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Идентичность и восприятие российского бренда одежды Akhmadullina Dreams в интернет-коммуникации

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Аннотация

Несмотря на растущее внимание к исследованиям брендов в последние годы, лишь немногие направлены на изучение идентичности бренда в Сети.

В данном дескриптивном исследовании российский бренд женской одежды Akhmadullina Dreams исследуется с помощью синергетического подхода, включающего изучение нескольких составляющих идентичности бренда (бренда как личности, бренда как продукта, бренда как организации и бренда как символа), что вносит определенный вклад в понимание структуры идентичности бренда, его сущности и способности транслировать ценности своим покупателям как совокупности критериев его успешности.

Дискурсивный и семиотический анализ раскрывают ключевые особенности бренда и сходство бренда с культурной концепцией. Критический дискурс-анализ определяет ключевые особенности веб-коммуникации и их вклад в идентичность бренда.

Психолингвистический ассоциативный эксперимент показывает, насколько успешно бренд сохраняет свою идентичность и доносит до покупателей свои основные принципы и ценности.

Результаты исследования имеют большое значение для тех, кто работает в сферах, связанных с брендами: создателей брендов, авторов контента, модных блогеров, лингвистов и журналистов.

Ключевые слова

бренд, мода, интернет-коммуникация, национальный бренд, культурная однородность

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Investigation of a Brand: The Identity in Web-based Communication and Perceptions of Akhmadullina Dreams

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Abstract

In spite of the growing attention to brand research in recent years, few studies have sought to investigate a brand identity and its web-representation to better understand how it communicates its dispositional characteristics and how it is perceived by customers.

The authors generate new insights and research propositions in a case study of the Russian women's clothing brand "Akhmadullina Dreams" to provide findings on the brand identity and its contribution to the brand's success.

In this descriptive study, the Akhmadullina Dreams brand is defined through several analytical stages by using a mixed-method design.

The initial stage involves multi-dimensional brand-related settings analysis [Kotler, 2006]: brand-as-person, brand-as-product, brand-as-organization, and brand-as-symbol. Discourse and semiotic analyses uncover key brand features and the resemblances of the brand to a cultural concept. The critical discourse analysis determines the key features of web communication and its contribution to the brand identity.

A psycholinguistic associative experiment shows how successful the brand is in maintaining its identity and delivering its primaries to the customers and, on the other hand, the meaning the customers perceive.

The results have significant relevance for those in brand-related spheres: brand creators, content writers, fashion bloggers, linguists, and journalists.

Keywords

brand; fashion; web-based communication; national brand; cultural homogeneity

For citation

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1. Introduction

"Brand" is a phenomenon dating back to ancient times which has an impactful presence in modern human society. Together with the era of social networks and media, a golden age of branding has come. New creative agencies, modern specialists in marketing, designers and linguists all develop brands in the digital universe.

Brands are complex multilayer concepts that represent social entities firmly embedded in people's environment and social interactions [Arnould and Thompson, 2005]. Brands attract attention [Russo and Leclerc, 1994], activate positive attributes in memory, and awaken certain emotions [Pogorzelski, 2018] and above all shift the choice outcome in favour of the brand product [Hoyer and Brown, 1990]. Recent studies have shown that the choice of the brand bought by customers is implicit and unconscious [Chartrand and Fitzsimons, 2011] and predisposed by brand schemata effects [Halkias, 2015]. It is of paramount interest how a brand may exist in brand-related settings, interact with its customers via web and how its customers perceive the brand message.

This case study of a successful Russian brand Akhmadullina Dreams is novel in its large perspective due to the integrative narrative and the unusual exposure of its conceptual issues and interdisciplinary links. It presents insights into the communication of authentic brand values, conveying a clearly defined aesthetic and visual language that maintains relevant and consistent brand narratives in 21st-century Russia. The success of the brand is considered in terms of language-related issues and

its cultural heritage which lies in its ability to capture and represent the essence of Russian culture, identity, and uniqueness.

2. Literature review

Brands are widely studied nowadays in different scientific fields. In the 2000s, the interest of linguists was attracted to the issue of how language influences the way consumers interact with brands [Carnevale et al., 2017] and how the brand image and identity are connected [Helin, 2014]. The brand name itself and its contribution to consumers' impressions of the product and brand preferences have been studied by Nacchia and Massaro (2017) and Koshikawa (2019). Some researchers go further in the brand name analysis like Subkowski (2019), who examined consumer language fluency on brand name attitudes and perceptions, connecting the brand name to sound symbolism and its effect. How to develop a brand name using linguistic knowledge and the theory of signs to build a concept for its promotion was analyzed by Madiyeva and Uzakbayeva (2021). Rizzo et al. (2023) examined how sensory language shapes consumer responses to influencer-sponsored content. These papers link the disciplines of marketing and linguistics with the focus of linguistics as a means of effective marketing.

Among relevant research topics in 2018–2022, we observe a focus on social media and brand-consumer relationships, for instance, the language of brands in social media [Swaminathan, 2022] and brand reputation in social media [Rust et al., 2021].

Researchers have studied the content of online brand–consumer interactions [Smith and Rose, 2020; Villarroel, 2019] and web-based brand communications. Facebook pages of 100 Fashion Brands were investigated by Camiciottoli (2018). Cruz and Leonhardt (2018) examined Facebook-based brand communication and analyzed personality, sentiment, and emotionality of consumers in this relationship. Andriuzzi (2021) focused on linguistic practices in social media between consumers and brand representatives.

Overall, in recent studies there is a shift to an entirely new interdisciplinary research. The idea of branding as a distinctive entity drawn on history, culture, economy, society, geography, people, and other ideas are brought together in the book “Research Companion to Language and Country Branding” [Theodoropoulou and Tovar, 2022]. No researchers have yet conducted an analysis of a Russian brand through the lens of its identity and setting, and how it is supported by web-communication, on the other hand, how this meaning is perceived by customers.

3. Theoretical background

Through the chosen synergetic framework, we define the brand through brand-related settings and integrate the language-related disciplines of psycholinguistics and semiotics to create a novel, interdisciplinary approach.

Psycholinguistics focuses on what happens in the mind when individuals process language – in our case when customers “deal” with brands. Therefore, we analyze the language used by the brand and its effect on the behavior of the audience and how consumers perceive the brand. In other words, there are two fields in our research: communication strategies used by a fashion brand and the meaning of the brand based on customers' associations with it.

For these two fields we employ critical discourse for the web-communication analysis and an associative experiment for the brand meaning description.

Discourse analysis is an approach to the analysis of written, oral, or sign language use, or any significant semiotic event. It deals with the long term analysis of fundamental causes and consequences of issues and requires an account of the detailed relationships between text, talk, society, and culture [Van Dijk, 2006 p. 252]. Discourse is socially constructive and socially conditioned; it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and

groups of people [Wodak, 2009 p. 37]. Critical discourse analysis looks to establish connections between the properties of texts, the features of discourse practice, and wider sociocultural practice [Fairclough, 1995 p. 87]. In this case study, we understand discourse as a complete system by which people communicate including written and non-verbal communication. Discourse analysis is used to study language in social context. As a context for social interactions for the brand, the official website and social platforms on which the brand has got accounts have been chosen.

Semiotic analysis helped to uncover hidden brand identity features and detect how meaning was created in non-verbal messages and what resemblances of the brand to a cultural concept the brand possesses.

4. Method: mixed methods design

The discourse material for the analysis was collected from summer 2022 to summer 2023 to observe all seasonal collections.

The material was taken from social networks on which the brand is represented: VKontakte, Facebook and Instagram. The brand has a website <https://akhmadullinadreams.com/> as another means of communication with the customers. Qualitative critical discourse analysis was used to analyze all these platforms.

Through this approach, we define the brand in terms of brand-related settings description and the key elements for building a brand: brand salience and resonance, performance and imagery, and consumer judgements and feelings [Keller, 2001].

These key elements may be defined via a brand identity model. According to Zanthus Corp (2011), Aaker has developed - a four-part model of the concept of a brand. The model suggests brand strategists should consider the brand in four ways: brand-as-personality, brand-as-product, brand-as-organization, and brand-as-symbol. In the analysis of these four brand-setting elements, we used brand semiotics to uncover hidden brand identity features, non-verbal messages, and the resemblances of the brand to a cultural concept.

To unveil latent sociocultural information about the brand, we used an associative experiment in which the participants wrote down the first-word reaction that came to their mind on represented stimuli - 5 sets of clothes. From a psycholinguistic viewpoint, verbal responses to a stimulus refer to Miller's hypothesis of the predictive relations of associations. Formally, the relations between a stimulus and a response are expressed in the formula "A is B, therefore A contains B" [Miller, 1974 pp.165-177]. In other words, the cognitive ability to invoke one entity as a reference point in order to establish mental contact with another is access to one conceived entity through another [Langacker, 2002].

5. Results

5.1. Brand identity

Brand identity includes the visible elements that identify and distinguish the brand in consumers' minds and over time. We consider it might involve three perspectives: past, present and future. The past represents the history of the brand; the present tells customers a story conveying its values; and the future perspective is on its development. Akhmadullina Dreams has a clear representation of each: the story behind the brand, a compelling message to send to the customers, and a focus on the future in the idea of eco-friendliness and technological advances. Customers eagerly respond to such 3D brands that engage consumers, inspire emotion, and build loyalty, forging meaningful relationships that go far beyond product and service. All three perspectives are defined through the analysis of the brand identity in media resources below.

Akhmadullina Dreams's history dates back to 2017 when the second women's clothing line was launched by Akhmadullina with the same name. Initially, Akhmadullina's brand positioned itself as a

purely elite brand offering emphatically feminine designer clothes to fashionistas far beyond the mass market. However, the company changed its marketing strategy, branching off into a separate brand in 2017 and focusing on promotion at the expense of the main value – openness to middle-class consumers and the realization of the dream of affordable beauty. The word “Dreams” in its name implies the idea of the fulfillment of the dream of beautiful designer clothes that any woman can afford.

The brand is focused on high quality natural fabric: silk, mercerized cotton, linen, merino wool, tencel, and viscose with unique prints created for each collection. Today’s network includes an online store and 30 retail stores in Russia mostly representing the middle price segment. The designs of the brand have been showcased in numerous fashion shows around the world including Paris, Milan, and New York.

The brand-setting of Akhmadullina Dreams is multi-dimensional and employs social media resources. Customers view the brand as a blending of personality, company, and its product which are combined in the message the brand conveys. Therefore, the identity of the Akhmadullina Dreams brand should be considered in several ways : as a personality (that of the founder and the image the customers may try on buying the product), as a product (the clothes it produces), as a company (its story, strategy, and message), and as a symbol (the meaning for the customers and their needs).

Brand as a personality

The first perspective, brand-as-person, deals with having a unique personality for the brand and the different personality features [Aaker, 1996 pp. 78–84]. A brand personality is defined as “the specific mix of human traits that may be attributed to a particular brand” [Kotler, 2006 p. 148]. According to Aaker [1996 pp. 173–174] the main advantages are that a brand personality can provide a vehicle for customers to express their own identity. However, the brand should have a strong personality so that customers have a more vivid self-expression.

A woman who wears Akhmadullina Dreams clothing is romantic, feminine, and harmonious. She is 20-40 years old, a little eccentric and at the same time intellectual, practical, and elegant. This image resonates with Akhmadullina’s own beauty and personality. Her physical and intellectual attractiveness as a brand founder affects customers’ evaluations and raises her credibility. Since many of the consumers view the brand as an extension of their own identity [Vincent, 2012], they become attached to the brand.

The credibility level is enhanced by celebrity endorsements and collaborations with Akhmadullina, and domestic and foreign brands. For example, she designed the costumes for the closing ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, costumes for Cirque du Soleil, and a costume for Rita Mamun, the Olympic rhythmic gymnast. 2021 witnessed the creation of dishware together with The Dar Store with familiar patterns from fairytale books.

Besides, Akhmadullina herself has become a role model for many fashion lovers and designers. She is called one of the most striking phenomena in the history of Russian fashion. In 2010 Akhmadullina was awarded the title of Honored Artist of the Russian Federation due to her contribution to the arts and culture of Russia.

Akhmadullina Dreams brand epitomizes a unique personality. Among the five different brand personality traits are sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness [Aaker, 1996], Akhmadullina Dreams possesses almost all: sincerity and competence, excitement and sophistication.

Brand as a product

The second perspective of the brand identity description is brand-as-product. Aaker [1996 pp. 78–80] claims that product-related associations are very important, as they are strongly linked to brand choices and to the user experience. According to Aaker [1996 pp. 80–82], the brand-as-product

perspective consists of the product scope, product-related attributes, quality and value, associations with occasions of use, associations with users and links to the country of origin.

The key features of Akhmadullina Dreams are relevant and multifunctional clothes items suitable for different occasions and moods with comforting and soothing tones; feminine silhouettes with a frivolous touch. Its distinctive feature is prints created manually for each collection.

Another unique feature of clothing by Akhmadullina Dreams is multi-functionality: the items can be adjusted to suit different occasions and moods. They should be not only stylish, but also ergonomic: a dress with a detachable collar, a down jacket with a detachable pocket, a transformer jacket from which almost all details can be removed, a jacket with a detachable vest.

The products by Akhmadullina Dreams have significant cultural relevance. Akhmadullina Dreams brand communicates its culture via the context and images of Russian folk tale characters and Russian traditional costumes such as quilted jackets, sundresses and kokoshniks with patterned embroidery and long braids. By incorporating elements from Russian folklore and history into the design, Akhmadullina Dreams not only creates visually stunning garments but also serves as a vehicle for cultural expression. This allows individuals who wear their clothing to feel a connection to Russian culture and proudly display it to the world.

This trend is reinforced by global politics of the recent years and it can be traced in the growing interest of buyers. Aaker [1996 pp. 80–82] suggests that “the brand’s association with a country of origin implies that the brand will provide higher quality, because that country or region has a heritage of making the best within that product class”. The functional or emotional benefits for customers are directly related to the purchase or the use of a product.

This tendency to look back, search for national identity is extremely popular in Russia and worldwide. For instance, Chinese and Korean fashion designers emphasize the meaning of regional concepts in understanding the concept of national identity [Sun and Ha, 2019] and claim that heritage brands contribute strongly to national identity. According to Bulmer (2010) a common factor among New Zealand clothes brands was the provision of local stories that were relevant to the brand and that resonated with buyers.

Brand as a company

This aspect deals with organizational attributes, such as innovation, consumer concern, and trustworthiness and the differentiation of local and global attributes.

Akhmadullina’s Fashion House is a phenomenon unique for the Russian market: a successful combination of exclusivity and accessibility. Since brands are symbols of status, the consumer has a chance to increase their status [self-enhancement] or to signal that they belong to the group who can afford buying high quality designer clothes, though they buy at an affordable price [Florack and Palcu, 2017].

Another important focus of the company is on innovation. By targeting novel ideologies from crowd cultures, brands can stand out and Akhmadullina Dreams does. In 2020, Akhmadullina was the first Russian designer who had released a collection of virtual clothes and created a virtual model Tsarevna Vasilisa. Vasilisa lives on Instagram at @akhmadullina__digital and introduces virtual collections and innovative solutions. Such a marketing ploy means that this brand created a user-friendly virtual model and promoted unusual social networking. The social responsibility of the brand is also manifested in its marketing strategy: hundreds of bloggers and media personalities wanted to buy their own virtual fashionable bow without damaging the environment. Thus, the brand gave customers a completely new experience of interacting with the digital fashion world.

Akhmadullina Dreams is an eco-orientated brand. In 2020, the designer created a 3D capsule based on the concept of Dymkovo toy with helmet-masks as an essential accessory of this collection. Akhmadullina Dreams claims that helmets are needed because of the deterioration of Earth’s ecosystem and in search of life on other planets. Akhmadullina keeps Russian costume motifs here, too. She

adorns a woman's headdress with a polyethylene scarf with a sunflower pattern on it. Such authentic stories captivate audiences by creating meaningful memories linked to the emotions.

Brand as a symbol

The fourth perspective includes three types of symbol: visual imagery, metaphors, and brand heritage. According to Zanthus Corp. (2011), a strong symbol provides more cohesion and structure to an identity and makes recall and recognition easier. The potential power of the brand is reflected by elevating symbols to the status of being part of the identity.

Akhmadullina Dreams is associated with comfort and security, cheerfulness, lightness and magic. This really connects the brand with the audience. However, this is what the brand claims itself and indirectly messages this to the customer. To identify the customers' perception of the brand, a controlled associative experiment was conducted.

Empirical research

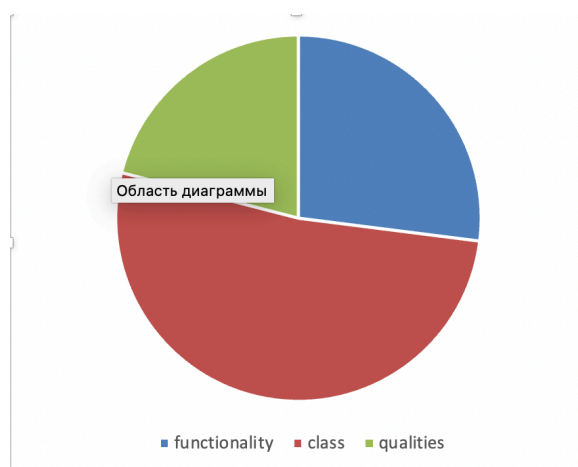
This research studies the image and identity of Akhmadullina Dreams brand and evaluates whether the brand identity matches the currently promoted brand image and how successful the brand is in delivering its values to the customers. Additional aims are to determine which traits of the brand personality emerge, which are the most frequent ones perceived by its customers, and which nuances of meaning can be identified within them.

According to the rules of the empirical experiment participants were asked to write the first word-reaction that came to their mind on the represented stimuli. Five brand sets from five different collections were randomly chosen as stimuli, four of them were borrowed from four seasons of the year and one non-seasonal set for the purity of the experiment.

Every participant had up to ten minutes to attribute qualitative adjectives or other words and word combinations of their own choice that came to their mind as an association with five clothes sets. The 302 participants were all females aged from 17 to 35.

An association network of 1510 words was created. All verbal reactions were classified according to their semantic and functional meaning, relations of similarity, and contiguity with the stimuli.

We distinguished three thematic classes among the total number of responses: multi-functionality 27 %, social status or class and age 52 % and qualities of a set 21 % (see figure).



Классификация речевых реакций по смысловому и функциональному значению
Classification of verbal reactions according to semantic and functional meaning

The division is arbitrary. Group 1 [81 answers] is represented by adjectives explicating the occasions on which the set might be worn. For instance, [not] *for every day, for a special meeting, for a party*. Group 2 (157 answers) includes the verbal reactions describing social status plus affordability of clothes and corresponding age [for successful business ladies, for the rich, exclusive/exceptional, not for the young].

Group 3 (63 answers) includes mostly adjectives describing specific qualities of the sets. For example, *beautiful, original, romantic, natural, fresh, Russian*. Certain words being repeated several times on their own and in combinations naturally reflect the brand identity and the message of the brand. See a more detailed result representation in Table.

The association network analysis

Анализ ассоциативной части

	Group 1 Functionality and occasions for wearing	Group 2 Status and corresponding age	Group 3 Set description
1. Word content	(not) for every day (7), for a special meeting/day/occasion (12), for a party (3), for business/work/job (27), multi-functional/multi-purpose (32)	for successful ladies (29), for the rich (11), for exclusive/exceptional people (36), not for the young (12), for boss/leader ladies/women (22), 30+ (5), 25+ (3), 20+(3), classy (4), for the older (4), upper/higher class (10), not for (teenage) girls/not for (7), makes you look better/richer/socially higher (11)	Russian/national (12), natural (10), feminine (12), romantic (8), magic(al) (7), original/exclusive (5), beautiful (7), fresh (2)
2. Total number of samples	81	157	63

We observe that the audience’s key evaluation focus is on the probability to buy and wear such clothes including their price, style, functionality, and appropriateness for certain age and social status. The analysis of the network shows that most associations are typical and are conforming to the brand primaries and its values: beauty, multifunctionality, status, uniqueness and national heritage. Though the message of affordability and how it is conveyed in set images still remains debatable because some participants stated it was indicating higher (upper) class or is made for the rich (exceptional people).

5.2. Brand Performance and Imagery

In this part of the research, the Akhmadullina Dreams brand performance and imagery are being analyzed on the official website and on social networking sites via critical analysis of verbal and non-verbal brand language.

Brand performance starts with its logo and slogan on the website www.akhmadullinadreams.com. The Akhmadullina Dreams logo is designed in inimitable pastel color shades with a name Akhmadullina Dreams and a kokoshnik above it (a traditional Russian headdress worn by women) which is recognizable, simple, homely and memorable. The brand’s slogan “Dream Always” written in a specific font corresponds to the brand’s USP: “the embodiment of unique design and strong personality in clothing that every woman can afford”. Both the logo and the slogan introduced on the

official website carry out the brand message “to invite women to a fabulous reality where dreams and imagination lead”.

The critical discourse analysis of the brand’s performance on the website, Instagram, VKontakte and Facebook shows that the brand language is predictable, repetitive, non-aggressive, predominantly visual, image-based with the use of limited communication channels. Accordant with the brand strategy is the word choice on the website that shows that a few word formulas organize brand text messages having some or all of these elements: Attention – Interest – Desire – Motivation – Action.

The imagery is also quite rigorous. There is no central character, mascot, ambassador or symbol though in the advertising campaigns during the period from summer 2022 to summer 2023 we observe some images of girls connected by a unity of style, theme and idea. The customer has a twofold impression: behind the ghostly airiness and romantic images there lies an ominous note of primordial Russian magic that is primitive, philosophically complex, and eclectic. The latter predominates in web-communication in the form of a unique philosophy based on the aesthetics of Russian fairy tales about love, heroism, magical helpers, and true friendship.

Other non-verbal techniques include everything that helps to consolidate a bright, memorable brand image in the consumer’s subconsciousness by creating positive associations. Visual brand language includes shape, colour, and materials to subliminally communicate the brand’s values and personality through imagery and design style. The colour scheme in communication is classic and static for the brand: warm shades of earth in autumn, a palette of green and some bright colours for the summer and winter collections. For instance, the delivery of information on a social medium VKontakte is performed with the distinguishing brand colour shades of beige, brown, and green. [1] These colors symbolize calmness, security, and tranquility. Such visual identity unifies the brand performance regardless of the platform Instagram, VKontakte, or Facebook.

The multisensory dimensions of the brand language are limited. The series of pictures in the media for the seasonal campaigns are mostly silent, rarely accompanied by music. Though at times melodic music like in the “Dance and Dream” collection on VKontakte may literally call for positive thinking. [2] The customers, having watched this commercial, express their admiration in comments leaving positive feedback (*fabulous, gorgeous, pleasing, serene* and others).

To enhance the positive feedback and the bonding with the customers the brand marketers utilize a variety of other techniques. The brand is proud to have built not just loyal relationships with customers but real mutual feelings. The idea of being a part of the Akhmadullina Dreams family elicits honorable, elitist and family-like feelings and is widely promoted in web-communication because such an approach guarantees the positive feedback from the customers.

The slogans and manifestations in web-communication are aimed at retaining and cultivating a desire to become or be a “friend of the brand”. The core of this strategy to build a community with customers is realized via the Akhmadullina Dreams Club loyalty program. To establish strong mutual feelings between the consumer and the brand the company offered a whole range of rewards from discounts on purchases to gifts in the form of designer desktop wallpaper for phones and computers. This is how the brand fulfills the desire of customers to feel their involvement and get an exclusive reward.

The most frequently used speech acts in web-communication are intensifying this involvement and positive feeling with the emotional appeal tactics: “*Always dream with Akhmadullina Dreams*” [3] on VKontakte or by a rapprochement with the addressee: “*Let’s make dreams come true together!*” on Facebook [4].

The human aspiration to be unique and express this exclusiveness is also realized via special drawings and patterns created for each collection. The brand’s aim is to fulfill the desire of every woman to wear exclusive designer clothes with natural fabrics at an affordable price. Human striving for childhood and its carefree time is reflected in characters from fairy-tales such as bears, hares, foxes, and wolves which appear in every collection. The brand seamlessly blends contemporary fashion trends with traditional Russian fairytale characters, creating garments that are both fashionable and culturally significant.

The brand also promotes sustainability in terms of social ethical campaigns unifying and encouraging the customers to make donations. For instance, Akhmadullina Dreams decorated the shop windows with a QR code “Dobroshrift” to allow the customers to make a donation to children and founded a charitable fund called Alyosha for sick children.

Participation in something socially significant is in accord with the modern charitable giving trends.

The analysis of the brand web-communication on the Akhmadullina Dreams’ website, Instagram, VKontakte and Facebook shows that the brand successfully communicates these priorities and values verbally and non-verbally, enhancing positive feelings of involvement to meet the customers’ needs and aspirations through exploiting some natural human desires and impulses.

Akhmadullina Dreams web-communication language appeals directly to a customer’s emotional state. In the brand’s web-communication we observe how a positive emotional response in a consumer is triggered, leaving a strong and lasting attachment to the brand comparable to a feeling of bonding, companionship, or love.

6. Discussion

The creation of the Akhmadullina Dreams brand prompted the designer’s desire to bring a unique brand concept to the Russian market that would combine the individuality of the designer’s personality with luxury exclusivity at an affordable price. Akhmadullina Dreams has managed to carve out a niche for itself by incorporating elements of Russian folklore, history, and traditional craftsmanship into its designs. By doing so, they have created a brand that not only showcases the beauty and richness of Russian culture but also celebrates it. The brand’s success lies in its ability to strike a balance between modernity and tradition. Akhmadullina Dreams goes beyond just clothing: it tells a story. Each piece is meticulously crafted with attention to detail, reflecting the brand’s commitment to preserving and promoting Russian heritage.

Akhmadullina Dreams exemplifies how a Russian clothes brand can embrace its cultural identity while creating unique fashion pieces that resonate with individuals seeking an authentic experience that meets their needs and aspirations.

Besides cultural relevance and cultural heritage preservation (fairy-tale motifs and Russian customs) this meaningful brand maintains other values: beauty, accessibility, naturalness [of colors, materials and prints], innovations (3D-capsule, virtual collection), social responsibility (Fund “Alyosha”, program “Dobroshrift”).

The psycholinguistic associative experiment shows that the brand successfully communicates its identity and values to its customers since the brand target group literally named the brand’s priorities though with some minor deviations.

The analysis of the web-communication strategy shows that the brand language remains consistent throughout the campaign no matter what the platform is (Instagram, VKontakte, or Facebook) with the emphasis on visual and emotional impact.

7. Conclusion

Despite the relevance of language in consumer responses to brands, no research to date has explicitly incorporated web-communication strategies of a Russian brand, its identity and cultural relevance into theories of branding.

In this paper, we provide a mixed-method design investigation of a Russian brand identity via brand-related settings analysis [Kotler, 2006]: brand-as-person, brand-as-product, brand-as-organization, and brand-as-symbol.

We review the language (verbal and non-verbal manifestations) on the brand’s website and social networks (Instagram, VKontakte, Facebook) that underlies the specificity of a brand as a multilayer

entity and its functioning in social media. A psycholinguistic associative experiment with customers and critical discourse analysis of web-communication content help to uncover key brand elements perceived by the customers and the resemblance of the brand to a cultural concept.

The psycholinguistic associative experiment shows how successful the brand is in maintaining its identity and delivering its primaries to the customers.

The results of the research may provide ideas for practitioners regarding the language-related aspects and web-communication strategies to consider when creating a brand.

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