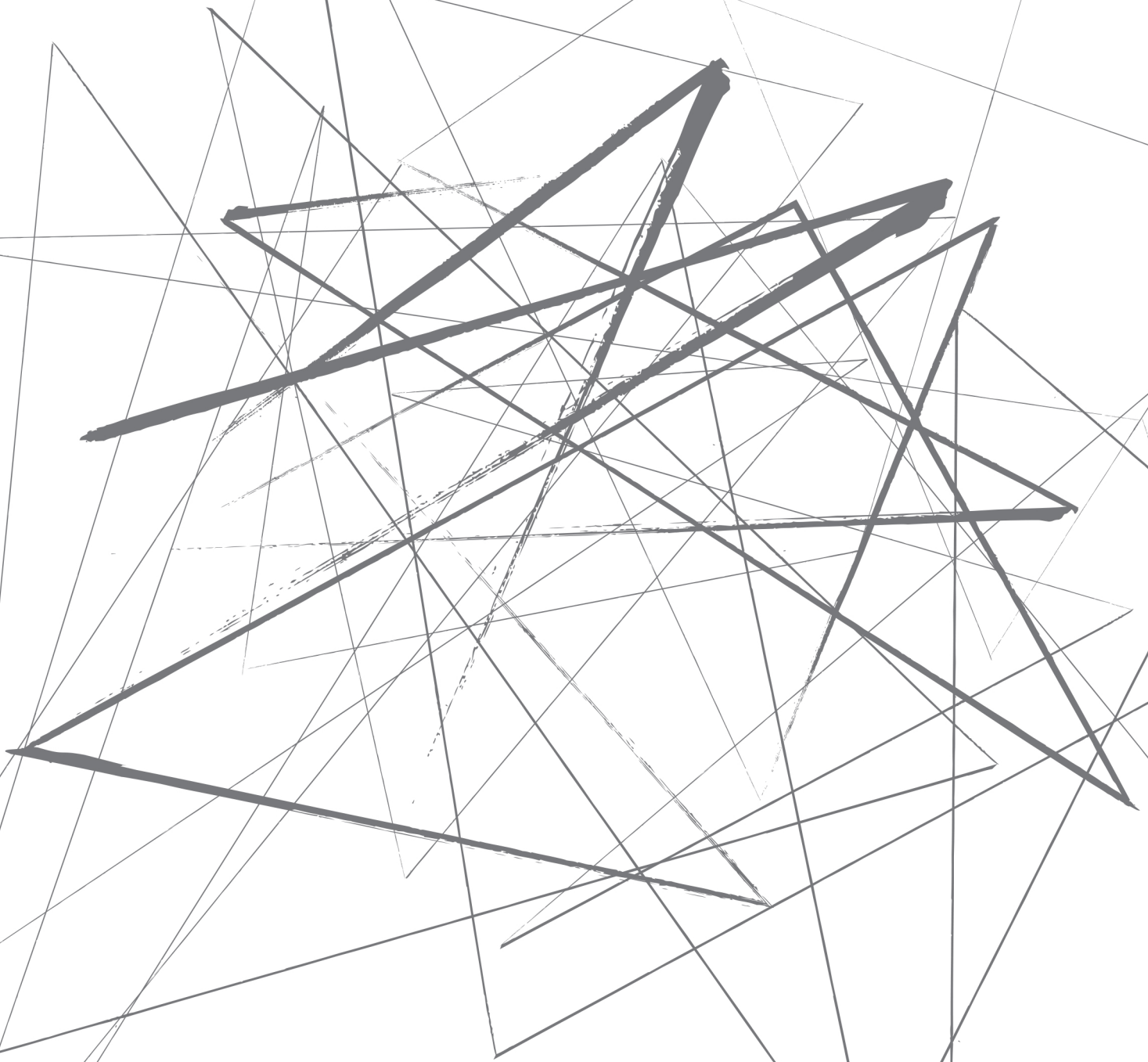


Master's thesis

In the eye of the beholder

Visual communication on digital media



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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to analyze the significance of a corporation's use of visual communication on digital media. The development of digital media has resulted in content shock, meaning that the amount of content an individual is exposed to is not proportional with the amount that can be perceived. This complicates the communication activity, as it becomes more difficult to catch the consumers' attention.

The research question of this thesis is as follows: *How and why does visual communication on digital media have significance for a corporation, when communicating with consumers in the connected age?*

The theoretical statement used to obtain knowledge and understanding is the communication model of Shannon and Weaver, the visual communication model by Thorlacius, and the theory of social network. Additionally, the theoretical statement is used as the starting point of the study. Moreover, the method of qualitative literature analysis has been used in the analysis of visual communication in the context of the sender, the message and the receiver.

The sender needs to be visible on various digital media forms, as well as being consistent in its brand, constructed identity, and visual identity. Continuous exposure of a brand's visual identity will result in consumers forming associations that produce the brand image. The message needs to communicate with a suitable communication approach, such as integrated marketing communication (IMC), as IMC focuses on the consumer and therefore is competitive. Moreover, when creating a message, one must use the design tools available, as this will result in the best representation of the communication purpose. It is vital for a corporation to understand its receiver, when competing for their attention. The practice of understanding how consumers perceive and comprehend messages are very valuable, as well as difficult. Various unknown variables affect the consumer, why knowing the basic human psychology is important.

With this in mind, one could think that it would be easy to create valuable, effective, and successful visual communication. But no. There is no such thing as one-size fits all. The thesis touches upon some variables such as biased perception, purpose, and context, which are not taken into account in the communication models - in addition other unknown variables do also exist. Leaving criticism of the linear process found in the theory.

Table of content

PREFACE	3
INTRODUCTION	4
RESEARCH QUESTION	6
DELIMITATION	7
PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE	8
METHODOLOGY, METHOD AND EMPIRICISM	10
METHODS	10
EMPIRIC	11
CONCEPT DEFINITION	12
STANDPOINT OF VIEW	14
FRAMEWORK	14
 THE DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL MEDIA	 16
THE WOLDWIDEWEB	16
REFINING THE BUSINESS MODEL	20
 THEORY	 21
THE TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION MODEL	21
A VISUAL COMMUNICATION MODEL	23
SOCIAL NETWORK THEORY	25
THE LOCUTIONARY ACT	27
PARTIAL CONCLUSION	28
 THE SENDER...	 29
THE CORPORATION	29
5 FORMS OF MEDIA	30
A BRAND & A BRAND	34
IDENTITY	37
VISUAL IDENTITY	39
VALUE FOR THE SENDER	42
 THE MESSAGE...	 43
THE MESSAGE	43
THE COMMUNICATION OF A VISUAL IDENTITY	43
DESIGN TOOLS OF VISUAL INTERFACES	45
ELEGANCE AND SIMPLICITY	47
SCALE, CONTRAST, AND PROPORTION	48
ORGANIZATION AND VISUAL STRUCTURE	49
MODULE AND PROGRAM	49
IMAGE AND REPRESENTATION	49
STYLE	50
VALUE OF THE MESSAGE	51

THE RECEIVER...	53
THE CONSUMER	53
ATTENTION, PERCEPTION, COMPREHENSION	53
THE BRAIN	54
GESTALT	55
CONSTRUCTIVISM	56
SEMIOTICS	57
COGNITIVE THEORY	58
THE EYES	60
MEMORY & INFORMATION PROCESSING	62
INFORMATION PROCESSING	63
VALUE OF THE CONSUMER	64
ONE-SIZE FITS ALL... OR?	65
ADS - PICTURES OR TEXT?	66
THE CONNECTED AGE	68
THE VISUAL SOCIETY	68
CONTENT SHOCK	69
THE HIDDEN COST	71
THE VALUE OF DATA	72
NO-SIZE FITS ALL	74
CONCLUSION	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY	77
APPENDIX 1	80
NOTE BY ERMAN BOZTEPE	80

Preface

This paper is a communication artifact based upon my learnings during the last five months. It has been a process where I have investigated the literature of a new area, which I had little or no knowledge about before the beginning of this Master's thesis process. It is an artifact where I explicitly have tried to connect all my new knowledge, for you to read and hopefully see thing in a new perspective. It has not been a goal of mine to reinvent the wheel, so to say, but rather to explore a literature area and gain new knowledge that had my interest.

Introduction

Have you heard about digitalization, *the* internet, web 1.0 - and the shift to web 2.0, social media, digital marketing, online etc.? Did you know that the first email ever sent was back in 1969? Please, let me do a quick calculation: $2016 - 1969 = 47$... The first email was sent 47 years ago. Since then, a lot have happened such as:

- In average one opens one's smartphone 110 times pr. day
- It is 3x more likely that a teenager will follow a brand rather than family on social media
- 90 % of all the data is generated during the last 2 years (between 2013-2015)
- 204 emails are sent each minute
- 15 % of the Google searches, have never been searched before
- Today, more iPhones are sold than babies are born - globally, more than 9 iPhones are being sold each second
- Most of the traffic online is generated by the so called bots
- In 2017, 90 % of the traffic on the internet will be video
- The first SMS was sent in 1992
- More than 40 % of the companies that were in the top of Fortune 500 in 2000, was no longer in the top in 2010
- More than 97 % of all emails are spam
- 59 % of all leaders, make business decisions in their spare time [just because they can]
- The telephone reached 50 mil. users in 75 years. Angry Birds (a game available through an app) reached the same in 35 days
- 47 % of all American smartphone users says that they would not be able to live without their smartphone
- Each smartphone consists of 250.000 patents
- Mobile phone owners check their phone 9 times per hour
- Each day we are exposed by information equal to the content of 174 newspapers

(3, 2015)

It is time to be updated. I suggest that we no longer call it for digital media, digital marketing etc., and instead *just* call it by media and marketing. We live in a world where “digital” is the new standard, the new normal. And it happened so fast that some might have missed it.

First time I read one of the above mentioned facts, I was scrolling through Instagram. It was the (last) fact about the increasing exposure of information and content on a daily basis. A fact I have shared in my network and have not forgot about. I even remember the visuals of that exact fact, which leads to another fact that I stumbled upon in my research:



Figure 1

Albert Mehrabian, a psychologist, has demonstrated that 93 % of communication is nonverbal (dr4ward, 2014), which seems reasonable as human beings only remember 20 % of what they read, compared to 80 % of what they see and do. Suddenly, verbal communication seems a bit boring, why I will focus on visual communication on digital media in the context of communications between a corporation and its consumers. How do corporations capture the attention of their consumers online, if consumers today are exposed to an increasingly amount of information and content?

A consequence of being online has been the movement from local to global, why the competition has raised. Consumers are much more informed (thanks to Google), and the technological development has increased the ease of use, which is why the consumers are in control today. More and more corporations are going online, and some even arises online. This trend has changed the way corporations communicate, as it before were more one-way communication, today everything is mass-communication. Further, communication happens on the premises of the consumers - where and when they want it.

We live in a world where human beings are always on(line). The connected age. Everyone has become a producer of content, as devices are available everywhere; smartphones, computers etc. Information flows faster than ever before and is using an increasing amount of channels.

For corporation, the connected age has given the opportunity to develop deeper, more interactive experiences and participation platforms, as content and information can be accessed anytime, anywhere, from a multitude of different devices (Burcher, 2012). Organizations are not able to be competitive just by being digital. Everyone is digital now. Today, competitiveness can be found in a corporation's communication toward its consumers, including the design, content, and the engagement and involvement of one's consumers.

Research Question

With a specific thematic framework given for the study, this thesis is based on the foundation of: *organizational communication, organization, strategy and leadership in a global /organizational context*. This thematic framework resulted in my subject description being:

“Strategic communication with focus on visual communication on digital media. An investigation of the value of visual communication. A quick research shows that people remember 10 % of what they hear, 20 % of what they read, and 80 % of what they see and do. Is this true? And what does it mean in the context of organizations external communication?

Can visual communication contribute to a visual identity for a global organization? And what is the value for the consumer?”

However, the thesis ended by having the objective to investigate corporate strategic communications on digital media. More precisely, the strategic communication being visual communication.

The research question of this Master's thesis is:

How and why does visual communication on digital media has significance for a corporation, when communicating with consumers in the connected age?

With the purpose of answering the overall research question of this thesis, I will make use of the following sub-questions:

- Which practices are dominant in the value creation of visual communication?
- How is the value creation affected by digital media?

Delimitation

Communication appears both as verbal and nonverbal. As the objective of this thesis is to investigate corporate visual communication, visual communication refers to the nonverbal communication. One could argue that visual communication also concerns verbal, as it is the presentation of words, but this will not be the focus of this study. Moreover, according to van Riel and Fombrun (2007) corporate communication consists of three principal clusters, which are typically classified as: management communications, marketing communications, and organizational communications (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). Whereas management communications focus on the communications that take place between the management levels, organizational communications refer to stakeholder communications such as public relations, public affairs, investor relations, environmental communication etc. Marketing communications consist primarily of communications that support products, services, and brands, and which is the channel towards consumers. For this thesis, it counts that communication is seen as corporate marketing communication. As of marketing, this thesis will not distinguish between different forms of marketing, as it will be generalized as a corporation's communications towards its consumers within the areas of branding. Additionally, corporate communications can be distinguished between internal and external communications, where the focus only will be on external communications, even though they are interdependent.

For corporations to be able to communicate online, a need for different professionals arises; the sender (the corporation itself), the (graphic) designer, and the programmer (not limited). Therefore, it should be stated that this paper will not go in depth with the hard-core IT opportunities. Neither

will it go deeply into the technical design process, since it belongs to the professional graphic designers. However, the thesis will touch upon some design tools as a part of understanding how to create successful visual communication. Likewise, this thesis will not go into depth with specific platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, Corporate websites etc.) to communicate on, meaning digital media will be generalized to be platforms online. However, an overall analysis will be made to categories digital media, and examples from specific platforms will be used.

Another perspective of relevance when looking at consumers and their perception is culture. Culture could bring another dimension to the understanding of the receiver of a message, but will not be included in this thesis.

Organizations can be digital in many ways, but it is the digital channel towards their consumers, which will be the focus of the study. It is not about how digital an organization is or how many digital assets they have invested in and offer to their consumers.

Philosophy of science

I will not go in depth with the various scientific approaches but rather explain this thesis scientific perspective, so that it is possible to relate to the knowledge produced. A paradigm consists of ontology, epistemology and methodology, why my philosophy of science perspective has its starting point in those terms. First of all, a distinction will be made of ontology and epistemology, whereas the following sections will explain the methodology.

Ontology is the study of the being (Langergaard, et al., 2011, p. 75). Thus, the ontology of this thesis, is the assumptions I as the researcher examines the world with. Epistemology is scientific knowledge, and is dealing with the human cognition, including the limits of human knowledge and cognition (Langergaard, et al., 2011, p. 76).

For this thesis, the epistemology represents my view of how knowledge is possible. It is based on a distinction between two concepts being both social constructivism and hermeneutic approach. The ontology of the thesis is social constructivism, meaning that the thesis is built on the assumption that the world and its communication is a social construction (Langergaard, et al., 2011, p. 105). In relation to the question of how knowledge is obtained, the approach of this thesis is hermeneutic and thus epistemology of the thesis. The hermeneutic approach applies that

knowledge is created in a circular process in which the researcher's understanding is partly explicit, and recognizing that truth is mutable (Langergaard, et al., 2011, p. 126). The knowledge creation of this thesis means that I, as researcher, experiences a circular process, since the knowledge I acquire in the process of making this thesis will change my pre-understanding and understanding of my problem area. The circular process is based upon the fact that my understanding and knowledge of the subject is constantly changing during the investigation of the problem area, and that I acquire new knowledge continuously. Given that the thesis has its philosophy of science standpoint in respectively social constructionism as ontology and hermeneutics as epistemology, is essential in the following ways.

Social constructivism explains that actions will always be contextual and social interaction is required for actions to exist. In the basis of this thesis, it means that the knowledge I gain in my research, will not necessarily be the same for anyone other, as it depends on the context as well as the standing point of this thesis. A change of standing point, will result in a change of result. As a result of this, the knowledge I gain during this thesis study, will not necessarily lead to the same knowledge, if someone else carried out a similar study.

The hermeneutic approach is used as part of my attention on my preconception role in this thesis and a limitation of this preconception influence on the thesis. However, it is recognized that my preconception impact on the investigation can not be dispensed to the fullest, and that this is crucial in my acquisition of new knowledge. The fact is that my preconception is essential in my further development of the knowledge obtained in this thesis. Linking new knowledge with knowledge that precedes this investigation, is a continuous process, which allows the formation of this thesis to be constant evolving.

I do also make use of the hermeneutical circle, which according to Nygaard (2005) is to: "[...] understand the meaning of parts by seeing them in the context of their whole - and can only understand the whole from the parts that create this" (Nygaard, 2005, p. 75). That is, my preconception has an impact on how I understand, which results in the knowledge gained takes its starting point in my preconception and current understanding. According to the above finding, there will be a difference in how individuals understand and interpret, as does this thesis and its results. That I am aware of the above, however, contribute to that I focus on my own preconception influence, and therefore I try to limit my subjective influence on this thesis results. Furthermore, I

take my own influence of the dissertation study and interpretations by continually reflect on both methodological choices and interpretations of results.

The philosophy of science influences knowledge creation in this thesis, and can be argued to be final and entirely objective knowledge. I believe that the results obtained in the thesis, not necessarily would be the same if the study were to be made by another person. Thus, I emphasize that the knowledge produced in the thesis is not conclusive, as society and individuals' understanding of the world and reality society operates, not is the actual reality but just a construction thereof.

Methodology, Method and Empiricism

Methodology can be described as the doctrine of the different approaches I will use in connection with my investigation. Moreover, it deals with the consequences of methodology that my choices of approach have for the results I find in this thesis. In a methodological perspective, social constructivism and the hermeneutic approach involves that knowledge is contextual. Likewise, it counts that my preconceptions play into the understanding of a given subject, resulting in a circular process, as there constantly is conducted new knowledge into the preconception, as the study progresses. Therefore, it is acknowledged that an entirely objective representation of the problem area is not possible. With this in mind, I recognize that my subjectivity comes into play and needed to reach a result. Nevertheless, should I strive for my results being based on as many sources as possible (in the form of data, researchers, theories, methods, etc.) so that the validity strengthened by compensating for my own subjectivity influence on the dissertation study and results. Why this thesis using different methods, in the form of qualitative literature analysis and individual interviews, in search of the answer to the problem formulation. Similarly, existing theories are used as a theoretical framework prior to the thesis study. Therefore, the thesis study design is defined as a methodological, which managed is that data and testing methods used must support each other without necessarily being equal.

Methods

This thesis is divided into three parts. The first part is a theoretical statement of communication process and social network theory. The theoretical statement is used to obtain knowledge and understanding, which I will use as a starting point for my study. The understanding, which is

derived from the existing theories regarding communication and social network, is used in the further analysis, as the theories of communication process will result in the analytical framework, which is the second part.

The second part of the thesis is a presentation and analysis of the collected data. The data will be collected through empirical research consisting of qualitative literature study.

The third and final section is a discussion of the results as a critical reflection on finding the weaknesses and implications for further research. The section ends with a conclusion where I will reply to the research question and the underlying issues. Since the thesis uses existing theories, in particular, to create an analysis of the empirical data collected, it is the case of a deductive method. Validity can be distinguished between internal and external. Internal validity refers to the equality between the researcher's research and the theoretical ideas which one develops on this basis. External validity refers to the degree in which the results of the study can be generalized beyond the study context. The thesis is using method triangulation to approach the problem area from several angles (sender, message, receiver) that are supposed to support each other, which forces the studies internal validity. The use of multiple angles to illuminate a problem, and thus the triangulation, is a method to improve the validity. One of the challenges of external validity is the qualitative method, as it highlights one single phenomenon with limited empirical data, which challenges the usefulness of the knowledge produced, when it comes to generalizations beyond the study context. The external validity of the study can be criticized as conclusions are drawn from relatively little literature. One of the possibilities to strengthen the external validity would be to define hypotheses based on the results of the survey, for then to test these. Similarly, the external validity weakened in the ontology of the thesis, as it is seen as social-context and thus relations determined, resulting in that the finding are also dependent on the context they are in the unfolded and thus difficult to generalize beyond the thesis context.

Empiric

The thesis will be treated with three types of empirical data. First of all, the examined theory serves as understanding that forms the basis for further study. Secondly, the qualitative literature analysis is used to understand visual communication for both the sender, the message and the recipient's point of view. Thirdly, to test the secondary empirical material in a contemporary and truly world

(of today), two semi-structured interviews have been held with two professionals within brand communication on digital media. The two interviews will not be elaborated further in this thesis.

Pratica senza la teoria e come un marinaio che ha tavole nave senza timone e bussola // Practice without theory is like a sailor who boards ship without a rudder and compass. Leonardo da Vinci, 1452-1519 (Lester, 2011, p. 44). The theory of this thesis forms the basis for understanding the research. One of the aim of science is to produce new knowledge. If the existing knowledge about the study area is not put forward, it is difficult for both the researcher and the reader to find out whether the knowledge gained through the literature analysis, is new and therefore in which the study's scientific contributions made. Further, there is a need for a theoretical understanding of the existing literature on the investigation, in order to obtain new knowledge by recent studies.

Therefore, it is through the understanding of the theories of communication process and of network theory, that I am able to investigate the research question by testing visual communication in a communication model. I analyze the literature in my way to the knowledge needed to proceed with this thesis study. The empirical search focuses on three main areas as of the communication mode, the sender, the message, and receiver. The analysis will be guided as well as answering the two sub questions.

The fact that I develop new knowledge, based on knowledge I continuously acquire, is consistent with the thesis' hermeneutical philosophy of science perspective. Here, the process is to acquire new knowledge continuously and to depend on the researcher's preconception that is constantly evolving. Thus, the process of this thesis is first of all to acquire my theoretical understanding of communication processes and social network approach, for then to contribute to the further understanding of the subject.

Concept definition

This thesis will distinguish between the sender, the message and the receiver. The *sender* of a message is an arbitrary corporation, who is using digital media to communicate in one or another way with its consumers. The *message* refers to any communication activity (branding, marketing, advertisement) by the corporation. The message is both the design of a website, an ad, or other

marketing activities. The receiver is all possible recipients of the message. The receiver refers to consumers online.

To have a common ground in understanding the concept of communication, I will draw on the definition by Niels Erik Wille (Thorlacius, 2002, p. 24):

“The word is an unresolved contradiction between the two applications that focus on transfer and distribution of messages of various kinds, and the applications that focus on it to share feelings, experiences, thoughts and ideas in a close and like mutual process [...] the first is often associated with one-way communication, an asymmetric communication process, where information is transferred from a sender to one or more recipients but not in the opposite direction, and the last with two-way communication, a symmetrical communication process in which the parties exchange information with each other (and therefore acts as the sender and recipients in writing). The latter is seen by some theorists as genuine communication, and first as pseudo communication whereby reciprocity become a defining feature of the concept of "communication”.

Likewise, Mullet & Sano (1995) defines communication as a “full process by which the behavior of one goal-seeking entity comes to be affected by that of another through the reciprocal exchange of messages or signs over some mediating physical channel” (Mullet & Sano, 1995, p. 1).

Moreover, Thorlacius (2002) defines visual communication as more than just an analysis of a picture, but as a “presentation of a text, the typography and layout, color use, design of logos and menus” (Thorlacius, 2002, p. 50).

The visual aspect will be the focal point, while the corporation and consumer will be the central actors. A corporation will always be economy-oriented to maximize profit, whereas the consumer is more goal-oriented, meaning that the consumer always need something, a service, product or information, which provide the desired value. Therefore, I find the definition of visual marketing by Wedel and Pieters (2008) very informative, as it in my aspect touches upon all the important

components, as well as connect and highlight the importance of the interplay between the two actors. The definition is:

“We [Wedel, Pieters] term visual marketing; that is, the strategic utilization by firms of commercial and noncommercial visual signs and symbols to deliver desirable and/or useful messages and experiences to consumer [...] an important component of visual marketing is the actual design of the visual communication, including logo, packaging, and advertising design, and more recently web page design [...] if indeed “seeing is believing” and “believing is buying”, it is important to manage what consumers see to maximize profit” (Wedel & Pieters, 2008, pp. 1-2).

When mentioning the connected age, the digitalization and the shift from web 1.0 to web 2.0, it refers to the online evolvement, the ability to communicate and interact corporations and consumers in between on digital media.

Standpoint of view

Picture a corporation getting lost in the continuously changing digital media. The corporation wants, as all their competitors, to get their consumers' attention and to connect with them. But there is much to it. It is no longer just like that - it is jungle. The standpoint of view of this paper is as the function of an external consultant, whose job is to explain to the corporation where they stand right now, which possibilities they have, and go through the toolbox of opportunities. Likewise, it is my job to advise them regarding how consumers perceive messages online, so they are able to understand their consumers. Without the understanding of one's consumers, one's presence on digital media will be indifferent.

Framework

In order to approach the research question in a structured manner, this thesis will in the following section introduce the historical development of the WorldWideWeb. Hereafter, the thesis will be divided as follows:

Theory. I will introduce the theory starting with the traditional communication model by Shannon and Weaver, as well as a redrawn version, in the attempt of aligning the model with the world today with digital media. Further, I will take a look at the linguistic communication model by Roman Jakobson (Thorlacius, 2002), and go into depth with the revisited version by Thorlacius (2002), which focuses on visual communication. Finally, I will describe the social network theory as it is of importance in understanding how individuals are being influenced by their social network. As the theories can be interconnected, I will sum up with the concept of the locutionary act.

Further, as a communication Master's thesis, the second section will analyze the literature of visual communication in the context of a communication model: sender, message, receiver.

- The sender. This section will go into depth with different forms of media, the value of a brand, a corporation's identity, and visual identity.
- The message. A communication approach focusing on the consumer will be introduced. In addition, this section will touch upon various of design tools to use when aiming for consumers' attention.
- The receiver. This section will focus on the consumer, and go into depth with visual theories such as gestalt and semiotics. Moreover, it will focus on how consumers perceive messages, and which elements their eyes catches.

Finally, the communication model will be discussed in the context of visual communication, when having the knowledge of the key actors in the communication process. The conclusion will end the paper, by answering the research question.

The development of digital media

The WoldWideWeb

The Cold War. Everything starts with some piece of history. So here we go. The Cold War, a political “war” mainly between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, created threats of nuclear weapons and destruction of major cities. This threat made the U.S. military consider other forms of communication than the telephone. Things evolved and a result of it was the first email being sent back in 1969 (Lester, 2011, p. 382). An email between researchers at UCLA and the Stanford Research Institute. The need for networked communication increased and in 1989 Timothy Berners-Lee developed HTTP (Hypertext Transfer Protocol) language, which created files that could be accessed from the Internet. In 1991 HTTP was used for the first web browser, which Berners-Lee called the WorldWideWeb. Timothy’s innovations in mass communication made him one of the most influential persons of the 20th century, and in 2004 he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for his work (Lester, 2011, p. 385). In 1993 the internet expanded tremendously because of the Mosaic software developed by Marc Andreessen. His web browser made it possible to access and download internet files that contained still and moving pictures with audio (Lester, 2011, p. 385).

One can argue that the internet is the future of mass media or a colossal waste of time and resources. The web has earned its place as a valuable resource for information, entertainment, and blatant commercialism - as all media eventually do. The web is an important medium of communication because it is a composition of all that has come before (Lester, 2011). The web has the immediacy as the radio and television, its totality of information from print, and its visual and audio qualities from motion pictures, and much more than all those media (Lester, 2011). With the web it counts that $1 + 1 = 3$.

The continuously improvement of technology has changed the way people behave and communicate (Burcher, 2012). Today, we live in a world of connections enabled by the internet, where people connect to transact, discover, share and express themselves. This network of connections between people, enhanced by social networks and mobility, is profoundly changing how people learn, experience and communicate with and about everything including a marketer’s products and services (Burcher, 2012).

The digitalization has contributed to a change in the world of media. Today we distinguish between traditional media and digital media. Further, digital media has contributed to the social network and social media. We live in the connected age where digital media are evolving daily and changes are of rapid pace.

The transition to digital also means that businesses need to redefine their business model. Their sources of value are changing due to this “new” world. Geography has changed from local to global as well as the media segment has become much more complex. The long-term beliefs about the sources of value in a given business model, media segment, or country are also updating rapidly, creating tremendous uncertainty. Thus, the belief of businesses is that the sources of value are changing as well, as their media segment, geography and business model change.

Digital advertising, consisting of Internet and mobile advertising is predicted to be the largest advertising category in 2017 (McKinsey & Company, 2015). Digital advertising will surpass TV, and mobile will double its share in the digital ad market. Digital video is predicted to be the new black, and corporations are recommended to use their TV budget on digital productions. The rapid shift to digital is partly driven by the growing number of connected consumers, the expansion of mobile telephony, and elevated mobile broadband adoption. And it continues.

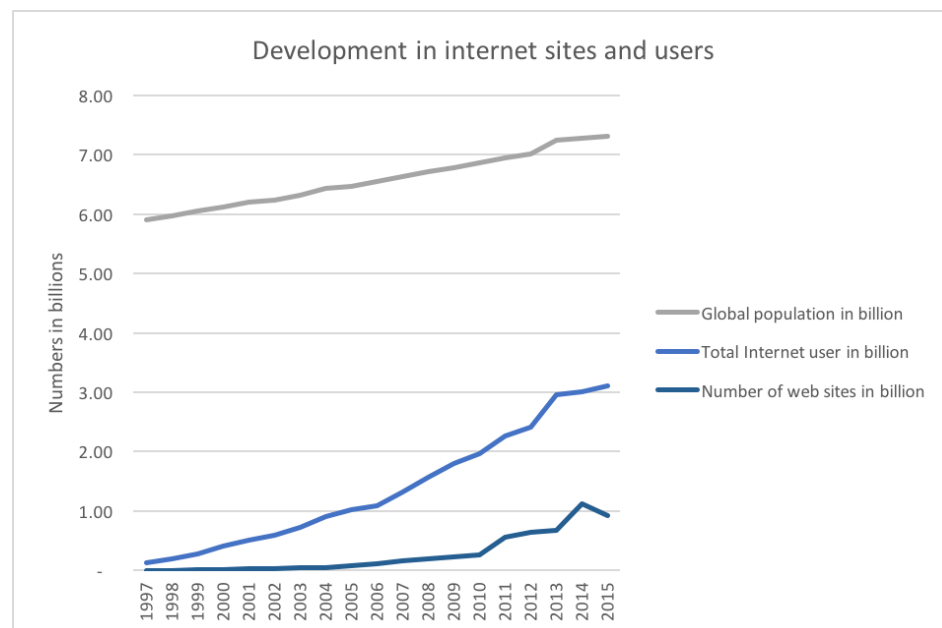


Figure 2

According to the McKinsey (2015), an important change in the world of media is that the power is moving more and more towards the consumers. Corporations are moving away from “bundled” media such as the traditional cable TV package, and more into self-service to be competitive with their digital competitors (such as Netflix). Consumers can pick and choose from a variety of online streaming service to create their own personal bundles.

Another important change is the rise of global content intermediation and integration. The evolvement of social-networking platforms, means that professionals are able to provide videos, pictures, music, news, and much more content directly to their users in real-time. Furthermore, the public is able to share just as much content as the professionals. The more direct contact between corporations and consumers result in more interaction, which can change the consumer’s consumptions patterns, and image of the brand (McKinsey & Company, 2015).

A consequence of the fact that digital media is gaining ground, is that advertisers increasingly are accepting the validity and persuasiveness of advertising on these media, moving away from the typically high cost-per thousand (CPM) traditional media to less expensive, low-CPM such as Internet and mobile advertising. The primary reason is that digital ad rates are generally much lower than ad rates in traditional media, why traditional media has been and still is struggling with monetization as corporation largely are moving their budgets to the low cost social-network platforms, instead of using the budgets analogy. The transition of advertising from traditional to digital media has therefore resulted in slower growth in advertising spend than was experienced when there was little or no digital advertising.

“Digital advertising was the fastest-growing category in 2014, with a 16.1 percent increase, followed by video games at 14.3 percent and broadband at 9.2 percent. Both digital advertising and broadband are entirely digital, and growth in video games was fueled by its digital components. This pattern reflects the underlying transition of the market from traditional to digital media [...] Advertising in digital media rose 16.1 percent in 2014, while ads in the remaining media increased a collective 1.6 percent. This discrepancy is not new. Over the past five years, digital advertising has expanded at a 16.1

percent CAGR, compared with 2.2 percent growth compounded annually for non-digital advertising” (McKinsey & Company, 2015, p. 7)

In addition, the predictions by McKinsey (2015) are that digital advertising, video games, and broadband will continue to be the fastest-growing segments over the next five years.

It is not only corporations that spend more on digital media. Consumer spending on digital components rose with 11.2 percent in 2014, whereas traditional components of the market only increased with 1 percent (McKinsey & Company, 2015). It is important to stress that the fact that both corporations and consumer spending on digital media only highlights the shift to digital era. The more digital components the consumers are investing in, the more platforms exist for corporations to communicate and interact.

As stated, the key development in the market is the shift in advertising from traditional to digital media. The rise of advertising in digital media is a trend that reflects enormous growth in the broadband universe as seen in the figure 2 above. According to the McKinsey (2015), the number of fixed broadband households increased by nearly 233 million and the number of mobile broadband subscribers rose by 1.3 billion in the years between 2009 and 2014. As a result, there were 55 percent more fixed broadband households in 2014 than in 2009, while the number of mobile broadband subscribers nearly quadrupled over the same period. As the fixed and mobile broadband universe has grown, media usage has steadily transitioned from traditional to digital. “Advertisers have followed consumers, allocating more resources to digital channels. Digital advertising accounted for 28.2 percent of total global advertising in 2014, up from 17.2 percent in 2009” (McKinsey & Company, 2015).

It is clear that there has been a transition in the media usage of both corporations and consumers. It changes the way people are communicating and interacting with each other and with brands. Digital media, digital advertising, and digital marketing are of such a rapid pace that it cannot be ignored, which is why this paper is solely made in the context of digital media.

Refining the business model

With the digital development, to be a success online business can seem difficult as it is changing faster than anything else. A corporate's online presence also plays an essential role in a corporation's supply chain - from marketing and customer outreach to sales and delivery. The design of one's website is a powerful and important aspect of any business. And the fact that it contains lots of data and the ability to measure everything are valuable. Therefore, an increasing focus are on creating engaging customer experiences.

The evolvement of the Internet and the connected age have forever changed what it means to be a business. Consumers are engaging with corporations through interactive and visual experiences; websites and apps, using computers and mobile devices. The customer experience is highly based on design; which importance are increasing. Consumers interact directly with the design by clicking, looking, typing, listening, speaking, and touching. The interaction occurs only when and where the consumers wishes. Further, consumers decide within the first very few seconds of visiting a website whether they will stay or not (Krypel, 2014, p. 4) No matter what a business is built on behind the scenes, consumers solely interact with its design when they go online (Krypel, 2014). It does not matter how great the business idea is anymore - if a company does not understand how to express themselves visually in a way customers will understand and be able to interact with them easily, they will just google for another supplier.

As the design plays such a vital role, it is important for a corporation to determine which design customers will use and find engaging, and which ones will drive them away. The single most important principle companies must observe here is to develop design that will satisfy both the goals of the business and those of their customer. Consumers are goal-oriented. The goal is often to find a product or service they need, gathering information, supporting a cause, or seeing entertainment. The goal of a business is typically to make money through direct sales, reservations, account creations, and the collection of information etc. A business help consumers accomplish their goals.

The importance of starting from a foundation of helpfulness cannot be overstated. It is important to recognize that, although interactive designs are sometimes - incorrectly - regarded as holding

purely aesthetic value, they are in fact products or services that consumers use when they are looking for help from corporations online. Carefully studying customers can reveal a wealth of information about their unmet needs (Krypel, 2014).

Theory

The traditional communication model

The traditional communication model by Shannon and Weaver (1949) was specially designed to develop the most effective communication between sender and receiver (Burcher, 2012). Shannon and Weaver created the communication system based on five essential parts: an information source, a transmitter, the channel, the receiver and the destination. In the process Shannon and Weaver did also find a factor affecting the communication process, namely noise. As the models dates back to 1949 it was originally focusing on one-way communication, with the primary role laying at the sender, and the secondary role at the receiver. The original model of the communication system can be seen below.

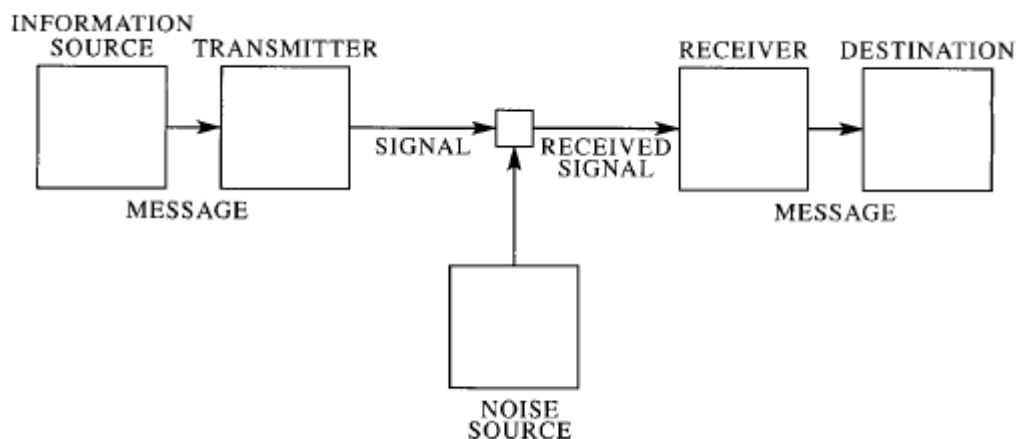


Figure 3

One of the things that makes Shannon and Weaver's model special is the acknowledgment of the importance of the outer factors (noise) in the communication process. The model of Shannon and Weaver shows us that the message not necessarily reaches its receiver in its original form. There is a risk that the message can change during the process due to influences from outer sources of

noise. Through Shannon and Weaver's model, the message is perceived as content of the information. If this is not being perceived as it was intended by the sender of the message, and error or misunderstandings of the communicative action can occur. Here the mistake either lies with the sender, for not expressing oneself clearly or by the receiver for not decoding the message correctly.

Moreover, Shannon and Weaver's communication model have shortcomings. A drawback of this model, is the fact that the message is seen as relatively unproblematic, and when applied to the process of communication, problems can occur, when meanings are contained within the message. Another drawback is that all the focus is on the sender, and the receiver is not really implicated. This has been recognized by (Burcher, 2012), why he has redrawn the original model.

Because of the digitalization and the evolvement of the connected age, communication is becoming more and more two-way as well as mass-communication. As the setting has changed, the redrawn mode is necessary to get a better understanding of the modern communication process. Moreover, this also changes the roles, meaning that both the sender and receiver have a primary role. Even though the setting has changed, most of the basic components are still a part of the revisited mode, as they are the basis of a communication process. The modern version of Shannon and Weaver's model contains much more noise, a number of destinations/receivers, and feedback as a result of two-way communication.

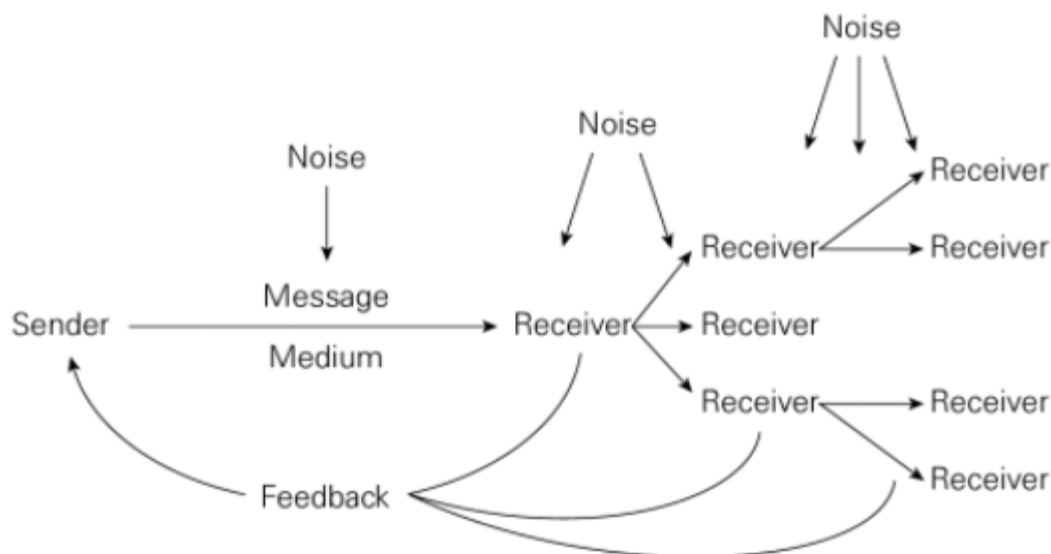


Figure 4

Online mediums are often public and offers to ability to share content, meaning that each message has several receivers, and those receivers are able to re-broadcast and forward messages with other receivers. For each receiver there is noise. Noise in such a way that a receiver's perception can be different from what was intended by the sender, as well as receivers are able to impose meaning to the message when sharing it. This stresses the importance of being very explicit, both in the wording and design.

A visual communication model

Another traditional model has been revisited, namely the linguistic communication model by Roman Jakobson (Thorlacius, 2002). Overall, the two models look alike, as they contain several of the same components. Both models are build upon the same process, but with different focus point. According to Thorlacius (2002), Roman Jakobson claims that communication is more than just the relationship between sender, message and receiver, it also presupposes a context. Additionally, communication presupposes a contact, meaning the physical connection between the sender and receiver (the Internet etc.), and finally a code, in it broadest understanding a common language between sender and receiver. The model of Roman Jakobson has been revisited by Lisbeth Thorlacius (2012) with focus on transforming the linguistic model into a *visual communication* model.

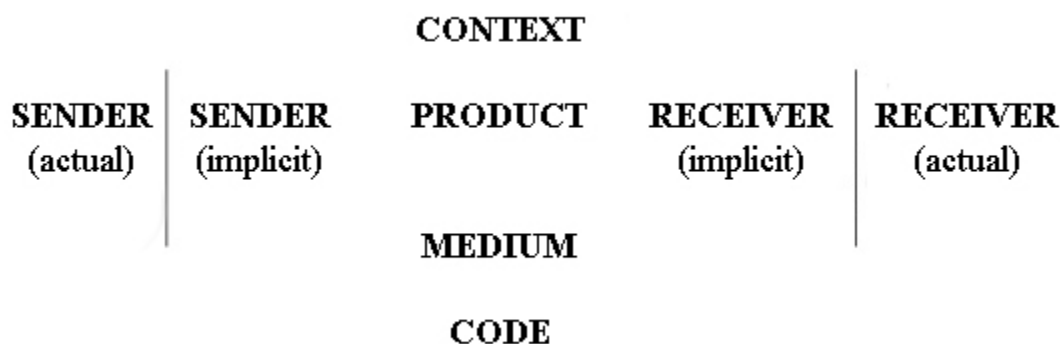


Figure 5

According to Thorlacius (2012), *the sender* is responsible for the communicative action. Thorlacius (2012) distinguishes between an implicit and actual sender. The actual sender is where the real intentions behind the communication product can be found. In addition, the actual sender

is also linked to the emotive function, which only is usable if the sender has knowledge about its receiver. The implicit sender, on the other hand, is linked to the expressive function. The expression of the product such as the focus on feelings, opinions, and values. The implicit sender can be reflected in the use of language and color.

The receiver is the one that the sender wishes to affect with its message. Again, Thorlacius (2012) distinguishes between an implicit and actual role. The implicit receiver, is the one thought of by the sender. Whereas the actual receiver is the one who actually experiences the website and the visual communication (the message). The actual receiver can bring insight regarding the accordance between the intentions of the sender and the experience of the receiver.

The product covers both the content and expression of the whole. The product is linked to the aesthetic communication features, which is divided into two: the formal and the unpredictable. The formal aesthetic feature is the visual expression, in the communication of an aesthetic experience, the sensory and cognitive experience which can be explicitly shared and described among others. The unpredictable aesthetic feature cannot be described explicitly, as the experience is not based upon common sensory experiences.

The context is linked to the referential feature, with focus on the meaning of the signs or content of the product. Further, the context is linked to the intertextual feature, meaning references to other products or connections. Images often refer to other contexts, as the visual effect such as colors, fonts and graphical design refers to other timelines, trends and products.

The media is the medium between sender and receiver. The phatic feature linked to the media focuses on how the contact between sender and receiver can be kept intact without any sharing of information. A feature of phatic function could be the navigation design of a website. The phatic function can be found in design consistency as the consistency proves to the receiver, that it is “one universe”. When the phatic function or design consistency breaks, it reflects that the receiver has moved to something new. The phatic function is especially vital in connection to corporate design and a visual identity, as a corporation can be recognized in its consistency in design (Thorlacius, 2002). A change in the phatic function can also be used to arouse the attention of the receiver, which can help the receiver to see the product from another angle and lead to renewed interest. But, it can also have the opposite consequence. That the receiver will dissociate with the product and lose the interest.

The code is the selection of signs that in connection to each other creates a meaning. For the communicative action to succeed, the meaning of the sign system must be known by both the sender and receiver. Meta-communicative feature is part of the code, as well as the intersemiotic function. One cannot compare the linguistic signs with the visual signs. (Thorlacius, 2002).

As digital media has evolved, the concept of interaction have become central. According to Thorlacius (2002), Toscan (1999) argues that the development is the foundation behind trends such as moving from passive to active; from linear to nonlinear; from one-way communication to multi-way communication; from centralization to decentralization; and most importantly from the closed and predetermined towards the more open and unpredictable (Thorlacius, 2002). Communication exists on various channels. On digital media it is especially content and functionality that plays a crucial role in getting the desired attention, which is where visual communication fills up the toolbox of visual effects.

Social network theory

In addition to the evolvement in the communication field, it is vital to understand the social network theory. Human beings are not just individuals, everyone is connected in networks, which influences one in one or another way. Social science provided the idea that “individuals are embedded in thick webs of social relations and interactions” (Borgatti, et al., 2009, p. 892). Borgatti et al. mention an example that explains the concept very well. Even though the example dates back to before the first email was sent, the foundation in the understanding can still be used in a digital context and in the modern social network, social media, which makes one’s social network and connection very visible and salient.

“In the fall of 1932, there was an epidemic of runaways at the Hudson School for Girls in upstate New York. In a period of just 2 weeks, 14 girls had run away - a rate 30 time higher than the norm. Jacob Moreno, a psychiatrist, suggested the reason for the spate of runaways had less to do with individual factors pertaining to the girls’ personalities and motivations than with the positions of the runaways in an underlying social network [...] the links in this social network [sociometry], Moreno argued, provided channels for the flow of social influence and ideas among the girls. In a way that even the girls themselves may not have

been conscious of, it was their location in the social network that determined whether and when they ran away” (Borgatti, et al., 2009, p. 892).

The adaptation mechanism states that individuals are becoming homogeneous as a result of experiencing and adapting to similar social environments. When two or more face the same environment forces, they are likely to adapt by becoming increasingly similar. In the runaway case, the first girl to make the runaway-action, is the one who puts the idea of runaway into the network between the girls, which influences the other girls to do a runaway.

What is a social network? A network consists of ties and relationships between the actors in the network. Social scientists operate with four basic types of ties: similarities, social relation, interaction, and flows (Borgatti, et al., 2009). The relationship of similarities could appear from a location, a membership or attributes such as gender or attitude. Social relations can be kinships (parent of, married to, sibling to, etc.), affective (to like or hate someone), “other role” (friend of, boss of, student of, competitor), or a cognitive tie (to know, or know about, or sees as happy). The third relationship, interaction, could be someone, one has helped, talked to, harmed, or even had sex with. And finally, the fourth, flows, means information, beliefs, personnel, resources etc. The different ties can affect each other, which can play a role in a social network research (Borgatti, et al., 2009).

As it is stated in the example, the girls might not be conscious about the influence and ideas flowing in the network. But, social network is not only about unconsciousness. One can argue that it is fair to distinguish between an internal and external effect. The internal is on a more personal level as in the runaway example. Whereas the external deals more with information and knowledge, which one is conscious about. Cross et al. (2001) investigate knowledge creation and sharing in social networks. Based on Cross et al.’s study, people tend to use their network as sources of information, when acquiring information, solving problems or learning (Cross, et al., 2001, pp. 102-103). In such a situation it can be useful to look at Borgatti et al. (2009) again and distinguish the ties between people. According to Borgatti et al. (2009), the influential strength of weak ties-theory has been introduced by Granovetter (Borgatti, et al., 2009, p. 893). Granovetter argues that strong ties, meaning the relationship of one’s close contacts, can result in information being redundant,

as one's strong ties often tend to know each other as well. On the other hand, weak ties are the ones that easily can be unconnected to the rest of one's network, why the information is more likely to be novel (Borgatti, et al., 2009, p. 893). Further, Cross et al. (2009) argues that "the potential for inaccurate perceptions is only increased by our transition into a world of virtual work and telecommunicating, where employees are engaged in work relationships increasingly invisible to their superiors" (Cross, et al., 2001, p. 103).

The Locutionary Act

To sum up the two communication theories and the social network theory, an introduction to the locutionary act will be described. A locutionary act is the production of sounds and words with meanings (Boztepe, appendix1). It is the basic act of producing a meaningful expression in a given language. It is a subtle way to view communication on and it consist of two separate acts: the illocutionary and the perlocutionary.

The illocutionary act is the force in the saying, meaning the intention behind the messages made by the sender. The sender wants to obtain and achieve an effect or interactional goal with the recipient, as the sender do not produce any utterance without having a purpose. On the other hand, we have the perlocutionary act, meaning the actual effect of the communicative act at the recipient. If the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act are not alike, the communication (locutionary act) is not at its most effective and successful level. Communication is a difficult discipline. The illocutionary act is determined by the sender, but the sender cannot determine the perlocutionary act, as it is up to the receiver and the receiver's perception how the locutionary act effect one. As mentioned above everyone is unique, which makes it even more difficult to communicate, as it is severe (if not impossible) to know it advance, how the communicative act it going to be perceived. One's perception can be influenced by one's social network. The difficulty of communication has been expressed by Searle (1969):

“The hypothesis that the speech act is the basic unit of communication, taken together with the principle of expressibility [whatever can be meant can be said], suggest that there are a series of connections between the notion of speech act, what the speaker means, what the sentence (or other linguistic element) uttered means, what the speaker intends, what the

hearer understands, and what the rules governing linguistic element are” (Boztepe, Appendix1)

When looking at visual communication, the visual artifact is the locutionary act, whereas the corporation is the illocutionary act, the sender/speaker who wants to communicate a message, and the actual effect the message has on the receiver is then the perlocutionary act.

Partial conclusion

The model of Shannon and weaver gives an insight on how the most effective communication model looks like. Moreover, the redrawn version of the model by Burcher (2012) shows how the communication model has evolved with the development of digital media. Additionally, the redrawn model gives a visual insight of social networks, as messages can be shared and thereby re-broadcasted with one’s online social network. This re-broadcasting results in more noise, which the sender should be aware of.

The revisited model of Roman Jakobson by Thorlacius (2002) provides us with a more detailed insight of how a visual communication model looks like. Both the sender and receiver is distinguished between being actual and implicit. Here, it is important to state that the actual receiver is not the receiver in the mind of the actual sender. Meaning, that the receiver thought of by the sender, might not be the one who actually receives the message, which creates a gap in the distribution of the message. Additionally, the messages are not just affected by noise, but also the context in which it is communicated, as well as the medium and code. As of the medium, the design comes into play both in the creation of a user friendly navigation, but also in the creation of a phatic function, where design can create consistency and ensure that consumers navigate within “one universe”. Likewise, a product (message) consists of two feature, whereas only one of them is able to be explicitly articulated by the receiver. This could cause difficulty in testing if the message has been received correctly. Further, the context touches upon how visual elements can refer to other timelines, trends and products - Just like a picture say more than a thousand words. This states the importance of code, as sender and receiver must be on a communicatively common ground, as a consequence of no code is that the actual receiver perceive the message unintended. Communications have become more complex, which is arguable to say is caused by the development of digital media. The development has also visualized the idea of social network,

which can be seen on social media. Moreover, social networks create the ability of consumers being influenced on the external level by branding and advertising messages, which are not intended them. This exposure is caused by the social media of today, when one's social network chooses to interact with a brand online. Thus, a consumer's social network functions as marketers in the sense that they operate as brand ambassadors through their interaction and sharing. Individuals are influenced by their networks, as social systems generate a need for uniformed knowledge and information sharing among the participants of the social network. If a network-actor likes or share something, one will be influenced by it indirectly.

In the aim of answering the research question of how and why visual communication has significance for consumers, the first sub question will be used as guidance in this analysis. The following section will go into depth with the dominant practices of visual communication with the purpose of creating value. Therefore, this analysis will be divided into three subparts including the sender, the message, and the receiver.

The Sender...

The corporation

More and more corporations are becoming online to be competitive and interact with their consumers. Some even arises from the digital world and are solely online. Digital media creates new opportunities for corporations in their communication with their consumers. Therefore, corporations are increasingly aware of their image and reputation, as the evolvement of the technology has resulted in the consumer having more power and influence on corporations (Christensen, et al., 2008). By using an effective corporate branding strategy, organization are able to control and influence the consumer's interpretation of its brand.

To get a better understanding of digital media, the concept will be divided into five categories; paid, owned, earned, sold, and hijacked media.

5 forms of media

As long as the concept of media has existed, it has been possible to differentiate it into various categories. Three classic categories have been paid, owned and earned, and has existed long before the web. Now, when the Internet grows continuously, new devices are being developed, and innovative channels arise, it is time for the concepts to be revisited in a digital context and further, to add two new concepts: sold and hijacked. The five forms of media are necessary to understand, as it is the online platforms where corporations and consumers meet each other, communicate and interact. As the digitalization is still evolving and thereby changes quicker than you can pronounce the name of the most famous Danish dessert: rød grød med fløde, the description of the various forms of media might have changed again already tomorrow. The three classic concepts: paid, owned and earned media will only be viewed with digital lenses, whereas the two newer concepts have occurred due to the evolution online.

The three classic concepts have become more complex as they have experience a shift in being media channels in their own rights, to be part of the social media network, where consumers can contribute to content getting significant reach and coverage, which can then lead to the content becoming newsworthy in its own right (Burcher, 2012). The socially connected marketing landscape is based around behaviors and people, why marketers need to understand the new ways in which the public are communicating, connecting, consuming and sharing (Burcher, 2012, p. 7). One of the most remarkable changes of the digitalization, has been the shift from monologue (one-way communication - organization towards consumers) to dialogue (two-way communication - between organization and consumers). This change has also given the consumers much more power in their saying, which will be recognized in the concept of earned media, but also is the foundation for the newer concept hijacked media.

According to Burcher (2012), marketing and advertising are now being defined by a trilogy that is made up by the mantra of paid, owned, earned media, whereas Edelman and Salsberg (2010) have added the two newer concepts, sold and hijacked media:

Paid media involves a payment for media space or paying a third party to either promote a product, website, piece of content or anything else that an advertiser [corporation] desire that consumer

draw their attention toward. Digital advertisement is now tailored to consumer actions in real time, thus improving relevance and potential effectiveness. The feedback loop allows online display advertisements to be delivered using behavioral (based on actions) or contextual (based on relevant editorial) targeting. Relevance is now critical, and the feedback loop provides the information that facilitates this (Burcher, 2012). Other examples of paid media could be web-banners, search-engine marketing, commercials on YouTube, online product placement etc.

Owned media is a corporation's usage or creation of its own channels to communicate or advertise and any other asset owned by the brand. In the digital space this could be a website or microsite, a social network presence, a branded community, an app, or simply a piece of branded content. The arrival of the internet means that content is always accessible, and the need to consume the messages live or on the day of issue effectively disappeared. Additionally, the internet acts as an archive, preserving information, and as a result the volume of digital content has exploded. On-demand mechanics give 24/7 access to content and content experiences, and both publishers and advertisers are utilizing the web in order to be available for consumers whenever that want to interact (Burcher, 2012). During the improvement of speed and browser capability, brand websites began to evolve in such a form that consumers could register, find dealers and stores, CRM programs implemented, and e-commerce functionality introduced new experiential components (Burcher, 2012, p. 14). The importance of a website was highlighted in a research published in April 2008, which showed that Google advertisement impressions contributed to an 11 percent increase in unaided awareness, where an increase of 59 percent in unaided awareness was seen if the user visited the promoted website (Burcher, 2012, p. 14). Brands use these hubs to foster engagement and relationships, with all of this serving to reinforce the idea of advertisers being content marketers, often more akin to a publisher than a seller of products (Burcher, 2012). Owned media has helped to shift marketing emphasis from 'push' strategies to 'pull strategies, meaning that messages are not sent to the consumer anymore, but the consumer seeks out the content or brand in question (Burcher, 2012, p. 15).

Earned media happens when consumers create media and/or share media a corporation has created. It is all [positive] brand-related consumer actions and conversations. Today, more and more earned media is being generated online. Technological advances (digital cameras, internet enabled mobile devices and so on) have seen everyone become armed with the tools of production, whilst social media channels have given everyone (free and easy) mechanisms for distribution.

The role of sender is therefore no longer purely the preserve of publishers or advertisers, as the roles of sender and receiver also have even become interchangeable. The tools of production have shifted to the “people formerly known as the audience” (Burcher, 2012, p. 19). Consumers, brands and publishers can therefore both be senders and receivers, which is part of the reason for the increased amount of online content, which can be seen on YouTube where 48 hours of content is uploaded every minute (Burcher, 2012, p. 19). The potential for everyone to be a sender has seen an explosion in the volume of product questions, photos, reviews, experience videos and customer feedback posted online, with brand reputation affected either positively (or negatively) as a result. Earned media, a modern concept of the more traditional word-of-mouth, has scaled and can now spread over much further distances, resulting in significant enlargement of the feedback loop, due to the evolvement of digital media (Burcher, 2012, p. 19). Gaining earned media amplification is not simply about content being passed on: “it’s about content generating emotional involvement too. People choose to participate or share things because they feel a need to - great brands and great content create this need” (Burcher, 2012, p. 20). Advertisers have always been able to listen to consumers using methods like focus groups and surveys, but the scaling of earned media now gives the chance to listen to a much wider group, over a much wider area in real time. This information can be used to spot trends and gain insights that can fuel product design, customer services, and strategic and creative approach (Burcher, 2012, p. 21). Examples of earned media is organic search (unpaid search-engine results based on keywords (Edelman & Salsberg, 2010) placement, sharing and forwarding popular commercials, consumer ratings and reviews (both positive and negative).

Hijacked media on the other hand, is the opposite and negative kind of “earned media”. It is the risk that passionate consumers, other stakeholders, or activist will make negative allegations of a brand or product and voice their opinions in a quicker (social media), more visible, and much more damaging way. It happens when a corporation’s assets or campaigns are taking hostage by those who oppose it, which is most likely to happen on social media. It can destroy a corporation or brand’s image and reputation, as well as have economic impact. According to Edelman and Salsberg (2010) members of social networks are learning too that they can hijack media to apply pressure on the business that originally created them. The goal of hijacked media is often to persuade others to boycott brands or products, or putting the reputation and image at risk. A great

example of a hijacked media, which went viral at an international level, was the Danish Zoo and their killing of the baby giraffe, Marius.

Sold media deals with the opportunity to sell space of a corporation's owned media to other marketers to place their content. It is the case of one's owned media becoming another's paid media, which is often seen on e-commerce sites where the retailer sells ad space on their site. The trend of sold media has been effectively used within the travel industry where hotels have bought ad space on airplane-companies e-commerce site.

Because of the development of digital media, corporations must have a deep understanding of how their consumers engage with different types of media at each stage of the journey toward a purchase decision. Further, the five different kinds of media are related and interact with one another, so marketing plans and capabilities must adapt and evolve. The five forms of media are being more interdependent than before, and where owned media has the possibility of serving a more engaging consumer experience and thereby get the consumers' interest, paid media can reach out for a broader audience and retrieve consumers to the owned media. To maximize the effect, all five concepts needs to work together (Burcher, 2012). Furthermore, engagement with the customer today is not just pouring a message on their head and hoping they get wet. It really is understanding that you must be present in a conversation when they want to have it, not when you want to (Burcher, 2012). In a world of fragmenting channels and ever increasing numbers of advertising messages, getting noticed has become more challenging (and expensive). More on, the difference between products have shrunk, and in many cases the main difference is now the perception of the brand or product and the related marketing. Advertising has become more important, whilst becoming harder to execute (Burcher, 2012).

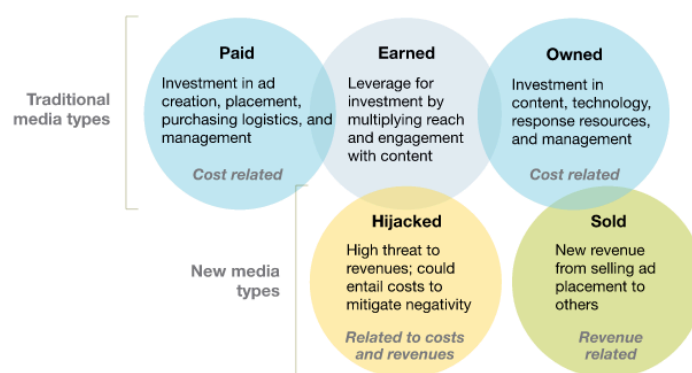


Figure 6

Owned media enables sold media, which create revenue to use on paid media that feeds owned and creates earned. Owned focuses on building long-term relationships and thereby gain earned media. Earned media is often the result of well-executed and well-coordinated owned and earned media, why it needs attention in both listening and responses. And the risk of hijacked media must always be taking serious.

Even though all the five forms affect each other and are integrated, there is still a remarkable difference in their reach and control. Earned and hijacked media is of very little control, and can evolve to have a very high reach in the case of going viral. Sold media is of high control and no reach at all. Owned media has little reach in the sense that the reached audience is visiting by their own initiative. In contrast is the control of owned media very high. Paid media has a medium control as it is made by oneself but often can be shared and forwarded due to the digital media. The reach has become gradually up to the corporation itself, as social media makes it possible to pay for an exact amount of reach.

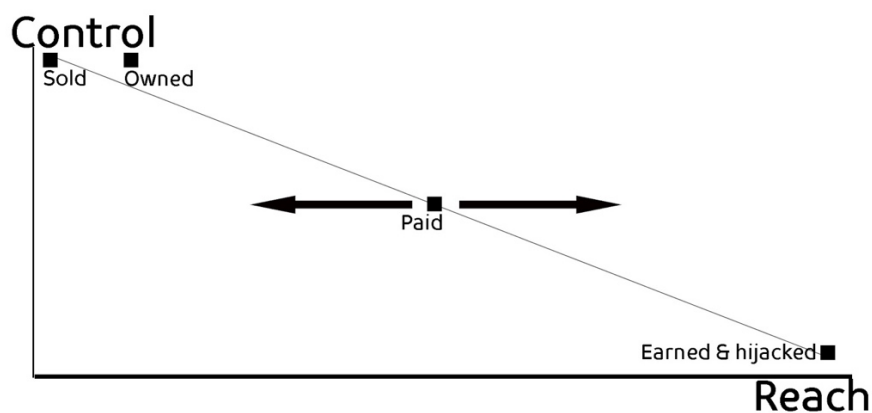


Figure 7

A brand & a Brand

As mentioned above, to maximize the effect of one's communications, all five media forms need to work together and be consistent. The consistency can be found in a corporation's communications, visuals, and identity, which are the core elements of a brand.

I will use the definitions of American Marketing Association to distinguish between a brand and a Brand:

A *brand* is a "name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers" (American Marketing Association, 2016).

A *Brand* is a:

“customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas; often, it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan, and design scheme. Brand recognition and other reactions are created by the accumulation of experiences with the specific product or service, both directly relating to its use, and through the influence of advertising, design, and media commentary [...] a Brand often includes an explicit logo, fonts, color schemes, symbols, sound which may be developed to represent implicit values, ideas, and even personality” (American Marketing Association, 2016).

In short a brand is the explicit features that make it easier for consumers to make identifications, and which can (if necessary) be changed by the corporation in a short term period. Also a brand can be seen in the perspective of inside-out. On the other hand, a Brand is the perception and experience of a corporation's implicit features by its consumers. Implicit features such as values, ideas and personality, which cannot be changed by the corporation, but might be able to influence on in the long-term, as a Brand has an outside-in perspective.

The outside-in perspective have gained more attention in recent years due to digital media and the increase of control for consumers.

The distinction of both brand and Brand has to include both views. Hanby (1999) distinguishes the concept of brand as old and new, where brand would be the old view and Brand the newer. The old view refers to a brand being an “object” with no personality, whereas the new view refers to a Brand being a living organism with personality and emotions. Hanby (1999) is quoted regarding *the new view* of brands “as holistic entities with many of the characteristics of living beings” (Bjerre, 2002, p. 15).

The old view:

“[A brand] is a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of seller, to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors” (Hanby, 1999).

The new view (defined by marketing experts, Judie Lannon and Peter Cooper):

“[A Brand is] what turn a product into a brand is that the physical product is combined with something else - symbols, images, feelings - to produce an idea which is more than the sum of the parts. The two - product and symbolism - live and grow with and on one another in a partnership of mutual exchange” (Handy, 1999).

Bjerre (2002) stresses that the *point of departure* is of high importance as corporations define and develop their brands. As van Riel states: “the company must know itself well, i.e. it must have a clear picture of its real situation, in order to present itself clearly through its behavior, communication, and symbolism (Bjerre, 2002, p. 20). Further, Kapferer states “before knowing how we are perceived, we must know who we are” (Bjerre, 2002, p. 19).

For a corporation to know itself, it must be explicit in who to know, which depends on the branding strategy. Is the corporation itself the one and only brand, or those it has subsidiaries, which have their own brand and identity? According to Olins (2003), three principles of corporate branding strategies exist, which are monolithic strategy, endorsed strategy, and branded strategy. Olins’ principles concern multi branded corporations, “some companies, especially those in consumer products, separate their corporate identity from the identities of the brands they own” Olins (2002). The *monolithic* strategy refers to a strategy where a company only makes use of one visual approach. The consumer is able to recognize the company right away, because of the symbols, colors etc. The company is one entity and often operates within a narrow field (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p. 121).

The *endorsed* strategy refers to companies, where subsidiaries have their own identity, brand, culture and traditions, but still is connected (visual) to the parent company. It is clear which of the companies’ function that traits back to the parent company (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p. 121).

The *branded* strategy refers to the principle in which the subsidiaries have their own style, identity, brand, culture and tradition, and where there is no recognition of the parent company. It appears, as there is no relation between the parent company and the subsidiaries, but also in between all of the subsidiaries (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p. 121).

A brand and Brand is vital for corporations today. According to Eckhardt and Arvidsson (2016), Levy (1959) found that goods are not desired for their utility but for their ability to create and articulate personal identity (Eckhardt & Arvidsson, 2015, p. 168). Further, Eckhardt and Arvidsson (2015) states that “the shift from advertising products to building brands altered the dominant *modus operandi* of advertising agencies” (Eckhardt & Arvidsson, 2015, p. 169). It is now less about inserting products into a common consumer mythology, and more about building cultural artifacts, including lifestyles, experiences and sensibilities around brands. In other words, advertisement is today more about selling a brand than the product. It has become more vital to have a brand to support the products, as consumers are buying the values of the brand, which satisfy their needs and emotions, rather than the functionality of the product.

Brands have become a much larger part of consumer’s life, which could be the reason why consumers attach some brands a greater importance than others. The shift from web 1.0 to 2.0 resulted in the consumer having more opportunities than before. Meaning that in the context of a purchase decision, consumers are no longer limited to the local choices, but are able to act globally. The shift has made the market more competitive, why it is up to the corporations to affect the consumers. Moreover, the consumers are much more informed, and the ease of use of technology is increasing.

Identity

As one of the core elements of a brand, the identity will be touched upon. The identity is vital for consumers’ identification. A definition of identity is given by (Cass, 2010): “[identity is] the *visual aspects* that form part of the overall brand”. This definition refers to the identity being purely visual. A perspective Balmer and Wilson (1998) has recognized, and argue:

“The emphasis given to graphic design [... is] understandable, since the overwhelming majority of corporate identity consultancies in the United States and in Europe have their roots in graphic design, employ many graphic designers, and emphasize the role of graphic design in rectifying a whole spectrum of problems faced by organizations” (Balmer & Wilson, 1998, p. 15).

Moreover, Balmer and Wilson (1998) argue that visual identity is deployed in order to communicate the identity, as well as making the identity more fashionable (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). Another perspective is of van Riel and Fombrun (2007), who suggest three major approaches of “identity”: the identity: rooted in design, the identity: rooted in corporate culture, and the identity: rooted in communication.

The identity: rooted in design enforces a consistent expression of a corporation. “Visual symbols are a quick and penetrating way of conveying a simple idea about a company, and have considerable emotional value” (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p. 64).

The identity: rooted in corporate culture refers to the shared beliefs and values of all organizational members, and the School of organizational behavior argues that “identity is very much in the eye of the beholder: What you see depends very much on where you stand” (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p. 64).

The identity: rooted in communication deals with the messaging and communication, and examines how the identity can be “translated” through advertising and publicity. The storytelling of the corporation.

Even though van Riel and Fombrun (2007) distinguishes between three approaches of identity, they are all interdependent. A corporation cannot successfully communicate their identity, if no commitment exists to both the symbolism and behavior, which is why the identity mix (the common denominator of communication, behavior, and symbolism) is important to manifest one’s personality to the world. The identity-mix is the outer expression of the corporation and consist of communication, symbols, and behavior (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p. 68).

A corporation needs to “construct” their identity, as not all elements of the corporation’s identity are equally attractive. The constructed identity should reflect those identity elements that the company wishes to endorse and emphasize (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). A company with a strong identity generates identification, and the identity mix is the cognitive foundation on which companies can build their “constructed identities” (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p. 62). The identity is vital as a corporation cannot be perceived as authentic if its employee do not believe and express its shared values in their interactions with their consumers.

In the perception and understanding of a corporate (constructed) identity, four identity types will be presented by Balmer and Wilson (1998): the perceived, projected, desired, and applied identity (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007).

The perceived identity refers to the way the corporation and its members see the corporate identity. *The projected identity* refers to the way the corporation presents itself through symbols and communication to its internal and external target audience. The logo of a corporation helps to communicate its identity and thereby make it easier to gain buyer recognition.

The desired identity refers to the idealized picture imagined by the corporation’s top management. *The applied identity* refers to what the organization expresses about itself through initiatives and behavior both consciously and unconsciously.

For an organization to operate successfully, it needs to make sure these four identities are coherent to avoid gaps; otherwise it can have a negative effect on how the organization is perceived by its stakeholders. A gap could be an inconsistency in how the top management in a corporation sees the most desired identity, compared to how the employees perceive the projected identity. A way to close gaps is by analyzing the strong and weak points of the identity mix.

Visual Identity

When having a clear and explicit brand and identity, the development of a visual identity can begin. One could argue that the importance of a visual identity is proportional increasing with the amount of content published online. Brands and corporations of all kinds have personalities, and most of what one knows about corporations and brands come through what one sees and hear about them. All these things make up the concept known as visual identity. A concept closely aligned with the

marketing and communications disciplines. A strategic tool, which need to be understood throughout the organization as a component of the corporation's success. According to Alessandri (2009) the concept of visual identity is a strategically planned and purposeful presentation in order to gain a positive organizational image in the minds of the public (Alessandri, 2009). Thus, a positive identity is established in order to gain a favorable reputation over time. Research indicates that the root of a brand or corporation's reputation is found in its identity. A consistent exposure of a corporation's visual identity delivered through coordinated communications and public behavior can produce a positive image in the minds of the consumers. Over time, repeated exposure to a corporate image serves to produce a positive reputation. Identity + image = reputation (Alessandri, 2009, p. 7). The distinction between identity and image is vital to understanding how to maximize the effect of a visual identity. The best way to cultivate the consumer's perception is to indirectly control its image by directly control its identity (Alessandri, 2009).

According to Alessandri (2009) every firm has a mission, whether it is tacit or codified. That mission is personified through the visual presentation of the corporation as well as its behavior. The identity is a set of individual elements that make up a part of the marketing toolkit. These elements make up the persona of the corporation (Alessandri, 2009).

While the corporation can and should control how it projects its identity, it is unable to control how the identity is perceived. The identity of a firm is a locutionary act. The perception refers to the corporation's image, which is a result of consumers' association of the identity composed of their interactions and/or experiences with the corporation. Alessandri (2009) distinguishes between two types of associations of the consumer about a corporation's image: those that are inherent and those that are built over time.

To create a visual identity one must understand the elements that are combined to make one. More practically speaking, a corporation's visual identity is combined of all the observable and measureable elements of a corporation's identity in its comprehensive visual presentation of itself. The tools used to create a visual identity includes (but not limited) its name, logo, tagline, color palette, and architecture.

The *name* is a brand or corporation's primary form of identification. It should be short and memorable, as well as saying something about the products or key benefits. Further, the name should be easy to pronounce and write and be of an international character. For the name to function in a global context is especially important because of digital media. Generally, names of corporations often fit into one of the following categories: name of founder, descriptive, fabricated, metaphor, or acronym (Alessandri, 2009, p. 10).

The *promotion strategy* is a must in order to generate awareness around the name, brand or corporation. The promotion strategy should create an organizing structure of the brand portfolio that specifies the brand roles and the relationship among brand and different product-market brand context. Thereby, it defines the way the corporation chooses to publicly promote the relationship between itself and any product brand it may sell.

The *logo* is the visual symbol that consumers use to identify the brand or corporation (Alessandri, 2009, p. 14). Alessandri (2009) quote Henderson and Cote (1998) in the definition of a logo as "the graphic design that a company uses, with or without its name, to identity itself or its products". A logo without the name might be a stand-alone graphic element or icon such as the Swoosh (Nike), whereas a logo with the name could be the one of FedEx, where the name and logo is integrated.

The *tagline, motto or slogan* is a short phrase typically used in conjunction with a brand or corporation's name or logo. Unlike the name and logo, a tagline typically does not stand alone, as it also can be changed more often than any other identity element, although it is a complementary identity element.

The *color palette* is a very important visual element. It was first in 1995 corporations were able to legally protect colors and register them as a trademark. Colors influence the association of a corporation or brand's identity. If the color palette of a visual identity is *navy*, it reflects reliability and credibility

Other elements count architecture and interior design, sounds (DSB and the three tones, which actually is the tone of D, S, and B) and scents (Abercrombie & Fitch). Another element to use is mascots, which corporations can use to personify their brand, or to use ambassadors that often is seen to be celebrities. When using celebrities there is a risk of their personal brand having a negative influence on the corporation or the specific brand.

Consumers form associations with a corporation or brand's identity, which then forms an image. Over time, impression of the image forms the reputation, which is enduring. Most consumers need to hear, see or experience something more than once to truly understand it. According to Alessandri (2009) one might not see an entire spot of an ad appearing on television for the first time. Or one might hear the spot without actually seeing the visual, because of focusing elsewhere. It could take a few exposures before one can actively process the message being delivered by the ad (Alessandri, 2009).

The visual identity is at the core of its brand, and there also its message. Using visible or verbal cues from the visual identity supports what is known as the cue compatibility principle, which states that successful recall of communication effects from memory is most likely to occur when the type of information contained in the cues is compatible or congruent with the type of information already stored in memory (Alessandri, 2009, p. 27). Further, a visual identity requires message consistency to achieve positive associations, since it is only over time, through learning the identity, that people form associations. Meaning that the value of having a congruent visual identity (the same font, colors, logo, name etc.), is that it is much easier for the consumers to memories and recall a brand, and thereby have positive associations with it.

To achieve the positive associations and create the memory of a brand in the minds of the consumers, they must be fully exposed to the identity, meaning it must be projected across all media types, why it is of high importance to integrate all the aforementioned media forms.

Value for the sender

The practices that are dominant for the sender in the value creation of visual communication, is to be visible and consistent. Visibility can be achieved by using various forms of digital media, and to make sure these are interconnected. A corporation must aim for earned media, as it has a high reach and a positive effect on image and reputation. Consistency can be found in the brand, identity, and visual identity of a corporation. A brand is vital today, as consumers more and more are buying the brand instead of offered products and services. A strong brand will create a clear distinction of itself and its competitors, which importance has risen as digital media has resulted in a more competitive market. Meaning that a strong brand fosters competitiveness. The constructed identity aims to highlight the elements, which the corporation wants to be associated with.

Additionally, identity generates identification with consumers. The visual identity is a strategic tool and purposeful presentation of the identity and brand. Continuous exposure of a corporation or brand's (visual) identity, results in consumers forming associations that produce a brand image. Over time, an image will become a reputation, which is enduring and certainly value creating.

The message...

The message

As the amount of content increases every second, it becomes more and more important to stand out from the crowd. The communicative part of a message differs from type of corporation to type of message, and especially what kind of purpose the sender wishes to achieve. But. To catch the eye of the consumer, there do exist some design tools to use. Before highlighting the design tools to use, I will elaborate on a communication approach, which is argued to be recommended when communicating one's brand and identity.

The communication of a visual identity

A corporation's visual identity is at the core of its brand, and therefore its message. How the visual identity is communicated needs to be a strategic decision within the corporation? In order to most effectively and efficiently communicate the identity, an integrated approach is recommended (Alessandri, 2009).

"Most people need to hear, see or experience something more than once to truly understand it [...]. It could take a few exposures before you can actively process the message being delivered by an ad" (Alessandri, 2009, p. 23). The importance of integrating messages in communications has increased. The concept is known as Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and refers to:

"The idea that a brand will communicate most effectively if it engages in a dialogue with the public and sends a unified message through multiple media [...] a new way of looking at the whole, where once we only saw parts such as advertising, public relations, sales promotion, purchasing, employee communication, and so forth. It's realigning

communications to look at it the way the customers see it... It means elicit a response, not just conducting a monologue [...]” (Alessandri, 2009, p. 23).

According to Alessandri (2009), the concept of IMC was criticized (by Cornelissen & Lock, 2000) for a missing definition, why Schultz et al. (2007) later provided the missing link of IMC. The missing link being a clarification of the three components to be integrated. These three components are content, delivery systems (media), and audience/customer. “It is how the elements are coordinated and aligned that really make Integrated Marketing Communication” (Alessandri, 2009, p. 29).

IMC focuses on the customer, and is therefore also rooted in the pull strategy, rather than the push strategy, which is more the traditional way. A push strategy “involves taking the product directly to the customer via whatever means, ensuring the customer is aware of your brand at the point of purchase” (Marketing-made-simple, n.d.) - the product comes to the consumer. In contrast, the “pull strategy involves motivating customers to seek out your brand in an active process” (Marketing-made-simple, n.d.) - the customer comes to you.

Integrated marketing communication has become of more importance in line with the development of digital media and the greater competition in the online market. In an oversaturated marketplace, the only true differentiators are logistics or communication, where communication is one of the areas where the corporation can tailor its approach (Alessandri 2009). IMC, which is based on consumer needs, will separate the corporation from one another by associating the corporation with value in the minds of the public.

In the development of the concept, IMC, and the shift away from traditional marketing, it was recognized that the mindset also needed to change. According to Alessandri (2009) it was Schultz et al. (1993) that made IMC a mainstream concept, and further changed the mindset from the marketing mix of the four Ps (product, price, place, and promotion) to the four Cs (more customer-focused), which consist of customer, cost, convenience, and communication (Alessandri, 2009, p. 25). It states the necessity of knowing what the consumers want rather than what the corporation wishes to sell.

Customer refers to the focus being on the customer rather than the product.

Cost refers to the cost of the product to the consumer - moving from the monetary price to an intangible cost. Consumer might be willing to pay more for a product online, rather than driving to a store, as the cost of leaving the home and family is more expensive.

Convenience is related to cost, as the focus again is customer-centric. It is more important that the purchase is convenient rather than placed on the right shelf in the right store.

Communication refers to two-way communication and thereby dialogue and interaction with consumers, rather than promotion that is seen as one-way communication.

There are several of good reasons to use the IMC approach when communicating one's visual identity. First of all, the broadly accepted notion that repetition of campaign elements aids in the process of linking associations to a corporation or brand (Alessandri, 2009). Second, to ensure the most effective processing by using visual retrieval cues. And finally, the usage of visual cues is argued by Keller (1996) to support:

“What is known as the cue compatibility principle, which states that successful recall of communication effects from memory is most likely to occur when the type of information contained in the cues is compatible or congruent with the type of information already stored in memory” (Alessandri, 2009, p. 27).

Positive associations are achieved by message consistency, as consumer “learn” the identity of a corporation over time and thereby form associations. Marketers now understand that information is not replaced but is combined with existing messages stored in memory.

Design tools of visual interfaces

With the shift from traditional media to digital media, the possibilities of visual communication have increased. Especially with paid and owned media the design and visual interfaces play an important role.

Design is valued for its fitness to a particular user and task. It is concerned with producing a life-enhancing aesthetic experience. Design aesthetic is always related to the intended function of the

resulting product. Design is focused on the specification of products intended for mass production and widespread distribution. Design is concerned with finding the representation best suited to the communication of some specific information. The choice and arrangement of elements in a concert poster, are constrained by the need to effectively communicate the date, time, place, and event in question. The elegant manner in which this information is conveyed within the context of a formal aesthetic statement that reinforce and enhances the message is a hallmark of good design (Mullet & Sano, 1995).

Graphic design in the user interface is not just a matter of aesthetics. There is much more at stake than simply pretty pictures. Good graphic design can significantly improve the communicative value of the interface leading to increased usability (Mullet & Sano, 1995). Leaving the design to the users is the ultimate abdication of the designer's responsibility to provide a quality product, and many studies have shown that users are in fact very poor designers and often customize their interfaces in ways that are detrimental to their productivity such as using color combinations that are known to cause reduced readability of screen text (Mullet & Sano, 1995). Good design and system usability can improve many attributes, including ease of learning, efficiency of use, memorability, reduced number of user errors, and subjective satisfaction.

Because all graphical user interfaces are communication systems, it seems fair to argue that their design should be held to the same standards of functional and aesthetic relevance that have evolved over the centuries for traditional print media (Mullet & Sano, 1995). To achieve a good graphic design some important design rules and techniques exist. As Mullet and Sano (1995) quote Paul Rand in their book "to design is much more than simply to assemble, to order, or even to edit; it is to add value and meaning, to illuminate, to simplify, to clarify, to modify, to dignify, to dramatize, to persuade, and perhaps even amuse" (Mullet & Sano, 1995, p. 1). The goal of communication-oriented design is to develop a message that can be accurately transmitted and correctly interpreted, and which will produce the desired behavioral outcome after it has been understood by its recipient (Mullet & Sano, 1995).

Visual design attempts to solve communication problems in a way that is both functionally effective and aesthetically pleasing for the consumer (Mullet & Sano, 1995). Visual language,

meaning visual characteristics (shape, size, position, orientation, color, texture etc.) of a particular set of design elements (point, line, plane, volume etc.) and the way the elements are related to one another (balance, rhythm, structure, proportion etc.) in solving a particular communication problem. Good design defuses the tension between functional and aesthetics goals precisely because it works within the boundaries defined by the functional requirements of the communication problem. Design must always solve a particular real-world problem (Mullet & Sano, 1995). “To be effective, design must be an integral part of the product lifecycle” (Mullet & Sano, 1995, p. 7). In the context of digital media, the product lifecycle is the creation of a corporation’s owned media or the product of paid media. Design is not something, which can be applied afterwards, it needs to have a fundamental role from the beginning.

To achieve the good graphic design one must know the important design rules and techniques that exist. In the following some of the most important rules will be touched upon, but as Mullet and Sano (1995) argues, rules are made to be broken - at least by the experienced practitioner (Mullet & Sano, 1995, p. 15).

Elegance and simplicity

The importance of simplicity can hardly be overstated. In fact, the sheer simplicity of an elegant solution is often its most startling and delightful aspect. Complex designs rarely seem elegant, why simplifications are an important step in the development of any elegant solution (Mullet & Sano, 1995). The most powerful designs are always the result of a continuous process of simplification and refinement. Communication can be enhanced by the visual designer if the designer carefully selects the elements to be included, and further, to ensure that the elements are presented so as to be perceptually salient. An elegant solution reveals an intimate understanding of the problem and an ability to ensure that the essence is grasped by the consumer as well. Simplicity abounds in the beauty of nature, from the laws of physics, to the symmetrical growth of crystals, to the structure of living organism (Mullet & Sano, 1995). Simplicity plays a central role in all timeless designs. According to Mullet and Sano (1995) the benefits of simplicity are functional as well as aesthetic in the nature of: approachability, recognizability, immediacy, and usability (Mullet & Sano, 1995, pp. 18-19). A quote by Josef Müller-Brockmann defines this well “what is simple should be treated simply, what is difficult should be reduced to the simplest terms” (Mullet & Sano, 1995, p. 37).

Reduction and simplicity is also known as the economy of expression, which is the ability to cut directly to the heart of the matter.

Elegance cannot be easily summarized in a few rules of thumb. It heavily depends on taste, and taste can only be developed through prolonged exposure to a series of high quality examples forming the benchmark, to which subsequent solution that can be judged upon.

Scale, contrast, and proportion

As Edward Tufte states: “information consists of differences that make a difference” (Mullet & Sano, 1995, p. 51). The subtle interrelationship of scale, contrast, and proportion can be seen in every harmonious design. The effectiveness of a clear composition always depends at least as much on the relationship among the parts as it does on the parts themselves.

Scale describes the relative size or magnitude of a given design element in relation to other design elements and the composition as a whole. Grillo (1960) describes scale as, “the feeling of a design fitting its space and its surroundings” (Mullet & Sano, 1995; 51).

Contrast refers to the noticeable differences along a common visual dimension that can be observed between elements in a composition. Contrast provides the basis for visual distinctions, which are the building blocks of meaning in a visual message. Contrast should be strong, but few in number.

Proportions refer to all the visual elements being proportional, meaning that the elements in term of design have a suitable relationship, and how the elements compare to each other.

When way too many contrasts are drawn, when too many scales are applied within the same design, when too many proportional relationships are established among elements, the resulting chaos makes effective communication impossible (Mullet & Sano, 1995).

Contrast is used to to *enhance communication*, not simply to add variety or interest (Mullet & Sano, 1995). Limiting contrast to those needed specifically to communicate the information of interest works to enhance selective perception and thus simplify the task of extracting meaningful information from the display (Mullet & Sano, 1995).

Organization and visual structure

Organization and visual structure provides the consumer with the visual pathways needed to experience a product in a systematic way. Structure affects the visual experience at its most primitive level because it is the first aspect of the display to be perceived as information is extracted and used to guide subsequent interaction. The eye craves structure and will seek to impose its own organization onto a design whose structure is not readily apparent. This breakdown threatens communication, since the designer is no longer in control of the message (Mullet & Sano, 1995). Organization and visual structure are the staples of successful communications-oriented design.

Module and program

Communication-oriented visual design is always concerned with the development of programs, or comprehensive systems of organization. By establishing the rhythm and tone of the solution space, module and program orchestrate the synthesis of a complex solution for both designer and end-user. The benefits of a systematic approach include: structure, predictability, and efficiency (Mullet & Sano, 1995, pp. 131-132).

Corporate identity programs depend heavily on the consistent use of color, imagery, and typography to establish a clear visual expression of the values, culture, and image of the ethereal corporate (visual) identity (Mullet & Sano, 1995). Module and program are especially relevant to graphical user interfaces. Graphical user interfaces almost always include many different displays (Mullet & Sano, 1995). The programmatic effect of repetition can be based on content or visual characteristics and can be established using virtually any design element. The powerful human tendency to perceive regularity in the display leaves the designer with a wide latitude for choosing an element whose repetition facilitates communication while providing the comforting familiarity of a well-defined program (Mullet & Sano, 1995).

Image and Representation

Imagery is essential for communication throughout the user interface. The “blink of the eye” is the span - the length of a single glance - over the which the most powerful visual phenomena operate. Images are perceived as configurations that utilize many of the same the organization and grouping effects described previously. Many of the factors considered previously - simplicity, structure, scale, contrast, program, etc. - are applicable to imagery as well. Images possess internal structure

that must obey the same rules of organization considered previously for the display itself. Without effective visual representation, the graphical user interface is no more effective than a character-based interface using an unfamiliar script (Mullet & Sano, 1995). The benefits of images and representation is: identification, expression, and communication (pictorial representations cross social and linguistic boundaries with ease when the objects being represented are relatively constant across cultures. Symbols can communicate with immediacy and impact, but they are dependent upon the culture in which their meaning is established).

Representation provides the basis for all communication. Consumers can convey and consider ideas about things that are not materially in our presence only by calling forth an appropriate mental representation. Imagery is at once the most obvious and least understood aspect of graphic user interface design. It is rarely sufficient to simply “draw a good picture” of the thing being represented. Effective imagery must possess a perceptual immediacy that allows it to be recognized at a glance (Mullet & Sano, 1995).

Designers choose between verbal and pictorial representations every day. As the world move to graphical user interfaces, there is a growing prejudice favoring the use of images. In many cases this represents nothing more than exploited to its “fullest” irrespective of task demands or user needs. It is also widely assumed, however, that images are, on their own merits, more useful, interesting, and (of course) more “fun” than verbal representations. Pictorial images can be very effective in representing familiar concrete objects from the user’s everyday experience (Mullet & Sano, 1995). Effective design respects the capabilities and limitations of the material or medium. The principle extends to choice of representation as well. Words convey nuances far more effectively than pictures (Mullet & Sano, 1995). An essential aspect of visual imagery is the speed and directness with which recognition and identification take place. This critical advantage, however, is heavily dependent on the quality and familiarity of the image, as well as its appropriateness for the concept being represented.

Style

In visual design, a legitimate style produces a unique visual language reflecting the moral and aesthetic values of the culture within which it arises. A style that panders to the fashion of the day

will be short-lived and soon forgotten. Fashion is driven by a need (psychological, social, commercial) for constant change and variety. While a style may become apparent only in retrospect, its broader scope and greater endurance reflect its deeper connection to the intellectual fabric of its time (Mullet & Sano, 1995).

While largely independent of content, the chosen style is in itself part of the message. Its pragmatic implications must always be addressed in effective communication-oriented design. Because it governs formal decisions, style is the first thing people notice in a design. It tells the viewer how to interpret the design by providing clues to the cultural context within which it was created and the audience for whom it is intended. Perhaps most importantly, style provides a mean of connecting with an audience at a very primitive level. This expressive directness makes style a central component of the aesthetic experience. When used with honesty and integrity, style provides several key benefits: emotions, connection, and context (Mullet & Sano, 1995, pp. 214-215).

According to Mullet and Sano (1995), maintaining its visual and conceptual identity, a style must be easily distinguishable. To remain coherent, a style must be internally consistent. The integrity of the formal style reflects the underlying philosophy on which the form is based (Mullet & Sano, 1995). Successful styles develop a visual language based on formal and compositional elements reflecting the inherent qualities of the cultures within in which they evolve (Mullet & Sano, 1995).

Value of the message

The practices that are dominant for the message in the value creation of visual communication, is to use the suitable communication approach and to design the message correctly. A suitable communication approach is vital as digital media has resulted in the market becoming oversaturated, stressing the need to be competitive. One of the competitive differentiators is communication. As IMC is based on and focuses on the consumer, the approach is more likely to create valuable associations of a brand in the minds of the consumers.

As with the visual identity, positive associations are achieved by message consistency. Consumers “learn” the identity of a corporation over time and thereby form associations. Moreover, it is found that information is not replaced but is combined with existing messages stored in memory.

By using the design tools, a corporation is able to enhance the approachability, recognizability, immediacy, usability, structure, predictability, efficiency, identification, expression, communication, emotions, connection, and context, which all can be categorized as positive results. Additionally, good design and system usability can improve many attributes, including ease of learning, efficiency of use, memorability, reduced number of user errors, and subjective satisfaction.

Design is concerned with finding the representation best suited to the communication activity. Good graphic design can significantly improve the communicative value of the interface leading to increased usability. Moreover, the goal of communication-oriented design is to develop a message that can be accurately transmitted and correctly interpreted, and which will produce the desired behavioral outcome after it has been understood by its recipient. To state the importance of design, Douglas Martin has expressed following:

“Questions about whether design is necessary or affordable are quite beside the point: design is inevitable. The alternative to good design is bad design, not no design at all. Everyone takes design decisions all the time without realizing it - like Moliere’s M. Jourdain who discovered he had been speaking prose all his life - and good design is simply the result of making these decisions consciously, at the right stage, and in consultation with others as the need arises” (Mullet & Sano, 1995).

However, even though design foster various of positive results, Mullet and Sano (1995) argues, that rules are made to be broken. If every corporation uses the same design tools when communicating, and create the exact same pleasing messages, it will not be competitive as consumer will not be able to distinguish between the messages.

The receiver...

The consumer

It is vital for corporations to understand their consumers when communicating. Coincidences do not exist. Everything must be based on data and knowledge. One way to understand the consumer is to understand the basic human psychology. This chapter will go into depth with four visual theories as well as providing a glimpse of how the brain and eye works in this digital visual age. Visual design, visual communication, and visual identity are all creations by the corporation. But how is it perceived by the consumer? One thing is to have the best graphic designer and the most optimized digital platforms, but if the consumer does not understand the message, it does not offer any value. To understand one's consumer is one of the most important things in today's business where one's competitor is only a google search away.

Attention, perception, comprehension

It seems to be a discipline itself to acquire the attention of one's consumers. But to have the attention does not mean that consumers also perceive one's message and comprehend it as desired.

Visual attention has traditionally been defined as an information processing support activity. Attention is an attempt to improve the precision of a representation through repeated sampling of the environment. The act of attention is in itself an act of information. The premise that attention is information can be illustrated by the awareness that often accompanies an orienting response. In stable environments, people do not orient themselves toward well-defined events or to irrelevant events. Instead people often orient towards the mildly ambiguous. Visual imagery is likely to provide many more opportunities for a person to make inference about the act of attention (Janiszewski, 2008).

Perception is traditionally viewed as an act of meaning selection (Janiszewski, 2008, p. 280). A perceiver has to select the most meaningful or most relevant perception from the array of perceptions that are available given the stimulus environment. Perceptual selection is equivalent to a late attention filter in the information processing system. An alternative framing/reframing could be production activity: a person produces a perception that is useful for the current task.

What are the factors that encourage people to produce any perception relative to another? Language production could be a use of analogy. If perceptual production is similar to verbal production, then who is the communication partner in a perceptual system? One possibility is to think of perception as an interaction between the person and the environment. A person generates meaning in order to interact with the environment in a beneficial way (Janiszewski, 2008). In perceptual production the goals are to (a) express meaning to oneself (experience) or (b) assess the intent of the environment. Individuals strive to express meaning that will provide the most rewarding, most informational, or least ambiguous interaction with the environment. Given this view of perception, visual communication could be thought of as interactive communications in which the audience produces self-relevant intent within the context of imagery. Recasting visual communication is providing an opportunity to produce an experience, and understanding how imagery can encourage a viewer to adopt certain behaviors that express intent to others is a relevant research agenda (Janiszewski, 2008)

Comprehension integrates a current perceptual experience with prior perceptual experiences (memory) to enhance and extend meaning. Meaning is fundamental to branding and positioning (Janiszewski, 2008).

The brain

Four theories divided into two fundamental groups, namely sensory and perceptual, can help understanding how consumers see and learn from images (Lester, 2011). The four theories are chosen as they are directly connected to mass communication. Sensory consists of Gestalt and Constructivism and are focusing on what the brain sees (the visual cues of color, form, depth, and movement) - what it looks like, whereas perceptual consists of semiotics and cognitive, which are dealing with the meaning that humans associate with the images they see - what it actually is (Lester, 2011).

Before going further into depth with the theories, the differences of visual sensation and visual perception will be highlighted. *Visual sensation* is a stimulus from the outside world that activates nerve cells within your sense organs. Sensations are lower-order, physical responses to stimuli, which standing alone convey no meaning. Nerve cells in one's ears, nose, hands, mouth, and eyes do not have the capacity to make intelligent thoughts. Further, nerve cells are simple conveyors of information to the brain, where our minds make sense of all the sensory input. The conclusions

made based on those data are almost instantaneous, as our mind interpret the noises, smells, temperatures, tastes, and sight. Whereas, *visual perception* refers to the ability to interpret the surrounding environment by processing the information that is contained. Moreover, it concentrates on the conclusion that are made from information gathered by one's eyes.

Sensory theories of visual communication refer to how the brain can notice and miss the visual cues of color, form, depth, and movement. They help us understand how we can be attracted and distracted from visual messages. A general rule is that sensory theories are not concerned with the literal meaning of what is possible to be seen.

Gestalt

The theory of gestalt emerged from a simple observation by the German psychologist Max Wertheimer. His idea led to the famous statement:

The whole is different from the sum of its parts (Lester, 2011)

Gestalt refers to the process by which individual elements are grouped into gestalts (wholes) during early visual perception. Gestalt principles can explain the success of many visual design techniques (Mullet & Sano, 1995). In other words, perception is a result of a combination of sensations.

Complementary research resulted in four fundamental principles of grouping the sensory elements; similarity, proximity, continuation, and common rate.

Similarity is regarding the fact that the brain automatically groups together objects that look similar. Meaning that words can easily be separated from images, whereas it is much more difficult to separate words from words and images from images.

Proximity deals with depth. The brain associate more thoroughly objects close to each other than it does to two objects that are farther apart.

Continuation is to prefer for the brain rather than sudden or unusual changes in the movement. In other words, the brain seeks as much as possible a smooth continuation of a perceived movement.

The concept of *Common Fate* can direct a viewer's eyes towards or away from a graphic element in a picture of design. If five arrows are pointing south, they will mentally be grouped. If a sixth arrow, then points north it will create tension for the viewer.

Studying individual elements will help one to a better understanding of the whole. The strength of gestalt is its attention to the individual forms that make up a picture's content. Gestalt teaches a visual communicator to combine those basic elements into a meaningful whole. The approach also teaches the graphic designer to focus attention on certain elements by playing against the gestalt principles. An example of visual interest comes from dissimilarity and not similarity, as it is dissimilarity that tricks our brain. The work of gestalt theorists clearly shows that the brain is a powerful organ that classifies visual material in discrete groups. What we see when looking at a picture is modified by what we are directed to see or miss by photographers, filmmakers and graphic designer. Any analysis of an image should start by concentrating on those forms that naturally appear in any picture. Recall that color, form, depth, and movement all are basic characteristics of an image that the brain notices.

Constructivism

A viewer constructs a scene with short-lived eye fixation that the mind combines into a whole picture. In 1970, Julian Hochberg, a professor of psychology at Columbia University, found that the eyes were constantly in motion as they scanned an image (Lester, 2011). Constructivism emphasizes the viewer's eye movements in an active state of perception, whereas Gestalt approach describes the viewer as being passive. The eyes quick fixations combined with the viewer's short-term memory help build a mental picture of a scene. If memorable, the scene will be added to a person's long-term memory. Researcher found that readers noticed the largest picture on a page first and a headline before a story. In contrast, web users noticed text on a screen first (Lester, 2011, p. 51). Furthermore, online users read more of a story than readers in broadsheet and tabloid formats; online users scanned through various stories whereas print readers tended to start at the beginning and read to the end. Bigger headlines and photographs gained a lot of attention in print, but online readers noted navigational elements and links. Noticeable is that both groups liked color over black and white (Lester, 2011, p. 52).

Although the sensory theories are limited by their emphasis on “what the brain sees” and not what the meaning of the objects are, the theories can be thought to be limited in their application for visual communication. However, gestalt and constructivism both have important uses for the designers, as no work is useful if readers, viewers, and users do not notice it.

Perceptual theories of visual communication consisting of *semiotics* and *cognitive*, can be considered to be content driven. Visions cannot happen without light, illuminating, structuring, and sometimes creating perceptions, these two theories stress that humans assign complex meaning to the objects they see.

Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of signs. Lester (2011) makes use of the definition of a sign by Charles S. Pierce (1931), which is “something that stands for someone or something in some respect or capacity” (Lester, 2011). The sign itself is the product of a three-way relation between the representamen (that which represents), the sign’s object (that which is represented), and its mental interpretant (the situated intelligence that performs the necessary substitution of signifier or signified). Nadine (1989) argues that when we interpret a sign, we become parts of it for the time of that interpretation (Mullet & Sano, 1995, p. 171). Almost any action, object, or image will imply something to someone somewhere. Consequently, the meaning behind any sign must be learned. For something to be communicated as a sign, the viewer must understand its meaning. If not, it is not a sign, but just an object. Over the years, semiotics has evolved into a theory of perception that involves the use of images in unexpected ways. The critical process of representation depends on establishing a clear relationship between a representamen and its object. Within semiotics there exists three types of signs; iconic, indexical, and symbolic.

Iconic signs refer to be like or to seem. An icon is the easiest to interpret because they most closely resemble the thing they are meant to represent.

Indexical signs have a logical, common sense connection to the thing or idea they represent rather than a direct resemblance to the object. Consequently, their interpretations take a little longer than that of icons. Indexical signs are learned through everyday life experiences. *Symbolic signs* are the most abstract. Symbols have no logical or representational connection between them and the things they represent. Thus, they have to be taught.

The more you know, the more you see (Lester, 2011). Images will be much more interesting and memorable if signs that are understood by many are used in a picture. The study of semiotics is vital because signs permeate every message, whether verbal or visual. In verbal language, the narrative or story we are telling/reading/hearing is linear. One word follows the next in a specific rule-based order known as its syntax, the grammar. Pictures on the other hand are presentational. All the elements of an image, whether still or moving, are presented all at once with a viewer free to look at them in any order. Signs within an image are presented in various ways for a variety of media, many times depending on the style of the image maker. Since most of us think of image through thoughts composed of words within our minds, we usually link individual elements within a picture of narrative whole.

The way individuals combine signs and form their own meaningful messages often cannot be controlled by the creators of the signs.

Semiotics teaches the importance of symbolism in the act of visual perception and communication. A viewer who distinguish the meaning behind the signs used in a complex picture will gain insights from it, making the image more memorable (Lester, 2011). The challenge for visual communicator, expressed in the study of semiotics, is that signs can enhance the visual experience and educate, entertain, and persuade a viewer. The problem in using complex signs as a part of an image is that they may be misunderstood, ignored, or interpreted the wrong way.

However, the development of digital media has brought semiotics (icons) with it in the form of emojis. According to Percolate (2016) there has been an increase of approximately 50 % in the usage of emojis by corporations (or brands).

Cognitive theory

Cognitive theory stresses the mental activities of a viewer focusing on a visual element. Mental activities that can distract the viewer as well. What is going on in the mind of the viewer is just as important as the image that can be seen. Carolyn Bloomer identified several mental activities that affect visual perception: memory, projection, expectation, selectivity, habituation, salience, dissonance, culture, and words (Lester, 2011).

Memory is arguable the most important mental activity involved in accurate visual perception. Memory is our link to all the images we have ever seen.

Projection is a person's mental state of mind is thus 'projected' onto an inanimate object or generalized statement.

Expectations are having preconceived expectations about how a scene should appear often leads to false or missed visual perceptions.

Selectivity, meaning one usually focus only on significant details within a scene. Most of visual perception is an unconscious automatic act by which large numbers of images enter and leave the mind without being processed.

Habituation is when the mind tends to ignore visual stimuli that are part of a person's everyday, habitual activities, such as when you walk or drive to school or work the same way every day, your brain will ignore the sights along your route.

Salience, a stimulus that will be noticed more if it has "meaning" for one. If one is hungry, one is more likely to notice the smell of cooking food.

Dissonance is when the mind tends only to concentrate on one thing at a time. Competing bits of information. Too many distractions and one will find it difficult to concentrate on a single visual message.

Culture has a tremendous impact on visual perception (even though visual is free of language borders).

Words meaning that although we see with our eyes, most of us think with words. Consequently, words, like memory and culture, profoundly affect our understanding and subsequent long-term recall of an image. One of the strongest forms of communication is when words and images are combined in equally respectful ways.

The sensory and perceptual theories teach visual communicators to look closely at their world, create designs that attracts attention, be mindful of the varied messages that come from images, and understand the possible mental enhancers and distractors to anything that might be attempted graphically.

The eyes

Visual communication relies both on eyes that function and on a brain that interprets all the sensory information received. An active, curious mind remembers and uses visual messages in thoughtful and innovative ways. Knowledge regarding the world and the images that it conveys will help you analyze pictures. All messages, whether verbal or visual, have literal and symbolic components. One understands what one is looking at (the literal component of a message) and one perceives a deeper, perhaps emotional connection with the message's content (the symbolic component). Seeing clearly is mostly the result of thinking clearly (Lester, 2011, p. 4).

“As consumers, we are exposed to several hundreds of explicit advertisements daily on television, newspapers, magazines, billboards, the yellow pages, retail feature ads, and on Internet sites. We experience even more implicit visual messages in the form of product package in stores and at home” (Wedel & Pieters, 2008, p. 1)

The visual context in which products, brands, and ads are presented may affect consumers' reactions to them (Wedel & Pieters, 2008). Much can be gained from the emerging insight into the effect that brands, package designs, print and banner advertisement and other visual tools have on consumers' visual perception. Central (in the theory development in visual marketing) is the idea that vision in the computation occurring in the eye and brain to build a representation of the world surrounding us (Wedel & Pieters, 2008, p. 2).

Vision science overlaps with cognitive psychology, as cognitive psychology has laid the foundation of the understanding of visual perception of marketing stimuli. Research may build for instance on recent studies, by Balcetis & Dunning in 2006, showing that people are more likely to perceive desirable than undesirable objects in ambiguous figures (Wedel & Pieters, 2008).

“Research on eye movements during reading, scene perception, and visual search is obviously quite relevant for understanding how people look at advertisements” (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008; pp. 9). When an individual read, look at a scene or search for a target in a visual array, the eyes move every 250-350 millisecond (ms) (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008; pp. 10). Eye movements serve

the function of moving the fovea to the part of the visual array that we want to process in detail. Because of acuity limitations in the retina, eye movements are necessary for processing the details of the array. Our ability to draw a distinction between fine details drops off markedly outside of the fovea in the parafovea and in the periphery (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008). During the actual eye movement, vision is suppressed and new information is acquired only during the fixation (the period of time when the eyes remain still for about 250-350 ms). Additional, it takes on the order of 175 ms to move the eyes under the best circumstances (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008; pp. 10-11).

Task	Mean fixation duration	Mean saccade size
Silent reading	225-250 ms	2 (8-9 letter space)
Oral reading	275-325 ms	1,5 (6-7 letter space)
Scene perception	260-330 ms	4
Visual search	180-275 ms	3

Table 1

Viewers do not fixate on every part of the scene. This is mainly because information can be obtained over a wider region in scene perception than reading. The average fixation in scene perception tends to be longer than that in reading, and likewise the average saccade size tends to be longer (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008).

According to Wedel and Pieters (2008), one important general finding with respect to scene perception is that viewers get the gist of a scene very early in the process of looking, sometimes even from a single brief exposure that is so quick that it would be impossible to move the eyes. A study by Castelhana and Henderson (Wedel & Pieters, 2008) showed that with exposures lasting as little as 40 ms participants were able to extract enough information to get the gist of the scene. Thereby, it is argued that the gist of a scene is obtained during the first fixation, leaving the rest of the fixations only to fill in details (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008). Further, eyes are quickly drawn to informative areas in a scene.

As stated above, the ability to draw a distinction between fine details drops off markedly outside of the fovea in the parafovea and in the periphery (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008). But, it is found that the effects are less dropped for object identification (scene) than reading, which supports the

fact that an individual are able to obtain a larger range of information from a scene that when reading (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008).

As in reading, viewers obtain preview benefit from object that they have not yet fixated, and the amount of the preview benefit is on the order of 100 ms, which makes is larger than in reading. Interestingly, viewers are rather immune to changes in the scene. Of course it can vary depending on the function of the scene and the task of the viewer.

Fixation durations in search tend to be highly variable. Some studies report average fixation times as short as 180 ms while others report average on the order of 275 ms (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008, p. 27). The wide variability is undoubtedly due to the fact that how difficult the search array is and the exact nature of the search task strongly influence how long viewers pause on average (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008, p. 27).

The number of fixations and fixation duration both increase as the array becomes more complicated. Eye movement experiments make it quite clear that viewers generally do not return to previously searched items (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008, p. 28).

The amount of information processed (perceptual span) on any fixation depends on the task. But the perceptual span is obviously smaller in reading than scene perception and visual search (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008, p. 30).

Memory & information processing

Attention is central to ad processing, as attention reduces uncertainty about the identity of objects or locations, and it enhances the distinction of them (Pieters & Wedel, 2008). Without maintaining attention, the speed and accuracy of ongoing mental and behavioral processes, such as message learning, is decreased, and even hedonic experience is reduced (Pieters & Wedel, 2008). There is also evidence that emotional stimuli are likely to draw and hold attention, and that this enhances long-term memory (Pieters & Wedel, 2008).

Two types of informativeness exist: semantic incongruity (SI) and goal relevancy (GR). Semantic incongruity defines the extent to which an object matches the overall schema of the scene, with incongruent object having been called more “informative”. The idea is that because

incongruent objects have lower likelihood of occurring in the scene, they are surprisingly, and important in comprehending and memorizing. Thus, a monkey in a farm scene would be more informative than a tractor. SI does receive more and longer eye fixations (Pieters & Wedel, 2008). SI is related to originality, because original ads deviate in an artful manner from what is normal, and as such are incongruous. Pieters, Warlop, and Wedel (2002) found that original compared to regular ads not only received higher fixation frequencies, in particular to their brand and pictorial, but also that this carried over to better brand memory (Pieters & Wedel, 2008).

Information processing

Is perception biased - and are some more biased than others? The issue with the lack of controllability of a bias is important as it implies that “training” consumers may not be an effective strategy to improve the quality of their decisions, and that consumers may continue to make inappropriate choices in spite of “training” (Raghubir, 2008). Certain visual biases are hard-wired, meaning they cannot be controlled even though a person is aware of them, and has the opportunity, ability, and motivation to control them (Raghubir, 2008).

According to Raghubir (2008), there exist five different kinds of process information:

The pre-conscious processing that operates outside of consciousness with the presence of the stimuli. Information can be detected by the human eye, but not by conscious processes in the brain. The process of visual tasks involving preconscious exposure and influence by advertising (Raghubir, 2008, p. 147).

The non-conscious processing is characterized by consumers being aware of the presence of stimuli, but unaware of its influence on their judgment (Raghubir, 2008, p. 147).

The heuristic processing and systematic controlled processing refers to consumers being not only aware of the presence of stimuli, but also aware of the influence of said stimuli and their judgment. When consumers are conscious of the stimuli, they can control the influence of the stimuli on their judgment (Raghubir, 2008, p. 148).

The hard-wired processing concerns the manner in which attention is deployed, and differs across types of stimuli and types of consumers (Raghubir, 2008, p. 149).

It has been suggested that the design and structural aspects of indoor shopping and consumption environment can affect people’s information process (Meyers-Levy & Zhu, 2008). A consumer

can be influenced by atmospheric variables such as color, odor, music, consumer crowding, and noise. Another variable is the height of the ceiling, which has an outcome for the consumer. Even though these aspects are non-digital, it still stresses how the different variables influences a consumer's information processing, and recognizes the need for design.

Another aspect is the consumer behavior at the point of purchase. This behavior is influenced by out-of-store, memory-based factors (brand preference), and in-store, attention-based factors (shelf position and number of facings) (Chandon, et al., 2008, p. 225). According to the Point of Purchase Advertising Institute, 74 % of all purchase decisions in mass merchandisers are made in store. Yet consumers only look at and evaluate a fraction of the hundreds of alternatives cluttering supermarket shelves. In these conditions, it is not surprising that attracting consumers' visual attention at the point of purchase strongly influences consumer choices (Chandon, et al., 2008).

An approach known as *feelings-as-information* suggest that central of the approach is the interplay of feeling and thinking is the assumption that people draw on their affective, cognitive, and bodily experiences as a source of information (Chandon, et al., 2008, p. 261). A study has shown that if corporations uses virtual product presentation technology - a technology where consumers virtually can try on a product before purchasing it - the consumer will be affected by its own picture. Meaning that if the consumer does not like the picture of oneself, the possibility of not liking the product either increases (Chandon, et al., 2008). Therefore, consumer should upload their most favorable picture of themselves, as they would be more likely to buy the product then. As the results indicate, consumers react to the overall image and dislike the product when they dislike their own picture (Chandon, et al., 2008). One cannot understand the constructive nature of consumer judgment and choices without taking the interplay of feeling and thinking into account (Chandon, et al., 2008).

Value of the consumer

The basic practice that is dominant in the value creation of visual communication, is to understand the receiver. How do consumers perceive and comprehend messages? And how to get hold of their attention? The understanding is vital, as no communication is useful if readers, viewers, and users

do not notice it. What is going on in the mind of the viewer is just as important as the visual element that can be seen.

People orient towards the mildly ambiguous, which is consistent with Gestalt that encourage designers to focus on certain elements by playing against the principles. A perceiver has to select the most meaningful or most relevant perception from the array of perceptions that are available given the stimulus environment. The goals of the perceptual production are to express meaning to oneself (experience) or assess the intent of the environment. Additionally, individuals strive to express meaning that will provide the most rewarding, most informational, or least ambiguous interaction with the environment. Moreover, comprehension integrates a current perceptual experience with prior perceptual experiences (memory) to enhance and extend meaning.

When communicating visually it is critical to establish a clear relationship between the objects and the receiver. The more the consumers know, the more they see. As this relationship is difficult to be certain of, one of the strongest forms of communication is when words and images are combined in equally respectful ways.

People are more likely to perceive desirable than undesirable objects in ambiguous figures, why the visual elements cannot be ignored. Moreover, it is proven that the eyes can see double as much of a nonverbal element than a verbal element (in the mean saccade size). Additionally, participants are able to extract enough information to get the gist of the scene, by exposures lasting as little as 40 ms. This is not the issue of verbal communication. Further, attention is central to ad processing, as attention reduces uncertainty about the identity of objects or locations, and it enhances the distinction of them.

One-size fits all... Or?

With knowledge of visual communication in the context of: the sender, the message, and the receiver, one is now able to create the most effective and successful visual communication. Or not. Does one-size fits all? During the research of the sender, message, and receiver, I was introduced to various of other interesting viewpoints.

According to (Rogers, 2014), the most effective tweets (in the form of percentage of retweets) is seen to be:

- Photos average a 35 % boost in Retweets
- Videos get a 28 % boost
- Quotes get a 19 % boost in Retweets
- Including a number receives a 17 % bump in Retweets
- Hashtags receive a 16 % boost

This emphasizes the popularity of visual communication, as a tweet containing a visual element (photo or video) is more likely to be retweeted by followers than an only-text tweet. However, it is important to note that the numbers can vary regarding to industry. We live in visual era, where visually - as a source of image representations, information, and entertainment - is more important than ever before.

Lester (2011) argues that “visual communication *is* the history of mass communication” (Lester, 2011, p. ix). According to Lester (2011), words have throughout history been the clear-cut leader when communicating. Likewise, he questions where the idea came from that words communicate better than pictures, as pictures were first invented to communicate complex thoughts (Lester, 2011). However, with the inventions of motion pictures, television, and the computer with ubiquitous spread of the web, these media have dramatically changed the role of visual messages in communication to be competing for the clear-cut leader position (Lester, 2011). And yet, educators never developed a visual grammar for photographs in the same way that a verbal grammar was developed for words after Gutenberg.

Ads - pictures or text?

This section is based upon experiments done within print advertisement and not online ads, as research of eye movements of online ads was infancy.

Rayner et al. (2001) and (2007) made two experiments to study advertisements with each their own goal (Rayner & Castelano, 2008, p. 31). In the first study (2001) the American participants

were told that they were moving to the United Kingdom. One group needed to buy a car, while the other needed to buy skin care. Both groups were exposed for the same 24 ads: 8 car ads, 8 skin care ads, and 8 filler ads. The same 24 ads were used in the later experiment (2007), where the participants were asked to rate the ads in terms of how effective each ad was or how much they liked the ad. The results of the eye movement were:

	Viewing time, seconds		Number of fixations	
	Text	Picture	Text	Picture
Rayner et al. (2007)	3,64 (39 %)	5,72 (61 %)	14,7 (39 %)	22,7 (61 %)
Rayner et al. (2001)				
-Intended	5,61 (73 %)	2.12 (27 %)	25,2 (72 %)	9,8 (28 %)
-Non-intended	3,6 (71 %)	1,5 (29 %)	16,4 (70 %)	6,9 (30 %)

Table 2

The results show that when the goal was to actually buying a product the participants spent more time reading, as opposed to when the goal was to rate the ad, where pictures received the most attention (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008).

Clearly advertisement differ in many ways. According to Rayner & Castelhana (2008), when viewers look at an ad with the expectation that they might want to buy a product, they often and quickly move their eyes to the text in the ad (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008, p. 32). Secondly, viewers spend more time on implicit ads in which the pictures and text are not directly related to the product than they spend on explicit ads (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008, pp. 32-33). Third, although brand names tend to take up little space in an ad, they receive more eye fixations per unit of surface than text or pictures (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008, p. 33). Fourth, viewers tend to spend more time looking at the text portion than at the picture portion of an ad, especially when the amount of space taken up is taken into account (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008, p. 33). Fifth, viewers typically do not alternate fixations between text and the picture part of the ads (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008, p. 33).

It is clear that the goal of the consumer influences the pattern of eye movement and how much time viewers spend on different parts of the ad (Rayner & Castelhana, 2008).

The connected age

The connected age has changed the nature of consumers, as consumers today are both senders and producers, which is visible in the two communication models and the revisited versions of them.

When corporations put a message into the digital world it can be amplified and re-broadcasted by the receiver and then re-broadcasted again by subsequent receivers and so on, with everyone adding their own thoughts, comments or reinterpretations at each step (Burcher, 2012). Peer-to-peer sharing can be beneficial for brands, but also have the consequence of being misinterpreted.

According to Burcher (2012) an average consumer relied on 5,3 sources of information when shopping in 2010, whereas consumers in 2011 relied on 10,4 sources. Furthermore, 79 % of consumer uses their smartphone to help with shopping decisions, whereas 70 % look at product reviews before making a purchase. And not to forget the mothers, 83 % of moms search online after they have seen commercials for products that have their interest (Burcher, 2012, p. 16). These numbers only stress the increase in consumer's usage of digital media in purchasing decisions. Further, it is important to note consumers' reliance of product reviews, as it can affect a brand, either in a positive way of being earned media, or negative as in hijacked media. According to a report (Percolate, 2016) 29 % of American consumers use Facebook to write customer complaints, which can be very harmful to a brand. Especially as Facebook is a social network media that allows one's activities to be visible for one's network, which will spread the complaint-message.

The visual society

According to Janiszewski (2008) it has been shown that:

- Trends of print media shows that a larger percentage of print advertising is purely image-oriented.
- The video component of a television commercial communicates the advertiser's message much more effectively than the audio component.

- There is overwhelming evidence that visual merchandising has a significant impact on retail sales (Janiszewski, 2008, p. 277).

Even though none of the three examples are concerning digital media, the tendencies show that visual effects are increasing in use as well as being more effective when communicating.

Lester (2011) suggest that it is vital to understand pictures, as one in this new convergent era cannot afford to know only how to write, know only how to make an image, or know only how to make print or web designs:

“Think of all the way visual messages are displayed - billboards, cell phones, computer monitors, digital cameras, magazines, movie screens, newspapers, packaging, personal digital assistants, photo albums, refrigerator doors, storefronts, T-shirts, tattooed skin, television sets, and wall space. Bombarded daily with a steady, unrelenting stream of visual stimulation from all manner of media, we need to understand pictures. We see mediated images more than we read words” (Lester, 2011).

Stories, products, and brands can be remembered if they are told with powerful images, and thereby added to one’s collective memory. One remembers these because of the emotional attachments and because they have been replayed many times on countless platforms. The goal of a visual communicator should be to produce powerful messages so that the viewer will remember the content.

Content Shock

As it has been stated above, the amount of content online has exploded, resulting in consumers being exposed of much more information than before. Information that consumers are in no position of consuming. The development has been analyzed with the lenses of the economic view of supply and demand by Mark Schaefer (2014). The supply is the huge amount of content available, while the demand is the content consumed.

According to Schaefer (2014) the amount of content is not just increasing, it is exploding at a ridiculous rate with the amount being doubled every 9 to 24 month - depending on the study one rely on. A rate that is infinite to consume. Schaefer (2014) states:

“This intersection of finite content consumption and rising content availability will create a tremor I call The Content Shock. In a situation where content supply is exponentially exploding while content demand is flat, we would predict that individual, companies, and brands would have to “pay” consumer more and more just to get them to see the same amount of content” (Schaefer, 2014).

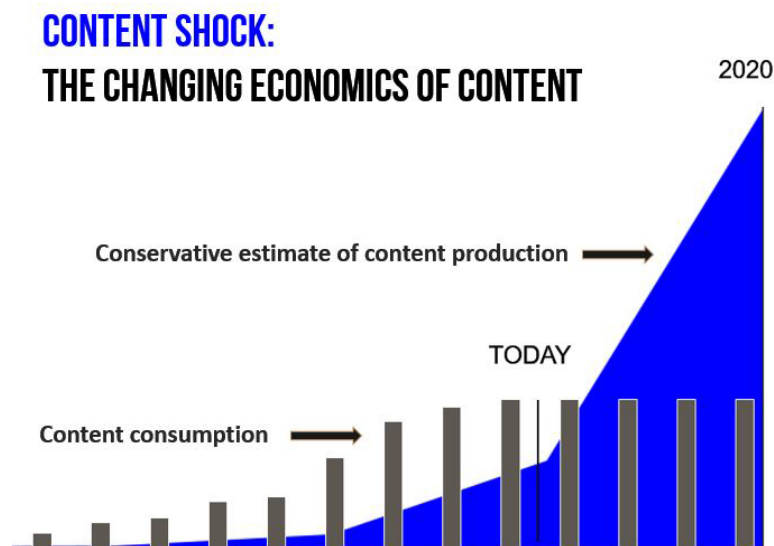


Figure 7

According to Schaefer (2014) the amount of content an average individual consume daily has grown from two hours per day in the 1920s to nearly nine hours a day in 2011. Further, due to mobile devices the consumption has risen with additional two hours between 2011-2014, reaching an incredible consumption of eleven hours a day. On the other hand, the supply (content available) is expected to increase by 500 % in the next five years (Schaefer, 2014). The idea that “great content rises to the top” (Schaefer, 2014) cannot be relied on anymore. There is simply too much information out there. This trend has been visible at Facebook where the organic reach (meaning the reach for unpaid content) for brands has decreased with 30 % within 12 months (Schaefer, 2014). As a platform owner, Facebook continuously needs to redefine their business model, as the

amount of content explodes. According to Schaefer (2014), content shock is great news for the consumers. As corporations are competing for their limited attention, the content will most likely be of a higher relevance and better quality.

The development of digital media and the content density will impact business competition (Schaefer, Beyond Content Shock, 2015). According to Schaefer (Beyond Content Shock, 2015) it is already noticeable that it is necessary to pay for getting one's content viewed. That there is a need to focus on distribution strategy and new channels, and more to there is a need to move away from crowded platforms to less noisy channels.

When the development is so rapid, one must question how corporations become cleverer, more resourceful, more strategic in the distribution of already invested content, so consumer see it, engage with it, and share it (Schaefer, Beyond Content Shock, 2015).

The hidden cost

Schaefer (Content Shock is here, 2015) states that “one of the predictions I made was that businesses with the deepest pockets would be in the best position to survive the slide, since the obvious options are to produce better content (at a cost) or advertise/promote the content (also at a cost)”. No matter what a corporation chooses it seem like the cost will rise.

According to a report by (Percolate, 2015), the production of (better) content and the measurement of the content's effectiveness is seen as *non-working spend*. Non-working spend is the cost of an agency, the design, a corporation's employees, technology etc. It is the cost spent on other (necessary) elements, which cannot be viewed by consumers. On the other hand, working spend is the distribution of content, it is the cost of promotion a tweet or post, the run of an TV ad.

The more working spend, the more distribution, the more consumers can be reached. Whereas, the more non-working spend, the less distribution, the less consumer can be reached.

The balance between working spend and non-working spend is delicate. If a corporation's whole budget is spent on non-working spend, the quality of the content should be high, but leaves no budget to distribute it. Whereas if a corporation's budget is spent on working spend, the content is of poor quality, but can be broadly distributed.

Moreover, the development of new media formats is driving growing production costs.

As a fun fact it should be mentioned that another report done by (Percolate, 2016) presents a result of why consumers increasingly are investing in ad blocks. In January 2010, 21 million users were using ad blocking software. In January 2015 this number had increased to 181 million. To the question of why, approximately 14 % of the respondents answered that they used ad blocking because they got tired of the low quality ads.

The quality of content is central. Moreover, the opportunity of distributing multiple kinds of content risen with the development of digital media. This trend has changed the business of ad agencies. According to Eckhardt and Arvidsson (2015):

“The multiplication of advertising space on the Internet has lowered the price of advertising and generally shifted budgets away from television and print media to digital, and more recently mobile advertising. In addition, the rise of specialized media bureaus [digital marketing, word of mouth marketing, event marketing, guerilla marketing, and so on] and the virtual monopoly that social media companies such as Google and Facebook exercise over online (and increasingly also mobile) advertising, and the result is that the media brokerage commissions that advertising agencies traditionally lived on have been significantly reduced” (Eckhardt & Arvidsson, 2015, p. 169).

As agencies have adapted to the connected age, so must the corporations. The market is more competitive, and the pressure is high.

The value of data

According to Krypzel (2014) the only reliable way to determine whether a product or design is helpful is to see how customers respond to it under real market conditions. Businesses can build all the financial projections and conduct all the customer research they want, but there is no substitute for testing ideas in the open marketplace (Krypzel, 2014).

The value of data is increasing, and by having the the right design, a corporation will be able to collect more data. Krypel (2014) proofs this with an examples including no less than President Barack Obama. During the 2012 campaign for Barack Obama, the team behind the President became known for their great use of data. Kyle Rush, the man behind the campaign website (Obama for America), and his team ran more than 500 tests across the site. Tests that are estimated to have raised the overall donation by 49 % and the email acquisition rate by 161 % (Krypel, 2014, p. 20). More exactly the team tested the graphic material, being the header of the website (a photo), which resulted in an increase of email submission with 19 %. Just because the one header/photo appealed more to the user than another header/photo (Krypel, 2014, p. 21).

To test and optimize one's owned media can have a huge positive effect on its users. Lying at the intersection of design, data, marketing, and technology; optimization is highly interdisciplinary and requires the ability to apply visual problem-solving skills in all of those areas. As more and more businesses are built online, the ability to combine these disciplines to create compelling interactive experiences will become increasingly important; indeed, it could even be called the skill set of the future (Krypel, 2014, p. 23).

Furthermore, data should be used to guide and not to dictate business decisions - a balance between data and design should actually enhances creativity as well as design effectiveness. The traditional design process aims for perfection, which puts a business at risk by not testing new designs. The traditional process is when only one version of the design is created, which needs to provide the ideal customer experience and to help business reach their goal. Yet even the most experienced and talented designers, marketers, and businesspeople are not able to predict with great accuracy how customer will engage with their design. Most companies still follow this traditional process, which means they effectively make design decisions flying blind, basing theory choices on either bad data or internal politics.

The new design process - testing - differs from the traditional design process in two important ways:

- Multiple new designs are created, with each representing a different idea.
- The new designs are tested with customers in a controlled environment, on the live site or app, to measure their impact.

By using the testing approach and the underlying data, a corporation is more likely to find the best suitable design. The testing process is based on A/B testing, but is not limited to test only two designs. The approach is only able to be used on digital media, as the sender needs the data to determine how the content was perceived by the consumers.

Additionally, when designing one's owned media, one should be aware of the amount of sold media. Both as its signal value, but also the consequences that sold media can have on one's owned media. According to the report by (Percolate, 2016), when loading CNN's website, it takes approximately 5 seconds to load the editorial content, and additionally 9 seconds to load advertising content (sold media), resulting in sold media causing the loading time to be 180 % longer than if the website was without sold media. This affect the customer experience, which can be damaging. In the connected age where consumers are (hyper)connected, brands have to design customer experiences that ensure they meet customer expectations and provide a seamless experience on all channels.

An important aspect to state, is that conversion rates (percentage of visitors who bought something) changes over time. It is not only determined by design. It can be affected by the release of a new product, sales and other price changes, events, competitors raising prices, weekday or weekend traffic.

No-size fits all

According to Honigman (2016) there is a trend in the market for corporations to desire quick-fix formulas when it comes to communication and marketing. This has extended the offerings of “the definitive guide”, “best practice”, “the key to success”, as well as many more guides. Honigman (2016) questions rather it could ever be possible to have a one-size-fits-all solution, and argues that “any approach claiming to be for everyone is either broadly general to the point of obviousness, or will lack even close to the necessary nuance needed to adequately provide direction” (Honigman, 2016).

The discipline of communication is rather complex, why one can only rely on “whatever works” (Honigman, 2016), which can be found with the use of the testing-approach. But, to rely on what

works must not be a static approach, as the world – digital media and consumers – is dynamic. When working with digital media, which constantly develops, and communication activities that are affected by various of unknown variables, a corporation must continuously test and refine its communication activities. There is no one-size fits all solution when communication.

Conclusion

Digital media has caused the market to be oversaturated, as competitors only are a click away on Google. This impact of this development has shifted the power from corporations to consumers, leaving the corporations with a huge task catching the attention of their consumers. Corporations must differentiate: one to be competitive is by communicating and interacting with consumers. Another way is to have a strong brand, identity and visual identity, as it has been proven that consumers today are more likely to buy a brand rather than a product. A clear and explicit visual brand is of high value for a corporation.

The most effective way of communicating a corporation's brand is by using visual communication, which is based on the visual identity and consist of several design tools. Visual communication foster associations, identification, and reputation for the consumers, resulting is the brand being remembered in the minds of the consumers. Further, a combination of visual and emotional elements has a great effect of the receiver of a message. Moreover, it is seen that visual communication is the most popular, as content containing visual elements (images and videos) are being shared more than quotes and hashtags. Shared content is equal to earned (or hijacked) media resulting in more reach than eventually paid for.

It can be concluded that the most valuable visual communication is gained by being consistent and visible. Consistency can be found in design and visual identity, whereas visibility is recognized by being visible on various media forms.

But. It is also found that visual communication in itself cannot create value on digital media, as the amount of content has exploded at a ridiculous rate. This trend is also alluding the economic increase of communicating on digital media.

Another aspect that affect the value of visual communication is the various variables. Variables that can occur as consumers are dynamic individuals, and variable such as the biased perception, the purpose of the consumer, the context etc. No matter how explicit a corporation communicates, a corporation will never be able to determine the perception of the the consumers.

However, the thesis does only touches upon some variables, which is not taking into account in the communication models by Shannon and Weaver, Burcher, Roman Jakobson, and Thorlacius. Other unknown variables do also exist. These variables and unknown variables indicates that the communication processes and models are not as linear as they look like - criticizing of the linear process found in the theory.

The hardest thing to see is what is in front of your eyes, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749-1832. (Lester, 2011; pp. 1).

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- Figure 1: (Ward, 2014)
- Figure 2: self-made with information from: (WebbyAwards, 1997-2016)
- Figure 3: retrieved from: (Shannon, 1948)
- Figure 4: (Burcher, 2012)
- Figure 5: self-made English version, information from: (Thorlacius, 2002)
- Figure 6: (Edelman & Salsberg, 2010)
- Figure 7: self-made with information from: (Burcher, 2012)
- Table 1: (Wedel & Pieters, 2008)
- Table 2: (Wedel & Pieters, 2008)

Appendix 1

Note by Erman Boztepe

Communication as speech act/performative utterance

Speech Community, Speech Situation, Speech Event, Speech Act

Please note that the word speech in these terms stands for all forms of communication, both verbal and non-verbal.

Speech community may be defined as a community sharing a set of rules for conduct and interpretation of social situations, a language of a language variety. To the extent that speakers share knowledge of the rules for social situations, they can be said to be members of the same speech community. In the course of day-to-day functioning of a community, there may be many situations: The example you gave below about open-air marketplaces is in fact one such speech situation – from the sociolinguistic standpoint. A speech event is an activity in which people interact with each other to achieve specific interactional goals: a party (speech situation), a conversation during the party (speech event), a joke within the conversation (speech act). A speech act, then, is the minimal unit of communication to convey speaker meaning. The basic idea of

speech act theory is that language performs communicative acts. What is said is segmented into units that have communicative functions that can be linguistically identified and labeled. The two bodied of knowledge, linguistic knowledge and knowledge about the world, are assumed to be part of competence. In Searle's (1969: 21) words:

"The hypothesis that the speech act is the basic unit of communication, taken together with the principle of expressibility [whatever can be meant can be said], suggests that there are a series of connections between the notion of speech acts, what the speaker means, what the sentence (or other linguistic element) uttered means, what the speaker intends, what the hearer understands, and what the rules governing linguistic elements are."

Locutionary Act, Illocutionary Act (or Force), Perlocutionary Act (or Effect)

All utterances perform speech acts that are comprised of a locutionary act (the production of sounds and words with meanings), an illocutionary act (the issuing of an utterance with conventional communicative force achieved in saying), and a perlocutionary act (the actual effect on the hearer achieved by saying). A locutionary act, then, is the basic act of producing a meaningful utterance in a given language. But speakers don't produce utterances with no purpose. They do it to achieve some interactional goal. In the open-air marketplace, for example, sellers would be shouting out loud to get potential buyers' attention or to make some kind of promise about whatever they are selling. This is the second dimension, or the illocutionary act. This is also known as the illocutionary force of an utterance. Of course, speakers don't produce utterances without intending it to have an effect on the hearer or the audience. The vendor in the open-air marketplace will make promises about his/her product on the assumption that buyers will recognize the effect he/she intended-- for example, to get the hearer to buy something from him. This is the third dimension, perlocutionary act. It is also known as the perlocutionary effect.

So, like I said before, if you think of a company as a speaker and its logo as the company's utterance, it makes sense to build your theoretical framework around the concepts of locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary acts. You then analyze in your study the visual features of the logo such as its form, shape, lines, color or the typeface used (i.e., locutionary act), what the company intends to communicate through the logo (i.e., illocutionary force), and the actual effect achieved on consumers through the logo (i.e., perlocutionary act). We need to know what logo designers intended to communicate by designing the logo the way they did as well as the reason why they made the changes in any variation of the original logo. For example, if a logo with a horse is designed for a shipping/logistics company, the intended message could be to visually communicate strength, agility, speed, on time delivery, etc. Any variation of the original logo would then automatically mean a change in the logo's illocutionary force. A rearing horse, rather than a standing horse, for example, could further communicate power.

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