

INTEGRATED BRANDING IN THE CITY OF BRAŞOV - CONNECTIONS BETWEEN TRANSILVANIA UNIVERSITY OF BRAŞOV AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS IN THE SAME CITY

M.C. BULARCA¹ A.E. DAN²

Abstract: *This paper aims to discuss and analyze the idea of integrated branding in the city of Braşov. It looks at how Transilvania University of Braşov has created connections with various cultural institutions. Transilvania University of Braşov and the mentioned cultural institutions usually collaborate in order to achieve a common goal, by forming partnerships or by promoting each other. In this regard, the paper presents the way integrated branding is used in the connection that is observed between institutions, as well as the understandings, along with effective communication that bring beneficial results for both parties, while managing to promote the city of Braşov through the presence of positive images and outstanding support.*

Keywords: *integrated branding, cultural institutions, communication*

1. Introduction

A brand is a product or company that is distinct when it comes to consumer perception. This is created through elements of design, as well as packaging and advertising, which together manage to show the difference of the product from its competitors. A brand is an intangible asset that is made up of several elements. Together, these elements aim to help consumers in identifying a product as well as giving them reasons to buy it rather than its competitors (Kenton, 2023).

The concept of branding has its origins as far back as the year 2000 or so B.C. ever since merchants have had to find ways to sell their goods more effectively. History tells us that ancient Babylonian merchants were able to develop selling points to attract customers. To identify the origin of their products, craftsmen would mark or carve symbols on their wares (Kenton, 2023)

However, these were not all the ways in which the idea of brands made itself visible.

¹ *Transilvania* University of Braşov, Romania, cristina.bularca@unitbv.ro - corresponding author

² *Transilvania* University of Braşov

Over time, the idea of brands has developed a lot and has found its place in many ways, although in other ways we can say that things have not changed at all. Many other people have found ways to make their brands useful in more areas than those mentioned above, but the practices still exist today and do not seem to be going away any time soon.

When we talk about the difference between brand and branding, it can be noted that brand can be defined as the set of tangibles as well as intangible attributes that have been designed to create awareness, but also identity, as well as to build the reputation of a product, service, person, place or organization. When we talk about the objective of branding strategy, we talk about creating brands that differentiate themselves from the competition, managing to reduce the number of substitutes on the market. The tendency that the branding strategy follows to reach deep into the brand identity, more specifically into all functions of the company that address the customer and to extend the brand experience. The focus is on the brand experience and moving beyond the customer's understanding of a brand to measurable metrics around customer satisfaction across the entire value chain, but also customer loyalty (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015).

A perspective on brand culture shows how branding has managed to open up to include different types of research, be it cultural, sociological or theoretical, which complements and complicates the managerial and economic analysis of branding. An analysis of brands from cultural perspectives has been carried out by anthropologists, historians and sociologists who have succeeded in discovering and recognizing the importance of brands in society by giving them a necessary complement to the managerial and psychological views on branding (Schroeder, 2009).

Nowadays, the branding of places and cities has gained tremendous momentum among city officials. That is why marketing specialists who oversee the city's vision and the way it is seen, who have the mission to promote it to the target or potential target audience, are striving to establish the city as a brand to differentiate and assert its individuality when it comes to different political, economic or socio-psychological objectives (Kasapi & Cela, 2017).

The idea of university branding has started to gain popularity throughout the modern world. The context of the economic crisis may lead to the desire to bring branding accents to an academic institution since it was favoured by the decrease in the number of applicants or students, as well as dropouts during university years because paying tuition fees became impossible for some. In addition there was also a low interest in the academic area. A good solution to revitalize the academic area is to highlight the quality of study programs, but also research, teaching and interaction with students as well as a well-defined image of a higher education institution through branding techniques that are based on the mission, vision and values of that educational institution. A university brand has at its core quality programs and services, but also a close emotional connection with students and a unique set of communication values for the services offered. Therefore, the willingness of universities to use branding techniques and tactics is not accidental as this phenomenon has also started to gain momentum in the context of globalization and student mobility. A good management strategy that is also based on branding techniques will succeed in facilitating student attraction in many ways as it will

be able to attract students from the country of reference as well as internationally - which is why higher education institutions have planned various marketing activities to position themselves in the global market. Because of this, they began to analyze their strengths as well as their weaknesses to identify their unique selling points. Image is a top tool for strengthening a university brand (Ilieş & Fărcaş, 2022).

2. Methodology

As the official website of the city of Braşov says: Braşov is a city that has overcome all historical trials and has had the spiritual, civic and material resources to regenerate and reinvent culture. The municipality of Braşov takes responsibility for implementing intelligent solutions for culture and the responsible use of cultural resources.

On the official website of Transilvania University of Brasov, the question "Why Braşov?" is followed by the answer: because millions of tourists who visit the city every year are convinced that its charm quickly lures them in, and its economic development potential can convince you to stay. A bonus is the natural landscapes, but also the architecture. Plus, during winter in Poiana Braşov, the country's biggest ski resort, you can relax and consider it your favorite retreat. According to a World Bank study, Braşov is a "top 10" city with a developed economy and attractive architecture with a high quality of life. In addition to tourist attractions, nature and architecture, the qualities of the people who live in Braşov make it the country's number one city for tourists.

Over time there has been communication between the city and Transilvania University of Braşov to promote each other, which is why the two have been actively involved in each other's activities.

The city of Brasov is an "open city for students" as it can be seen on its official website that the opportunity is offered to students and other people to suggest a project for the local cultural project competition.

Even more than that is the fact that the Municipality of Brasov has concluded various non-reimbursable funding contracts with Transilvania University of Braşov and others, to support cultural activities and to support the activities of artists, public institutions, non-governmental organizations and legal entities that are involved in these cultural activities in the Municipality of Braşov. Thus, according to annual reports, activities were supported in various areas such as visual arts, architecture, theatre sports, music, dance, cultural heritage and many others.

Open not only for Transilvania University of Braşov, but also for the rest of the cultural institutions, the city of Braşov creates new possibilities. When people realized how they could use the idea of branding, partnerships between cultural institutions were not lacking, which is why Transilvania University of Braşov has developed over the years a good communication with many other cultural institutions through the events that took place thanks to mutual support.

In the last few years, Transilvania University of Brasov has managed to affirm itself in many ways, whether we are talking about the fact that it is a source of education, innovation and research or the fact that it is an active presence in the local and national cultural and artistic life. (Prof. dr. med. Liliana Rogoza, Prorector for Public Relations, 2022)

Prof. dr. med. Liliana Rogozea, Prorector for Public Relations believes that education and culture are those that help us discover ourselves and the world as it is, and that they manage to represent a bridge between the need for a good professional training and the need to be trained as people capable of being part of the community to which they belong in order to be responsible community members. Cultural life and education prove it once again that the constant standards of our academic existence are a link between the members of the academic community and the world of which we are a part of. The challenge of the last years is to increase Romania's visibility, to continue the internationalization process of the university in the field of education, but also in the field of culture or sport. Ranging from various sporting or cultural-artistic events to conferences and volunteer projects, the university has managed to go beyond the traditional academic sphere and has become an important factor in the social and cultural life of Braşov.

Providing young people with access to activities and cultural programs enriches their learning experiences and not only that, it also encourages their personal and professional development. Through exposure to different art forms such as literature or music, as well as the opportunity for creative expression, it can broaden horizons and encourage critical thinking as well as stimulate a sense of appreciation of diversity - thus representing a link between members of the academic community and the cultural communication of Braşov. Through the activities supported and initiated both at national and international level, the internationalization process of the university continued in the field of education, but also in sports and culture, ensuring the increased visibility of Braşov and Romania worldwide, promoting social cohesion and local and national values, as well as intercultural understanding. (Prof. dr. med. Liliana Rogozea, Prorector for Public Relations, 2022)

Transilvania University of Braşov has managed over time to become an open space where culture and education are harmoniously intertwined, providing a vibrant platform for visual arts, literature, music and other artistic fields - not only for members of the academic community, but also for members of the Braşov community, thus offering a unique perspective to visitors of the city and actively promoting cultural diversity, demonstrating excellence and providing access to a rich palette of cultural activities and programs. The cultural impact generated by the Transilvania University of Braşov has begun to be noticeable on several levels, starting from the local, to the national, reaching even the international level, because the university has managed to actively contribute to facilitating intercultural dialog, but also to promoting local and national values, as well as to increasing the visibility of Braşov and Romania on the global cultural scene. (Prof. dr. med. Liliana Rogozea, Prorector for Public Relations, 2023)

According to the 2022 and 2023 annual reports some of the cultural events that the university held are: concerts and recitals; exhibitions and vernissages; film and theatre events; book launches, meetings with writers, colloquia and competitions; cultural educational and formative activities; other cultural events; national and international conferences; workshops; communication sessions; participation in festivals and others. Some of these cultural events were held in partnership with other cultural institutions such as: the Museum "Casa Mureşenilor" Braşov, the Art Museum of Braşov, the County

Museum of History Braşov and others.

- Together with the Museum "Casa Mureşenilor" of Braşov, Transilvania University of Brasov, has organized the following events: Piano and chamber music recital (4 young pianists, students of the Faculty of Music), The exhibition "The Window of Doctor Honigberger. About Buddhism and Hinduism through the filter of architecture and sacred space", (Prof. dr. arh. Teofil Mihăilescu) and the Exhibition "From Constantinople to Athos. An exercise of urban anthropology" (Arch. Teofil Mihăilescu, Faculty of Constructions).
- Together with the Art Museum of Braşov, Transilvania University of Brasov, has organized the following events: the exhibition "Braşov. Atmosphere, architecture and urban space" (arch. Teofil Mihăilescu, Faculty of Constructions) both in 2022 and in 2023.
- Together with Brasov County History Museum, Transilvania University of Braşov, has organized the following events: "15 noiembrie 1987, ziua care nu se uită!", Screening of the documentary film "Braşov 1987. Doi ani prea devreme" (directed by Liviu Tofan) produced by Braşov County History Museum and TVR as part of the event "15 noiembrie 1987, ziua care nu se uită!" and the launch of the graphic novel "15 noiembrie 1987", realized by the Braşov native artist Alexandra Gold and published by the Braşov County Museum of History, within the event "15 noiembrie 1987, ziua care nu se uită!".

According to the official website of the Museum "Casa Mureşenilor" Braşov: Established in 1968, as a result of a donation made by the descendants of the Mureşianu family, "Casa Mureşenilor" was put into operation by the cultural will of the academician Iacob Mureşianu, who offered the Romanian state, in order to set up a museum, the necessary space which had a very valuable collection of furniture, sculpture, painting and especially an archive of inestimable cultural value including over 25,000 documents. The museum is dedicated to the memory of several members of this family with great achievements in the cultural and political life of their time.

Needless to say, Transilvania University of Braşov and the Museum "Casa Mureşenilor" Braşov have also organized other events together, working on various projects. Transilvania University of Braşov has participated over the years in numerous editions of the Scientific Communication Sessions „ȚARA BĂRSEI”.

Students and teachers of Transilvania University of Brasov were actively involved in the development of the functioning of the Museum "Casa Mureşenilor" Braşov by participating in projects such as "Virtual reality - innovative solution for heritage protection and promotion" and "The secret of the Mureşianu Family - gamified virtual tour".

As we can discover on the museum's official website in 2017, the Museum "Casa Muresenilor" Braşov, in collaboration with its partners: Transilvania University - Faculty of Sociology and Communication, and the School Inspectorate of Braşov County, are jointly developing the cultural project known as "Virtual Reality - innovative solution for heritage protection and promotion", which has as its thematic area: the national cultural heritage. The project aimed to introduce new innovative solutions for heritage protection and promotion using virtual reality and augmented reality applications in the

permanent exhibition at the Museum “Casa Mureşenilor” of Braşov, which has been transformed into a place of exploration and discovery by promoting interaction and emotional involvement of visitors.

In 2022 Museum “Casa Muresenilor” Braşov alongside the School Inspectorate of Braşov County and Transilvania University of Braşov - Faculty of Sociology and Communication organized a cultural project entitled: “The Secret of the Mureşianu Family - Gamified Virtual Tour”. The project was co-funded by Braşov County Council and the National Cultural Fund Administration and aimed to introduce an innovative solution to promote heritage through the game within the museum's permanent exhibition. The project was aimed at young people between the ages of 10 and 15. This is the first app that manages to combine a virtual tour of the exhibition with access to a game that is educational but also entertaining. The information was retrieved from the Mureşianu archive and presented for users to discover while accessing the gamified virtual tour.

The project was structured on multiple levels. In the first phase, to be able to better valorize the cultural heritage, a documentation of the mobile cultural heritage of the Museum “Casa Muresenilor” Braşov was conducted to be transposed into a gamified virtual tour. At the second level, a scenario-based game was designed and generated. The game was of a treasure hunt type and contained 24 graphically indicated hotspots. Multimedia inserts were realized as texts, images, videos or combinations of them to be an attractive way to educate and delectate the Mureşianu family story. The gamified virtual tour can be accessed in the museum via smartphone, tablet or at home on a computer or laptop. At the third level, the gamified virtual tour was tested during the visit of 10 classes of students from schools in Braşov. Following this tour, sociological research was applied to evaluate the degree of satisfaction and the potential of reception that came from the direct beneficiaries of the information in the process of interpretation of cultural heritage in the museum through this new tool. (Byweblogiq, 2017)

3. Results

According to teacher Ciprian Sandor, representative of the County School Inspectorate, a partner institution in the project, the feedback from the students who tested the first versions of the game was positive, the interest of schools in participating this project being significant.

- “Pupils see this project as a new way to develop a cultural education, something that engages them, that they are familiar with. So, the project was well thought out and with immediate results. Not only do I recommend it to other museums, but it is also a plea to adapt what they want to present to students to the 'working technique' they use daily,” said Ciprian Sandor.
- “I liked the graphics very much, the questions are of general knowledge, it's not difficult to play” - Rareş, 13 years old.
- “I have been to the museum before, but with the game, I find it much more interesting” - Clara.

- “It's very easy to use the app and the puzzles are not hard to solve either” - Letitia, 12 years old.

Thus, it can be understood that the result of the partnership between Transilvania University of Braşov and the Museum “Casa Muresenilor” of Braşov for the realization of various projects was positive.

4. Conclusion

To conclude with, we come to the idea that the collaboration between Transilvania University of Braşov, the Municipality of Braşov and other local cultural institutions such as the Museum “Casa Muresenilor” of Braşov highlights the power that partnerships have in shaping the identity of the city and its academic community. These collaborations not only promote cultural heritage, but also emphasize that they play a significant role in Braşov's internationality and visibility on a global stage. The use of innovative branding techniques through the integration of virtual reality and the possibility of gamified educational experiences demonstrates the adaptability of cultural institutions to modern technologies, thus making cultural education more accessible and attractive to younger generations.

The success of initiatives such as the gamified virtual tour illustrates how branding, when applied to cultural and educational institutions, can promote stronger community connections and thus enhance the learning experience by appealing to a wider audience. In addition, efforts contribute to the resulting goal of positioning both Braşov and Transilvania University of Braşov as important cultural and academic centers. Ultimately, when we talk about branding in this context, not only does it serve to differentiate the city and the university, but also to promote cultural cohesion, attract international attention and provide educational value to both residents and visitors.

References

- Anonim. (2022). Strategia de Dezvoltare Durabilă a Municipiului Braşov 2030. MANCON CENTRU SRL. (*The strategy of durability development of Braşov County 2030*) Strategia de dezvoltare a Municipiului Braşov.pdf (brasovcity.ro), accessed on 9.28.2024.
- Byweblogiq. (2017). Realitatea virtuală – soluție inovatoare de protejare și promovare a patrimoniului. (*Virtual reality – an innovative solution of protecting and promoting patrimony*), Muzeulmuresenilor.ro. <https://muzeulmuresenilor.ro/realitatea-virtuala-solutie-inovatoare-de-protejare-si-promovare-a-patrimoniului/>
- Casa Mureşenilor. (2022). Muzeulmuresenilor.ro. <https://muzeulmuresenilor.ro/portfolio/casa-muresenilor/>
- De ce Braşov? (*Why Braşov?*) (2024). Unitbv.ro. <https://www.unitbv.ro/de-ce-brasov.html>, accessed on 9.29.2024.
- Dumitru, D. (2022). Braşov: Secretul familiei Mureşianu - primul tur gamificat al unui muzeu. Agrepres. (*Braşov: The Secret of Mureşianu family – first gamified tour of a museum*) Braşov: Secretul familiei Mureşianu - primul tur gamificat al unui muzeu | AGERPRES • Actualizează lumea., accessed on 9.29.2024.

- Ilieş, V. I., & Fărcaş, P. A. (2022). Definirea principiilor de bază al brandingului universitar în România. *Management Intercultural (The definition of base principles of university branding in Romania)* Volumul XV, Nr. 3 (29), 2013. https://www.seaopenresearch.eu/Journals/articles/MI_29_14.pdf
- Kasapi, I., & Cela, A. (2017). Destination Branding: A Review of the City Branding Literature. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(4), 129–142. 10.1515/mjss-2017-0012
- Kenton, W. (2023, December 13). *Brand: Types of Brands and How to Create a Successful Brand Identity*. Investopedia. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brand.asp>
- Plusnet, okler.net. (2023). Finanţări proiecte culturale / Primăria Braşovenilor / [finantare.primariabrasovenilor.ro](https://www.finantare.primariabrasovenilor.ro). Primăria Braşovenilor / [Finantare.primariabrasovenilor.ro](https://www.finantare.primariabrasovenilor.ro). <https://finantare.primariabrasovenilor.ro/cultura/2024>
- Raport Anual 2022 Raport 2020 (unitbv.ro)
- Raport Anual 2023 Raport 2020 (unitbv.ro)
- Raportul anual a finanţărilor nerambursabile pentru anul 2019, (*The annual report of not reimbursing finance allocation for year 2019*) NR (brasovcity.ro), accessed on 9.28.2024
- Raportul Anual Al Finanţărilor Nerambursabile Din Fondurile Publice Pentru Anul 2021, (*Annual report of not reimbursing finance allocation from public funds for year 2021*) NR (brasovcity.ro), accessed on 9.28.2024.
- Rezultate de căutare pentru „Universitatea Transilvania” (*Research results for Transilvania University*) – Casa Muresenilor. (2024). Casa Muresenilor. https://muzeulmuresenilor.ro/?post_types=&s=Universitatea+Transilvania
- Sammur-Bonnici, T. (2015). Brand and Branding. *Wiley Encyclopedia of Management*, January 2015, 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118785317.weom120161>
- Schroeder, J. (2009). The cultural codes of branding. *Marketing Theory*, 9(1), 123–126. <https://www.academia.edu/1172120?auto=download&campaign=claiming-recommended-papers-download-button>
- Ungureanu, C. (2022, November 9). *Proiect cultural „Secretul Familiei Mureşianu – Tur virtual gamificat” - Facultatea de Sociologie și comunicare. (Cultural project “The secret of Mureşianu family – Gamified tour)*, Unitbv.ro. <https://socio.unitbv.ro/stiri-si-evenimente/633-proiect-cultural-secretul-familiei-muresianu-tur-virtual-gamificat.html#:~:text=Oferim%20o%20alternativ%C4%83%20la%20vizitarea>