

AESTHETICS CONFERS VALUE TO THE FIRM

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Abstract:

The aesthetics offers multiple, powerful, specific and tangible advantages to the firm such as: it creates fidelity; it expresses the personality of the firm and of its marks; it allows the establishment of superior prices; the aesthetics message penetrates the informational amalgam; it protects it from the competition offensive; it induces the rising of productivity and the reduction of costs; it reduces the distances between the stages of the launch of a new product on the market and its maturity.

From the moment when we wake up in the morning to the end of each day of work, we are guided by sight, smell, hearing and touch. Our personal tastes guide our decisions in choosing an apartment, decorating it, choosing clothes, buying a car.

It is possible for a lot of marketers to ignore the things that confers value to clients, what namely satisfies and incites them. More often the firms give attention only for quality insurance, saving costs or defining the competences. The economic process do not give value to clients. Not even the trade marks themselves do not do this thing. The value is insured by satisfying the needs. Today, lot of clients have the base needs satisfied and the value is easily insured by satisfying their needs for experimentation, their aesthetics needs.

Aesthetics is not esoteric, it offers to firms the chance to address to clients by a variety of sensorial experiences. This opportunity does not limit to some sectors (fashion, cosmetics or luxury products for „topnotch” segments), it refers to any firm from any sector.

Aesthetics is a veritable instrument of differentiation. The success of some firms to actual competitive markets can be explained not only by the products

and services quality, fault less skill, irreproachable projection and management of exception. The concentration to elemental competences, the quality and value given to clients where not enough to create an irresistible attraction force. Each firm applied an strong point of differentiation, using aesthetics to generate positive general impressions on firm personality or for respective marks.

For example, McDonald's Corp applies aesthetics (uniforms, cleanness, environment, care for the little ones) accentuating the affective contact with the clients, children (those who consume) or adults(those who buy).

In 80^s the specialists in clients attitude research debated a new alternative, the „hedonist” approach or „sensorial experiences”.

Any restaurant knows that besides the cooks merit in preparing a good roast meat, it must give a total sensorial experience: clean covers, ambiantal set, proper music in damper.

Philip Kotler in the nine edition of his classical book „Marketing management”, 1997, considers that segmentating the benefits – a clients classifying technique depending on the benefits that these search on products –

represent „a strong form of segmentation“.

The „aesthetics“ term was introduced in the eighteenth century by the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten starting from the Greek term *aisthetikos*, that means „perception able, especially sensorial“. Baumgarten was especially preoccupied for the impact of physical characteristics on personal experiences. Afterward, G.W.F. Hegel limited aesthetics use to the study of beautiful arts. The problem referring to the way that we obtain aesthetic satisfaction is a debate subject in the philosophical circles. Some recent works and researches regarding the visual dates supply, implicit memory and automatic processing, suggest that forms and colors can affect us directly, without the necessity of conscious processing (1). Other works, studying the information processing by the customers, concentrates on conclusions that customers take when they are exposed to visual stimulus and other sensorial stimulus (2).

The term „marketing aesthetics“ refers to structural and referential qualities of an organisation or mark aesthetics, working together. Some of customers perceptions are direct, while other are cognitive mediated. The satisfaction can be given by inherent qualities and structural features of product, also by communicated senses through the aesthetic image of an organisation or mark.

Marketing aesthetics is made of three elements: product design, communicational research and spatial design. Each of these domains is characterized by dichotomies. In product and graphic design is made a distinction between *function* and *form*. The first one refers to practical benefits or product or service attributes, and form refers to product or service package. In communicational research on persuasion is made a distinction between two types of messages: the

central message and the peripheral message. The central message refers to main points or persuasive arguments, while peripheral messages refers to other tangent elements that are not treated like main components of message – for example, those „surrounding the message“: presenter attractiveness, the color of the room from where the message is transmitted or the musical background of presentation. In spatial design is made a distinction between *structure* and *symbolism*. Structure is bound to aspects like the way that people interact with the surrounding environment on practical level: floors, elevators, signs of circulation. Symbolism refers to not functional aspects of people lived experience in the respective space. Marketing aesthetics transcend all those ill-assorted domains; it is made by a lot of specialists engaged in this general areas.

Why it is sustained the idea that the aesthetics is important? Because it gives to the firm multiple, strong, specific and tangible advantages, such as:

- Aesthetics confers faithfulness. Aesthetics is one of the „major satisfaction agents“ from the customers univers of experiences. When the products or services are perceived as undifferentiate concerning their typical attributes, intangible aspects like sensorial experiences, became the main points of sales.

- Express the personality for a firm or its trade marks, namely the effort to show what the firm does, what are its values and the assumed mission. To a mark, the task is similar, namely, express the trade mark character. In the context of an given market an certain firm there are four elements (corporative personality and base competences, products and markets served, corporative procedures and firm mission and vision), that compose the fundamental position of respective firm. Results that the task key of an aesthetic strategy consists in

expressing this corporative position under aesthetic form of position. The process that „transforms” the firm personality in its public face is aesthetic planning of identity elements.

- Aesthetics allows the settlement of superior prices. Nike practice at least 150 \$ for a banal couple of sport shoes, Honda S 2000, one of the most sportive convertible cars with two places, serial produced, has the price of 31.500 Euros or Mercedes CL 600 that has a price of 114.413 Euros. The aesthetic context that surrounds those trade marks (Nike suggest performance, Mercedes experience, loftiness and safety), so called „trade mark capital”, allow specific experiences , that clients can try through hearing, sight, smell, feel. As result, attractive identity as aesthetic point of view, allows the settlement of an superior price.

- The aesthetic message penetrates the informational mixture. The surrounding environment, routinely, becomes more loaded whit messages. Costumers are bombarded whit logo and messages. An attractive aesthetic message makes one way through agglomeration because uses a distinct symbolism that represent the firm.

The repetition enlarges the durability of those visual signs in the customers mind and products are recognised and selected immediately in the moment of acquisition.

- Aesthetics allows protection face to competitors. The trade marks are legally protected against duplication. It is possible for an competitor to imitate the entire complex of sensorial elements and success firm aesthetics.

- Aesthetics induce to the productivity growth and the reduce of costs. The employees need less time to create new presentations and messages, because the advertise notices and promotion materials have constant elements, they don't have to be reprojected for every new campaign.

- Decrease the distance among stages of launch of a new product and maturity.

- Aesthetics motivates the employees, attracts first class creative personnel and adorn the place of labor.

The important trade mark images are created through an attractive and good strategic organised aesthetics. Without a clear identity it can not exist attraction, no higher prices or fidelity possibilities. It exists just the suicidal variant to do competition only through prices. Michael Porter affirmed: „a strong feeling of identity is as important as unconditioned devotion face to financial results of strategic unit of activity”.

Some firms find in identity crisis adopts an old-fashioned image and create an undesirable joiner in trade marks and organisation image, meaning, they appear in dissonance with contemporary reality, from desire to seem innovator. Other successful firms, manifest maintaining the image and identity on active markets. For exemple, Petrom, („motion essence”) maintains identity and aesthetics in whole national network of on-sale points.

The entrance of new actors on competition scene generates new identities. Any firm must check the way that their identity interacts with the competition one. Norms, behavior attitude can evolve in time, enforcing the identity changes, especially in case of trade marks fated to some demographic segments. For exemple, the messages addressed to teenagers behave a permanent update because the successive generations of teenagers have different attitudes and tendances.

The firms that approach new markets must determine if it must create new images. More, image management became more accessible and cheaper because of made informatics programs. Identity management is a larger domain than brand management. Product and marketing managers spend a lot of

energy to establish prices, promoting products and their advertise, but they don't vise long term strategic elements that causes the brands survival, namely the identity and image of a brand, less than firm image. In a opinion survey realized in 1997 by the studies firm Louis Harris & Associates, the

consumers where asked to say the name of the best American products. The public remembered an unexpected big number of names, they were not necessarily products (General Motors, P&G, Johnson & Johnson). The conclusion? – a strong brand image helps the product.

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