instruments museum with the whole city at your feet! Strip cartoons are another Brussels root. See the wall art and trace the steps of Tintin... these are the types of emotion that build added value.

rule 3 : **promise experiences** tailored to visitors desires, with emotions that only he will feel : dive into the history of a city and at the same time understand its houses, streets and art. Sit on a café terrace to feel and taste the art de vivre of its inhabitants. In other words, take in the city... and give it a small piece of yourself in return.

Grammar is only the cocoon!

Before emerging, the butterfly follows **unseen usages**.

usage 1 : never assume that the established values and their emotions are accepted for ever. You have to regularly test them and conduct satisfaction surveys with customers and residents. And don't forget to consult blogs: these little virtual spies can help you verify that your promises have been delivered and your proposals meet current desires.

usage 2 : make a distinction between cyberspace and paper. Web communicates in a different way from catalogues or leaflets. Web is immediate and interactive.



usage 3 : tell stories to create legend and a supporting style for stage performances: penguin or drag queen... whatever its personality, the star must be seductive to attract fans and manage success. Once the look has been defined, protect it from wind and high water, so that it stays in tune with the grammar and remains competitive with all those other cities.

the butterfly effect

The recipe for a City Star is not exclusive. How can we therefore ensure that its city imaging is seen, talked about and desired by as many people as possible? Well, the answer is you have to dare and take risks! You need courage and pride, and a small dose of chauvinism.

You first have to dare to bring all the various players together, many of whom will be totally incompatible: politicians, business people, shopkeepers and cultural figureheads. The clash of ideas will be deafening.

You also have to get the journalists who highlight the city to talk about it in a different way: like a star whose values are determined by grammar and usages.

The ultimate challenge is to allow emotions to create word of mouth.

Councillors, hoteliers and artisans - a city star can only be born if spokespersons endorse it with passion. A storyteller is only convincing when his tale rings true and everyone supports him.

The butterfly effect grows from your attitude first : daring your city emotions with stylish branding & tribal marketing will make your city a star in the eyes of the world, the place to go to, the place your friends talk about, the cocoon for your next honeymoon, the easy meeting destination, the village where you want to see your children grow, the city providing jobs and challenges to make your life exciting.

However, today web-com challenges each destination to be perceived as different on computer screen: different visual style to make your city come out of the crowd and different in the meat of experiences demonstrating what your city is all about.

In the end, destination-experiences have to match the promises and the ambiance has to generate stories to tell, because good stories have a butterfly effect and its better to have exciting ones to repeat, confirming your city star status to future visitors.

And do not forget what comes first on the web : butterfly effects make talk of the town!!!

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