Corporate Identity Representation in Media Texts of Belarusian and Polish IT-Companies in the English Language

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Abstract

Corporate identity is a complex interdisciplinary concept that attracts both scholars and practitioners. It is believed to be a strong competitive tool for modern companies that helps them gain trust and recognition of their customers. Entering the global market, companies choose specific ways of representing their corporate identity. The aim of this paper is to analyse how Belarusian IT-companies use English to build their corporate identity in media texts, created for global business community. The same procedure is done with the texts of Polish IT-companies in order to spot social and cultural differences in the means of corporate identity representation.

Keywords: corporate identity, media texts, intercultural communication

Introduction: The Concept of Corporate Identity

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the concept of *corporate identity*, thus attracting the attention of both scholars and business practitioners. They look upon it as a strategic business instrument that helps companies achieve competitive advantage, improve reputation and increase return on investment (Melewar 2008). According to John M.T. Balmer, corporate identity is critical for a company, if it faces increased competition, expands its markets, lacks high calibre personnel, or does not meet public expectations for corporate social responsiveness (Balmer 2000: 256-257). As Bertrand Moingeon and Guillaume Soenen claim, *corporate identity* provides companies with meaning, stability and distinctiveness (Moingeon, Soenen 2003: 1). Clearly defined and effectively presented corporate identities help companies become more recognizable by customers, gain their trust and loyalty (Balmer, 2000). By effectively managing their corporate identities, companies can also build understanding of their stakeholders, achieve strategic alliances, gain the support of financial markets and generate a sense of direction and purpose.

Despite popularity of this concept, it lacks a commonly-accepted definition. Diversity in meanings stems from diversity in views on what corporate identity is. Professor John M.T. Balmer points out that definitions of corporate identity fall into three dominant categories (Balmer 2006). The first category unites definitions that reveal views on corporate identity as a visual image, which is created by means of graphic design: "A desired image acquired and communicated by the company to the public through consistent visual communications" (Balmer 2006: 5). This approach to the understanding of corporate identity appeared as a result of influence of graphic design practitioners (Walter Margulies, Veronica Napoles, David Carter, etc.) on corporate communication. One of the main goals of this approach was to increase companies' visibility.

The second category embraces views on *corporate identity* as *corporate identification* (Balmer 2006), which refers to "individual's self-definition and the inclusion of an organization in that definition" (Balmer 2006: 6). In terms of this approach, the identification

of employees, stakeholders and customers with an organization, its values, norms and rules of behaviour is viewed as a vitally important aspect of companies' success.

The third category contains definitions that reflect a broader approach to the notion of corporate identity. It is viewed as all distinctive and defining characteristics of an organization that reveal company's identity through its activities, communication and symbolism. In other words, corporate identity is "a set of interdependent characteristics of an organization which give the organization specificity, distinctiveness and coherence over time" (Moingeon 1999: 353).

The same approach to corporate identity is used in this research paper. Corporate identity is understood as the profile and values communicated by the company. According to this definition, corporate identity is heterogeneous and complex, consisting of many elements, which make a company distinctive and unique. Corporate identity is inseparable from corporate communication, which helps company to become visible and recognizable.

Research Aim, Methods and Results

Research Aim and Methods

The main aim of this research is to find out how corporate identity is created and presented in corporate media communication. To achieve this aim, a particular type of company, their specific target audiences and channels of corporate communication have been chosen. The method of content-analysis has been applied to the texts placed on the official sites of 50 Belarusian companies. The texts placed on the main pages of the websites and pages about the companies were analysed. Seven main topics have been distinguished. These topics come up in the texts with different frequency. To define the frequency of each topic, a quantitative analysis was applied to key-words (words that indicate the topics). The results of this analysis are presented in Table 1. In order to spot socio-cultural differences or similarities in creating and presenting corporate identity, content-analysis was applied to the texts placed on the official websites of 50 Polish companies. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

The Results of Research

Belarusian IT-companies have been chosen for the analysis of their corporate identities, presented in corporate English-language texts placed on their official websites. The sphere of IT is one of the fastest developing areas of the Belarusian economy. Together with Poland, Ukraine, Romania and Russia, Belarus tops the list of Eastern European countries that export IT services worldwide.

Belarusian IT-companies started entering the global market, providing their services to North-American and Western European countries, approximately 20 years ago. Having no local experience, they had to rely on Western-European business practices, adopting new rules of conducting business and communication. Being new and unknown to a global business community, they also faced the necessity to show their trustworthiness, business value and uniqueness.

One of the main tools of corporate communication that these companies used and are still using is an official site. It has many important functions. First of all, a corporate site ensures a company's official representation on the Internet: it often serves as the first and

most credible source of information about a company for new and potential customers. Secondly, an official website serves as an effective PR instrument that helps to create and maintain a positive corporate image. Companies highlight the stories of their success and achievements, so that people can get the right picture of companies' development and progress. Thirdly, corporate sites are used to provide informational support to their existing customers. These sites contain contact information and dialogue boxes for immediate contact with managers.

Belarusian IT-companies take into account and exploit all of the options that corporate websites have as a communication tool. The companies establish their corporate identity through the texts of corporate media sites to build positive corporate image and gain their audience's trust and recognition. Texts on the main pages of sites and on the pages about the company are usually used to present a company in the most favourable way and build positive corporate image. There are seven dominant topics that are often referred to in these texts. They are: expertise, progress and change, partnership, success, quality, company localization, attitude to work. These topics appeal to cultural and business values and help companies make favourable impression.

The topic *expertise* includes mentioning and description of professional skills and knowledge of companies' employees. Belarusian IT-companies strive to present them as experts in their professional domain by mentioning their professional achievements, certificates and other proof of their qualification. Their successful projects are also described in these texts: "*our expertise encompasses the creation of*", "has an *exclusive expertise in* building complete eCommerce solutions based on the Oracle Commerce Platform".

The topic *progress and change* highlights the importance of constant development, which serves as prerequisite for success and growth for different types of businesses. IT-companies demonstrate their constant development and progress. They show that they keep up with modern technologies and innovations. Therefore, they improve qualification and professional skills of their employees and can offer modern and high-quality services: "*Reaching new horizons* is our motto and a part of our company values", "continues *evolving* in many ways to make our services more beneficial and useful for you", "We are *growing* software company in numbers, quality and expertise".

The IT-companies also mention the fact that their services help various businesses to integrate new technologies, which makes these businesses more profitable and viable: "Our ingenious solutions *provide new* communication and marketing channels, *facilitate* business processes and *enhance* connection between all key enterprise elements from sales point to the back office and anywhere in between", "We have been collaborating with businesses to build clever web services since 2014 to *improve* their workflow".

The topic *partnership* reveals IT-companies' attitude to work with their customers, which is viewed as partnership and collaboration of equals aimed at achieving mutual success and progress. IT-companies use texts on their websites to convince their potential customers that the initial goal of IT-specialists is to help other businesses, establish good relations with them and become partners: "Our ultimate goal is to be *a reliable outsourcing partner* where our software experts are an integral part of the client team", "We *help our partners* by providing expertise and resources to develop solutions that stand out and build teams that would be seamlessly integrated into their organization and infrastructure".

The topic *success* is dedicated to IT-companies' achievements that show their leading position on the local and global markets. The products of Belarusian IT-companies are described as leaders or pioneers in their categories: "As *the category leader*", "the *world's*

first free RPA product". The success is also demonstrated through partnership with world-famous companies:

> Our *expertise* encompasses the creation of Digital Commerce & Marketing business solutions, Mobile Applications and various customized B2B and B2C web projects. *Being an official Oracle partner*, […] has an exclusive expertise in building complete eCommerce solutions based on the Oracle Commerce Platform. *We are also proud to be a partner of Adobe Systems*, the marketing software solutions *leader*. As such, we offer a full range of development and consulting services for Adobe Marketing Cloud business users.
>
> <div align="right">(About Axamit)</div>

Another important topic that is covered in media texts of Belarusian IT-companies is the *quality* of their services and products. They are advertised as being of high quality:

> […] is a custom software development company based in Minsk, Belarus. We offer software development services and have over 17 years of experience in this field. Our firm's primary aim and objectives are to completely execute our projects to meet our clients' satisfaction and requirement. We focus more of our attention on the quality and reliability of our software development services.
>
> <div align="right">(Aristek Systems)</div>

The topic *company localization* is dedicated to the advertising of Belarus, as a country where reliable and trustworthy IT-companies reside. The pluses of working with companies from this country include: high standards of IT-specialists' education in Belarus, advantageous geographical position and competitive prices:

> [...] The wages in the IT sector in Belarus are one of the lowest in post-soviet countries. The state education system produces many high-quality engineers. These factors enable us to significantly reduce our own costs and offer better rates for our customers while still providing an outstanding quality of service.
>
> <div align="right">(Why *Instinctools)</div>

> […] is one of the Europe based software companies located in Belarus, in the city of Minsk. The country is situated in the very center of Europe and borders on Poland, Ukraine, Russia, Lithuania, and Latvia. Belarus proclaimed its independence in 1991 and since then, has managed to preserve its most prominent production and technological infrastructure, educational establishments, and qualified specialists. Nowadays, Belarus is known as an Eastern European software outsourcing region with primary focus on the IT sector and comfortable economical and legal environment for businesses. That's why Belarus is an ideal place for software development companies in Europe, where local businesses successfully compete with international research and development centers.
>
> <div align="right">(Scand)</div>

One more topic that is often mentioned in these texts is *attitude to work*. This topic highlights the way IT-specialists treat their work. They are described as being passionate and creative specialists, who are not afraid of hard projects and are eager to share their experience and knowledge with customers, partners and colleagues: *"We are a team of specialists passionate about anything tech-related and working hard to build truly great products",*

"help your business grow with a team that is truly passionate about front-end development and design" (Blakit IT Solutions), *"Meet our amazing team of industry professionals, who are happy to work together to create a digital future in the high-tech era"* (Axamit).

According to the results of quantitative analysis, all these topics come up in the media texts with different frequency. Belarusian IT-companies give priority to describing themselves as *top-notch specialists* and *experts*. The topic *expertise* is mentioned in the texts most often. A lot of attention is also given to the topic of *progress and change*. It occupies the second place. Companies describe themselves as *innovative*, *progressive, developing and bringing about changes to the society*. Being *friendly* and *cooperative* is also important for Belarusian IT-companies. It is demonstrated in the topic *partnership*. Showing their *success* and status is more vital than pointing out the *quality* of their products and services. The results of quantitative analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Main Topics in the Media Texts of Belarusian IT-companies and Their Frequency.

Topics	Key-words	Number of words
1. Expertise	expert, expertise, experience, highly-experienced, qualification, knowledge, trained, certificate, tech-savvy, certified, professional, proficient, talent	383
2. Progress and Change	1.Verbs of growth (Berth Levin): grow, evolve, foster, cultivate; 2.Verbs of creation and transformation: transform, change, revolutionize, innovate, improve, enhance, optimize, upgrade, update, gain, implement, adjust, streamline, progress; 3. Verbs of motion: speed-up, accelerate. 4.Verbs of change of state: expand, boost, extend, increase; 5. Adverbs and adjectives: quickly, fast, instant, slow, quick. 6. Adjectives: innovative, cutting-edge, latest, state-of-the-art, modern.	373
3. Partnership	Cooperation, coordination, interaction, community, partners, partnership, relationship, family, join, open, openness, transparent, transparency, feedback, participate, share, assist, help, assistance, gather, together, discuss, talk, exchange	343
4. Success	Success, succeed, successful, leading, leader, global, international, trusted, reliable, reputation, recognized, recognition, respected, world-class, worldwide, giant, largest, biggest, fastest, renowned, award-winning, large-scale, reliable, trust, well-established.	220
5. Quality	Quality, high-quality, high-grade, top-grade, excellence, best-in-class, top-quality, top-notch products, reliable products	103
6. Company Localization	Location in Minsk, Belarus, Belarusian + universities, brilliant specialists, superior IT companies, competitive prices, IT talents	80
7. Attitude to	passion, fun, happy, passionate, excited, worried, satisfied, satisfaction, enthusiastic, enthusiasts, great, excited,	66

Work	awesome,	

Poland borders Belarus. Despite social and economic differences, both countries bear cultural similarities that appeared as a result of close interaction within the period of medieval and modern history. Polish IT-companies top the list of leading outsourcing companies from Central Europe. The analysis of the texts from the main pages and pages about the company on the websites of 50 Polish IT-companies revealed the presence of the same topics as in the texts of Belarusian IT-Companies: *expertise, progress and change, partnership, success, quality, company localization, attitude to work*.

A quantitative analysis, applied to these texts, showed that these topics appear in the texts of Polish companies with a different frequency than in the texts of Belarusian IT-companies. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

Polish companies are mainly oriented on cooperation and collaboration. The topic of *partnership* is mentioned most often. The topic of *progress and change* is given a lot of attention too. It occupies the second place. *Expertise* occupies the third place on the list. The topics of *success, quality, attitude to work and company localization* are given much less attention, which is demonstrated by the numbers.

Table 2. The Main Topics in the Media Texts of Polish IT-companies and Their Frequency.

Topics	Key Words	Number of Key Words
1. Partnership	Cooperation, coordination, interaction, community, partners, partnership, relationship, family, join, open, openness, transparent, transparency, feedback, participate, share, assist, help, assistance, gather, together, discuss, talk, exchange	355
2. Progress and Change	1.Verbs of growth (Berth Levin): grow, evolve, foster, cultivate; 2.Verbs of creation and transformation: transform, change, revolutionize, innovate, improve, enhance, optimize, upgrade, update, gain, implement, adjust, streamline, progress; 3.Verbs of motion: speed-up, accelerate. 4.Verbs of change of state: expand, boost, extend, increase; 5. Adverbs and adjectives: quickly, fast, instant, slow, quick. 6. Adjectives: innovative, cutting-edge, latest, state-of-the-art, modern.	338
3. Expertise	geeks, geeky, connoisseurs, aficionados, practitioners, intelligence forces, forward-thinkers, expert, expertise, experience, highly-experienced, qualification, knowledge, trained, certificate, tech-savvy, certified, professional, proficient, talent.	328
4. Success	Success, succeed, successful, leading, leader, global, international, trusted, reliable, reputation, recognized,	147

	recognition, respected, world-class, worldwide, giant, largest, biggest, fastest, renowned, award-winning, large-scale, reliable, trust, well-established.	
5. Quality	Quality, high-quality, high-grade, top-grade, excellence, best-in-class, top-quality, top-notch products, services, reliable products	100
6. Attitude	Amazed, brilliant, wonderful, awesome, hearts, fondly, vibes, love, joy, passion, fun, happy, passionate, excited, worried, satisfied, satisfaction, enthusiastic, enthusiasts great, excited, awesome.	98
7. Company Localization	Poland, Polish, experts from Poland, Warsaw, etc.	85

Having compared the texts of Polish and Belarusian IT-companies, it has been found out that the texts of Polish IT-companies tend to be more informal. They contain colloquial words (*geeks, geeky*). The number of emotionally coloured words (*aficionados, amazed, brilliant, wonderful, awesome, hearts, fondly, vibes, love, joy)* is much bigger than in the texts of Belarusian companies. Whereas the texts of Belarusian IT-companies exhibit more formality. They abound in clichés that sound neutral and business-like: *years of expertise, qualified staff experienced in working worldwide, technical challenges, find recognition, help businesses*, etc.

Concluding Remarks

Media texts of Belarusian and Polish IT-companies have some evident similarities: the content of the texts is mainly made up of seven common topics: *expertise*, *progress and change*, *partnership*, *success*, *quality*, *company localization*, *attitude to work*. Though these results need to be approved by further research of larger number of media texts, some implications can be made. First of all, the texts might have similarities because they belong to the same format of media communication: they are placed on the main pages of official websites and are aimed at advertising IT-companies, creating their favourable image. These texts are created by representatives of a professional subculture of IT-specialists. This could explain their similarities too.

Socio-cultural differences between Polish and Belarusian IT-companies are big enough to become visible in corporate media texts. Belarusian IT-companies strive to create more business-like, official image of IT-specialists, progressive and successful. When Polish IT-companies exhibit more relaxed and informal style of communication, using colloquial and emotionally-coloured words, appealing to values of cooperation and partnership.

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