



On the Values of Corporate Visual Identify

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Abstract

CIS (Corporate Identity System) is introduced from western countries in early 80s in 20th century. CIS, as the practical science, has important significance in western modern corporate management. It does exert imaginable effects on the operation of general corporate marketing.

Keywords: Corporate visual identify, CI system, Added value

1. Enter the non-material times -- the identity system

In the ring of new century, people pack off the 20th century that has ever created the splendid material civilization and greet the new mystery 21st century that will bring people into an unheard-of non-material society. What is on earth "non-material society"? The so-called non-material society refers to the digital society, the information society, or the service-oriented society that has been mentioned frequently. In this society, the proportion of information industry increases to a great degree. Differing from the original society and the industrial society in which the value of products includes the value of materials and labors, the economic value and the social value in the non-material society are assessed by the proportion of advanced knowledge in consumption product and new service, which indicates that the society has already turned into a kind of "software form" from the former kind of "hardware form". The theory of corporate identity system emerged in 50s in 20th century is a real portraiture for this social change. Corporate identity system, as an important component of information revolution and a signal, is an inevitable trend in the development of human society and material civilization. By means of prominent, unique, and touching visual signals, corporate identity system can transfer the spirit of corporation, and help the corporation to communicate with people and society. By this way, it can help to enhance the cohesion among employees and improve the quality of employees. Corporate identity system has already become a powerful weapon that helps corporation to improve its fame in fierce market competition and generate a brand effect. As a result, the corporation can distinguish itself from traditional material industry, making its corporate culture permeate into the society. By this way, the corporation will occupy the market and win people's heart.

Facing the trend of market competition, corporations introduce the corporate identity system (CIS) into their management. Therefore, from the brand consciousness at the consumption level to the identity consciousness at the business level, it becomes an important phenomenon in today's economic development.

Then, what is the corporate virtual asset identity system?

Corporate identity system is the CI system in essence. Corporate is the subject, including enterprises, institutions, nations, and even individuals. Anything has its identity no matter what it is a nation, an enterprise, or an individual. Identity indicates other's evaluation and expression toward certain subject. At the economic times, corporate identity becomes an important competitive way. Identity, in English, means identification, generalization, and stabilization, which are also the fundamental principles of CI system. The three principles can help enterprises improve their business, cultivating unique corporate identities, by mutual cooperation. The perfection of corporate business idea is the spirit of corporate identity system, and also the original force that drive the operation of corporate identity system. The internal power can affect enterprises' activities, systems, managements, and education. And its influences may spread into the society and the consumers. Finally, the organizational, systematic, and general visual identity plan can transfer enterprises' operation information, cultivating unique corporate identities, achieving the goal of corporate identity. Therefore, an enterprise with perfect organization and system should pursue a balance development in all aspect as it chooses to introduce or develop an identity system. By this way, a wonderful corporate identity may come into being.

2. A general introduction to CIS

CIS is composed of mind identity (MI), behavior identity (BI), and visual identity (VI). (1) Mind identity (MI) can help an enterprise establish its unique business idea in design, scientific research, production, marketing, service, and management. It generally programs and defines an enterprise's today's and future's business aims, ideas, marketing channels, and forms. It chiefly includes the corporate spirit, values, principles, operation tenets, policies, market

position, industrial composing, organizational system, social responsibility, and development program. It belongs to the consciousness scope of corporate culture. (2) Behavior identity (BI) is a dynamic identify system. It provides with principles of business operation and corporate culture for an enterprise, and it also helps to make a general programming for the operation of enterprise. Based on business idea, MI can help to construct perfect organizational system, management codes, employees' education, behavior rules, and benefit system internally, and explore market investigation, develop new products, and transfer the corporate idea by social activities, common relations, and marketing externally. By this way, BI can help an enterprise gain a wide social acceptance. (3) Visual identity (VI) can help an enterprise shape its unique corporate identity by turning corporate idea, culture, service, and principles into specific signals. It is a complete visual transferring system that is based on corporate logo, standard word style, and standard colors. VI includes the basic factor system and the applicable factor system. Basic factor system chiefly includes name, logo, word style, color, pattern, and marketing report. The applicable factor system chiefly includes office products, production facilities, environment, package, media, communication tools, clothes, flags, and display windows. VI is the most important part in CIS. It has a great influencing power and people would like to accept it. The static visual transfer can help to create a unique identity for an enterprise. The business idea and corporate spirit belong to the level of cultural consciousness. And the internal management of personnel, organization, and system and the external management of social activities belong to dynamic activities. MI is at the spiritual level. It reflects the nature and the meaning of the spirit. BI is at the dynamic level. It emphasizes on the process. But no visual result can value its results. In CIS, the VI has most direct and specific power in advertising. It can completely express the essence of CIS, namely the uniqueness of an enterprise. And VI can help consumers to easily understand the information transferred in it. Besides, the power of CIS can be determined by the frequency and the intensity of BI and VI. But the decisive factor belongs to VI, because the specific signals and the meanings transferred by VI can directly enter people's mind, creating the identity of an enterprise. However, the content of business idea and the characteristics of products and even the culture of corporate spirit have to be transferred through the whole system. Especially for some expressive visual signals, they must combine the spirits of enterprise with their visual forms together to transfer information and leads to a series of action: (1) arouse attention; (2) generate interests; (3) produce desire; (4) imposing memory; (5) take action, and achieve successful marketing. Besides, according to theories of psychology, it is easy for people recalling information that has been obtained through eyes. Therefore, it is the most effective way to build up the fame and the identity for an enterprise by cooperating with visual media to develop a visual-signal design system, and transfer the corporate spirit and business idea. In a sense, MI cherishes "personality", and BI "unity", and VI "identity". Only when the corporate business idea possesses unique personality, can it generate harmonious corporate activities and easy-to-identify visual identity. Once an enterprise has a stable mode of spiritual culture, anyone who enters this mode will be assimilated. Environment changes people, and people create nice environment. The corporate beauty created by CI system exerts a fundamental effect on the social humanism environment. In an economic society, enterprises are the main body. Therefore, a corporate spirit that respects people's needs and emphasizes on culture can drive the development of corporate culture and social civilization. CI system liberates enterprises from purely pursuing profits. Enterprises began to shoulder more social responsibilities and contribute a lot to the new civilization.

3. The effects of CIS on human life

At the very beginning, "Coca-Cola", the king of the carbonated drinks, has taken the handwriting of Frank Robinson as the brand. After a whole century's development, the brand is widely known. And it becomes the unique signal of Coca-Cola. In 1965, the decision-maker of Coca-Cola hatched a new program that almost influences the world drink market. The new program is Coca-Cola's new corporate identity system. At that time, they determined the standard word style and the waving form of the Coca-Cola brand, and took the red color as the standard color to unify the identity of brand. Every year, Coca-Cola spends hundreds of millions of dollars to advertise its new identity theme: the drink for the youth. After decades of years' hard work, Coca-Cola transfers the old history tradition and creates a new identity at the new times by its impacting visual signals. That is the CI system of Coca-Cola. As the largest CIS, Coca-Cola's new program gains a great success.

According to data in 1990, the virtual asset of Coca-Cola's brand was 22.4 billion dollars in evaluation, being three times of yearly income 8.4 billion dollars. In 1994, the number reached 35.9 billion dollars. These data prove that CI system is an effective corporate strategy. It is a set of theoretical and practical comprehensive strategy.

How much is a brand worth?

According to data in 1995, the Nestle coffee is worth 8.5 billion dollars, and Coca-Cola 24.4 billion dollars, and Marlboro 31 billion dollars. What's the power behind the tremendous values?

Considering the psychological effect of corporate identity, the value of identity cannot be estimated, just as the power of spirits. "The power of examples is infinite." As a matter of fact, examples are to transform the abstract spirits into the specific identity modes.

To construct the tenets or the spirits that completely embody enterprises' general values is the core of CI system and the

source of brand power.

The “quality + service + sanitation” business idea created by McDonald’s becomes the top spirit of whole snack industry. The founder of Sony Company has said that our idea is: never follow others and do similar things.

“To shape the abstract ideas into an identity, and turn into practical action” is the true significance of CI system.

In America with developed automobile culture, all communication marks and service signals from the eastern of North America to the western are same, exerting the identity effect of environment. Visual identity design can transfer information fast and clearly at modern information times. Figures and signals, as the common world language, can not be substituted by any other languages. To transfer information by simple figures and signals is the need of fast social life rhythm.

In CI system, the VI design is the most effective way that can reflect enterprises’ spirits and uniqueness. And it is also the fast way to cultivate a clear corporate identity. A nice corporate signal should reflect an enterprise’s business idea, management quality, and cultural personality.

Meanwhile, the effect of identity is determined by the application. An enterprise should make best use of any kind of self media, such as business cards, envelopes, reticules, cars, employee’s work suits, and corporate buildings, to make advertisements.

Sending a business card is an advertisement. Wherever people take the reticule, it is an advertisement. The car with corporate logo is the best billboard. The popularization of corporate brand can improve the value of virtual asset. It is better for an enterprise to adopt the VI design to build up an excellent corporate identity. And the standard manual of corporate visual identity system is the tools for corporate management, which can help an enterprise to popularize its identity. As we notice the “Benz”, “BMW”, “Toyota”, and “Lincoln”, most can know which one is German car, which one is American car, and which one is Japanese car at the first glance. Our brains have been impressed with amounts of world famous companies’ identities. But we do not know much about China’s companies’ identities. At present, China’s CI system is still at the initial stage of VI. Domestic enterprises have an urgent demand for VI design, which is in accord with the standardization stage of VI in the development of early CI. It is a normal objective phenomenon in development. Along with the adjustment of economic structure, the emphasis of enterprises will change from VI design toward corporate ideas and other deepening fields.

For example, I programmed a set of VI for the Jinbin Digital Electric Co. Ltd in Tianjin Development Zone in May, 2000. This company focuses on IT. It possesses the largest portal website in Tianjin Development Zone. And it is the second company that lists in the stock market. It possesses strong economic foundation. Driving by China’s economic tide, the company finds that it is necessary to set up a strategic plan in order to gain sustainable economic increase. Therefore, Jinbin Digital began from the corporate identity. A nice enterprise should have a nice brand. I designed a meaningful and unique signal for Jinbin Digital. Centering on the signal, I completed my design. The corporate colors are the blue and the red. And the former is the major color, and the later minor. The blue stands for preciseness, deepness, and information. The red stands for corporate vitality and energy. The wave serves as the assistant form. The simple, clear, and gentle corporate identity, getting rid of former unclear image, has won praises among customers. At the same time, the new corporate identity drives the development of the enterprise. Till late 2000, Jinbin Digital is more popular in the development zone than last year. And its economy is better than that in 1999. This example illustrates that CIS is a best way for an enterprise realizing the survival and gaining further development.

At the beginning of the reform and open policy, enterprises are wild about introducing sets of production lines, large equipments, and other hardware. They seldom consider the corporate identity, the corporate management, and other software issues. In late 80s, as many domestic enterprises did not know anything about CI, some enterprises began to accept CI system and gained benefits from it.

As the value of virtual assets is increasing, the value of material assets is decreasing due to outdated technologies, and discount.

In former planning economy, corporate identity is not matter. In today’s market economy, an enterprise that neglects corporate identity will cannot survival.

Why these foresighted enterprises in China introduce the CI is the long-term effect generated by CI system. The CI can exert a long-term effect but not a short one. For the long run, the sooner the enterprise takes the brand idea, the more virtual benefits the enterprise will gain.

Some people may regard CI system as a useless method. On one hand, this idea is not the whole fact. But on the other hand, CI system is not a panacea. To magnify the effect of CI is undoubtedly harmful for an enterprise, because the survival and development of an enterprise concern with many rings, including materials, production, sale, and after-sale service. Many factors, such as corporate mechanism, business management, scientific and technological application, production scale, technological power, service level, quality guarantee, and market exploration, relate directly with an

enterprise's essential issues. CI system merely deals with the issue of corporate identity. It cannot solve any problem in production and sale.

CI system contributes to an enterprise's survival and development. In today's fast developing economy, CI system is a best value-added strategy for an enterprise. As it generates a favorable environment for an enterprise's survival and development, it also creates a rich material base for the human society.

At this time, whether we have already noticed that the splendid sunlight of non-material society had covered the land with saint dowry of new century.

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