

The Role and Importance of Branding Traditional Performance Art, Taking the Example of the Lado Ensemble

In today's globalised world in which both communications and marketing experts struggle to attract public attention, in a world overloaded with information to such an extent that the apathy aspect is the response to advertisers' messages, branding is becoming one of the key factors in the success of companies, products and services, and they also include cultural content. The theme of this paper is linked to the importance of implementing the branding of traditional art as a cultural product on this market, taking the sole professional folklore ensemble in Croatia as an example.

Keywords: Lado (ensemble), branding, performance art, folklore

I. General definitions of branding in art

Among the numerous definitions of culture, Nikola Skledar emphasises that culture is a universal human phenomenon, an anthropological given and essential generic characteristic of Humankind as social and individual, spiritual and creative beings (Skledar 2000:15).

The question arises of how the cultural product dovetails into the branding concept. Tihomir Vranešević claims that the *brand* can develop independently from all fields of human endeavour, from product to service and experience (Vranešević 2007:3). Consequently, the subjects of marketing are not only products but also services, ideas, and the experiences offered to the user, that is to say, everything for which offer and demand exist. The Lado Ensemble, as will be discussed in this article, evokes a specific experience among audiences with its performances which, among other, also make up its brand. Demand has also emerged for what it offers in its performances, which has ensured the Ensemble its long-term existence and status as a unique and inimitable brand on the Croatian culture market.

Furthermore, Douglas Holt states that a brand's value lies in the specifics of its presentation, while the way in which the public perceives such as brand depends exclusively on the messages that it communicates to the public (Holt 2004). Communication is a sales process that consists of presentation, negotiation and sale, according to Šaša Petar (2008:19). That same author defines communication as a transfer of ideas, thoughts, attitudes and information from the source to the recipient that takes place on various levels and in various ways – through looking, talking, listening and reading but also through silence (Petar 2008:26).

Branding of products on the Croatian culture market is still in the initial phase. However, directors and managers in cultural institutions are increasingly recognising the importance of branding and starting to apply it in their marketing activities in order to attract their existing, but also new audiences by way of their continuously enhanced offer. It is an unfounded view that a fine cultural product does not need promotion, because it is precisely through branding that one influences the loyalty of the public, and also strengthens the positive image of the product, whether it be a show, exhibition, dance performance or cultural institution.

According to Vranešević, customers, the public or clients assess the significance of various brands and buy the ones that they think speak of them just what they wish to communicate about themselves (Vranešević 2007:19). Since brands are an integral part of society, their evolutionary course surpasses values in the field of branding and they become a part of everyday life. For that very reason, it is important to unify the psychological, social and emotional component of the brand in the branding process, so that more and more attention is being paid to what the brand means for the client, or what it says of him or her as an individual in society (Vranešević 2007:22). Design and the visual elements play an exceptionally notable role that is becoming increasingly important in achieving the symbolic significance of a brand, particularly when physically less palpable or less visible products are involved, such as, among other, the cultural product as opposed to products such as automobiles, clothing and similar tangible objects. And the Lado Ensemble is just such a type of product.

According to Vranešević, the brand is the symbolic meaning of all the information connected with the organisation, product or service in marketing communication. The brand includes the name, logo, experience and diverse symbols that characterise recognisability. Brands are also all-pervasive and it is impossible to avoid them in the open market system; they have developed identity, influenced life styles and adapted to the characteristics of their target groups (Vranešević 2007:22)

In addition to the product itself that it represents, the brand also represents the quality of the organisation, the way it does business and communicates with the public. According to Marshall Rosenberg, the founder of the concept of Non-violent Communication, effective communication consists of four components that imply taking notice of the message we receive, the feelings that such message expresses and the need that stands behind it, which is the foundation for sound understanding of the target public that we are addressing (Rosenberg 2006:26-27). The basic advantage of the brand derives from its image in the subconscious mind of the consumer, that is, the possibility of recognition and remembrance of it. Hence, the focal objective of the brand can be emphasised at just that notching into the memory of the consumer.

Management of the brand becomes particularly important in the field of the communication activities of an organisation. That is why the technique of contemporary marketing relies on differentiation by way of the brand. In that sense, the meaning of product policy is given the broadest possible significance, since all market characteristics are in the function of differentiation between generic products and branded products and/or establishing what the *differentia specifica* of individual products, services and experiences really are.

II. The history of the brand and branding

Denotation of a product by a brand is a centuries-old tradition. The beginnings of branding can be linked to the first branded products in ancient China, the Greece of Antiquity and the Roman Empire which, like the *Vesuvium*, the wine bottles found in the remains of 1st century Pompeii, bore a seal that established a type of *sub-brand*. For its part, systematic branding is linked with the beginning of the 19th century when industrial packaging of products began. Industrialisation transferred the production of many goods, such as soap that had previously been made at home, to factory manufacture. When goods were being placed on the market, the factories would mark them with their seal, creating the first brands in that way.

However, far before the industrial marking of products, branding was used to mark livestock in order to prove ownership. So the Oxford English Dictionary of 1551 gave the derivation of the word *brand* from the archaic Nordic word *brandr*, meaning *to burn*, which was also connected with the branding of livestock. With the branding of cattle in America, a body of notions emerged that was to become the foundation of the science and process of branding. For example, the term *maverick* was used to denote an unbranded calf and derived from the surname of a Texas rancher named Samuel Augustus Maverick. After the American Civil War, when all livestock had been branded, he had decided that he would not brand his cattle so as to differentiate them from other herds, thus creating what was to be the *differentia specifica* of his 'brand'. The British brewery *Bass & Company* claims that their symbol in the form of a red triangle was the first logo on world markets, while *Lyle's Golden Syrup* emphasises that their product is the oldest British brand since their green and yellow packaging has not changed since 1885. *Antiche Fornaci Giorgi* in Italy makes a similar claim since their bricks have borne the same logo since 1731, and they can also be found in Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican.

However, branding was not always linked throughout history with tangible goods only, but also with those that were intellectual. For example, the Roman Catholic Church recognised two forms of intellectual property at the end of the 19th century (Vranešević 2007:10). One was ownership of a product and design, while the other denoted the ownership of a product's manufacturer's or vendor's reputation, that is, the non-material aspect. Defaming someone's business reputation was considered to be a sin, by which the inviolable value of reputation was confirmed.

Products have been marked in a particular way since earliest history. That became particularly important when products began to be sold outside of the location in which they were manufactured, for example, at fairs outside town and in other regions and countries. The marks indicated the origin of the products, while they were characterised by ready understanding and recognition, which was even more crucial during the time of overall illiteracy. The guilds created their marks during the Middle Ages, their use being permitted only to their members, and they warranted a certain level of quality. During the Industrial Revolution, when manufacturers grew in number, the mark had major significance in connecting the manufacturer and the consumer and identified the products on the broad market.

With the sudden growth in industrial production at the beginning of the 20th century, advertising in the print media commenced while their circulation was constantly growing. Around the year 1900, James Walter Thomson published advertising in which he explained the importance of giving a prominent place to logos in advertisements. That was one of the first explanations of the process that we call branding today. Subsequently, companies started to work on their slogans, mascots and jingles, which then started to be broadcast in early morning radio and television programmes. The first television advertisement was broadcast on 24th June 1941 when Bulova, the watch manufacturer, paid \$9 to the WNBT radio station for an advertisement shown during a match between the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Philadelphia Phillies.

However, the real beginning of systematic branding as it is known today, particularly in America, can be spoken of as only following World War II. The military industrial capacities developed during the war to meet military demand were re-orientated to meeting the consumer needs of the ordinary man, so a wave of new products appeared, along with a simultaneous need for their differentiation and emphasis on their comparative advantages, in order to attract consumers. The economic power of the average citizen increased, shopping became the trend, and the mass media penetrated into virtually all aspects of public life. So one can conclude that the beginnings of systematic branding date from the time when the market started to be engulfed with mass production products, which lacked clearly defined differences, while direct sales no longer satisfied company needs. Competitive branding became the imperative of the industrial era and the enhanced reputations of factories had to be matched proportionally with the enhanced image of their products, or more precisely, enhancement of what made such products different and better than those of the competition.

III. Brand definition and the characteristics of the Lado Ensemble brand

III. 1. Basic brand categories

According to Vranešević, a brand can be defined by way of the following categories (Vranešević 2007:11):

● *functionality of the brand*

The basic function of the Lado Ensemble brand is to stir the emotions of its audiences. Lado concerts offer audiences a journey of sorts into the past, representing various parts of Croatia, through popular customs and music and dance heritage. Lado concerts are a powerful emotional experience with prominent educational elements and technically professional performance. The Lado Ensemble is a custodian of Croatian traditional culture, that is its mission and vision, and by that very fact it functions as a brand.

● *the uniqueness of the brand*

The uniqueness of the brand is based on the fact that Lado is the sole professional national folklore ensemble in Croatia. Unlike the large number of amateur culture and art societies that nurture traditional art, it was founded by the Republic of Croatia and is financed by the State budget.

● *additional values that the brand promises*

The Lado Ensemble brand endeavours to offer more than just an experience at its concerts. Additional values are also connected with the Lado brand such as educational workshops, organisation of exhibitions, publishing books and CDs and systematic work on the promotion of Croatian traditional culture. Besides that, Lado has been recognised for its humanitarian activities. All those factors make up the essence of the Ensemble's additional values.

● *equilibrium between the rational and emotional aspects of trust in the brand*

The fact that Lado belongs to the cultural brand category that relies primarily on the emotional component in communication with the external public weakens the possibility of definition based on that Vranešević precept. The public demonstrates trust in Lado led by emotions and knowing that a powerful experience awaits them at Lado concerts. Nonetheless, knowing that Lado educates and transmits knowledge and guards, nurtures and shows traditional art on stage, also emphasises the partly expressed rational aspect of the brand.

III. 2. Characteristics of the brand

Melissa Davis, the theoretician on branding and communication, stresses that a successful brand must possess the following characteristics: a story, context, style, tone and name (Davis 2005: 74).

The story

The brand must be backed by a 'good story', that is, a clear message that can be readily understood by everyone and not just the target public. A good story implies understandability and transparency, and the message being sent positions the brand and makes up its qualitative basis. In the case of the Lado Ensemble, the message on preservation and presentation of Croatian traditional art is quite clear, due to the fact that that is also the mission that the Ensemble nurtures and has been nurturing since the very beginning of its artistic activities.

Context

A brand does not function in isolation, but rather in diverse social environments in which its target public is also active. The context implies the entire environment in which the brand is situated, from everyday events and global trends, on to politics, urban culture and fashion. Besides that, the context includes the public's existing knowledge of the brand, while it is also important to monitor intensively the so-called *street trends* that are reflected in consumer habits, attitudes and behaviour, which can be an excellent indicator of the direction in which the brand should develop.

Although the Lado brand's quality relies on precisely the specific characteristics of the cultural product that it offers, the Ensemble tried to adapt its communication techniques to the environment in which it is located. By contemporary communication methods, new programmes and special projects, Lado endeavours to position itself in the contemporary setting that is undergoing constant change, but also to preserve the authenticity of its cultural product.

Style

The brand's style is the first feature that the public sees and with which it identifies. Style is the external characteristic of the brand's message that Lado hopes to communicate, while it must contain the 'soul' of the brand or, in other words, the emotional element that will make a positive or negative impression on the public. Furthermore, style sends a message on attitude emitted by the brand, which the public may accept or reject. Through the years, the Lado brand's activities have defined its recognisable style and the attitude that it communicates to its public. Returning to original and traditional values, the style nurtured by the Lado brand is recognised by its public as can be seen, for example, in the response to traditional music instrument workshops, educational congresses, exhibitions and similar additional activities.

Tone

The tone of the brand is the position from which the brand communicates with its public. It implies the manner in which the message is placed in public, the visual identity of the advertising messages, the person or face that the public associates with the brand, and the like. It also includes the items that create a powerful impression among the public, stems from the selection of the design and communication tool, and shapes differentiation in relation to other similar brands. The tone of a brand can change with its development and growth. Hence, among other canals of communication, the Ensemble issued the *Lado Annual* in 2002, with a review of events that had marked the past year, posting it on the Internet and distributing it among professional associates. Lado tries to create a recognisable visual message through its communication tools and advertising activities and, together with its management that usually communicates with the media, the Ensemble endeavours to present the faces of its artists to the public in order to connect them clearly with the Lado brand.

The name

The name can be a highly emotional factor in brand perception. The public creates a very intensive impression of the name, either accepting it or rejecting it completely, while the

name of a product is frequently cited as one of the reasons for the possible failure of a new brand in its placement on the market.

The name of the Lado Ensemble is indicative for a number of reasons. Namely, the word *Lado* means good, loveable or engaging and is often used in archaic songs from north-western Croatia, some of which are performed by Lado's performers today. The Ensemble has borne the name since it was founded, and all the Lado sub-brands have the same word in their names. So we have the *Ladarice* [the Lado Female Singers], *Vokalisti Lada* (the Lado Vocalists) *Orkestar Lada* [the Lado Orchestra], while the members of the Ensemble are referred to informally as the *Ladovci* [the Lado team].

All the elements mentioned are equally important in constituting the brand and making it integral and ready for placement on the market.

III. 3. The determinants of the Lado Ensemble brand

The term brand, its categories and the branding process have been defined in diverse ways. According to Melissa Davis, today's brands represent more than merely the products or services themselves that make up the logo, name, design and image of the brand. The brand is a synonym for the style that stands behind the product or the service, while branding is important because of influence on the world in which we live and for connecting the product and the buyer (Davis 2005:26). Ms Davis stresses that the brand does not exist in a vacuum but rather in a complex environment that she defines as being political, economic, socio-demographic and technological. In order for a brand to have long-term success, it is necessary to carry out the so-called PEST control¹ that encompasses the analysis of the possibilities of positioning the brand in the environment in question. The author defines the branding process as a discipline within marketing that has common features with all other marketing activities, but which primarily must define its public, themselves, that is, their product, select the manner of placing it on the market, differentiating it from all others and capturing its position on the market. Douglas B. Holt, the theoretician on marketing and branding, claims that cultural branding requires a different manner of understanding the consumer. More precisely, Holt speaks of creating *brand-icons* (Holt 2004) that emerge from myths, a story that is believed in, which is valued and whose values are adopted. Great myths are built upon understanding of what people want, and their fears and their tensions since they are based on sociological forces. Consequently, branding in culture relates to the creating of an experience that is 'sold' to the public. From that it follows that cultural branding is creating a myth by way of various symbols that are presented to the public through various modes of advertising. A myth is based on cultural contradictions, while viewed from the sociological aspect, from voids that cause uncertainty and insecurity. Holt regards that state as a precondition for creating new myths as sociological and culturological phenomena. He also offers a model that is incorporated into the process of advertising and communication with the public by which the story is transmitted, based on the populist authenticity that is the source of the material for the story in which the public believes. Populist authenticity emphasises the values that supersede material factors. Brand managers are discovering the possibilities of building a world in which attention to the product will not be the centre of attention, but

¹ PEST - *Political, Economics, Social demographic, Technological*, Ibid.

rather the experience and belief in what it offers, while the utilisation of that product should then become a ritual action by which the myth is experienced. Brand-icons do not extend only to tangible products. One also has brands that have become symbols of the cultures they impart among their adherents – for example, Coca-Cola or Harley Davidson create a powerful association with adventure, freedom and the like. All those who have an idea, and even an ideology, change and innovate their brands, and are respected by the public that identifies with them, entering a ‘special world’ with them.

One can recognise in Holt’s explanation the characteristics of the Lado Ensemble brand that has been communicating Croatian traditional art for more than sixty years and, in former Yugoslavia, also the art of the other constituent peoples. As the only professional performing body, the Ensemble has created a positive image among the public concerning its performing and technical precision and its devoted nurture of heritage.

Kaiser believes that, in order to create a successful brand in culture, what is most important is to work on the creation of the brand of the artistic institution through the branding of the programmes that it is actually offering (Keiser 2008:8-9). Once the institution stabilises itself as a brand, it is much easier to sell its new programmes.

Speaking of the constitutive components of a brand, Vranešević mentions the name and/or the sign as two key categories. So he stresses that *the brand consists of the name and/or sign of the brand, but also of other elements, and the activities that the manufacturer allocates to a certain product, service or idea in order to inform the market in that way of their uniqueness in general and/or in relation to other competitive products. The brand implies the name, symbol and all noticeable stimulation of the senses that are connected with the characteristics of the products and services and their functional and psychological benefits*” (Vranešević 2007:10).

Pavlek states that the main generator of the brand’s added value is the emotional link with its customers (Pavlek 2009). The brand is more respected and valuable when, along with awareness of it or its familiarity, there is more marked differentiation, special nature, relevance, and loyalty to it but, above all, emotional connection with it, which can also influence the culture, segment or peoples. Pavlek goes on to explain that contemporary brands have become a part of culture and everyday life and, in that way, closer to their consumers, being part of the status of a group, sub-culture or individual. That is the very reason for the momentum of emotional branding that focuses on the relation of people towards the brand, the way they feel about it and experience it, what it means to them as individuals and in social relations, and as part of culture and how it acts as a link in the relations of people in communities. Therefore, the author concludes that emotional branding, which includes cultural branding whose basic characteristics relies on the experience and emotions of the consumer, is orientated to how the brand engages the consumer of the level of the senses. It is not sufficient in advertising in the contemporary environment to emphasise the features of the product, the distinctive value of the brand and its quality, but rather one must include the consumer, create a dialogue with him or her, penetrating deeply into his or her needs and desires, enabling that the consumers become equals and partners in the market game (Vranešević 2007:10).

Pavlek defines the brand as what is thought and spoken about it, how it is experienced, what the consumers feel about it, its environment, and the employees in the company

that owns the brand, and its business partners and investors. That is the result, while the beginning of the branding story is the promise it holds, what the brand stands behind and its identity. The author gives a picturesque definition of the branding process: *Imagine yourself in that role! You are the brand! You build up your identity, what you are standing behind, what you promise to people, and send them signals. They will create an image in their minds on the basis of those signals, expect you to fulfil those promises and, if it is relevant to them, they will take you seriously, and follow you and your ideas. The result referred to is your image, and the beginning is the creation of identity, followed by design and control of the signal. That entire process – is branding.*” (Pavlek)

Pavlek also offers several general definitions of branding. So he states that the brand in the classic sense is the path that leads us to something we will buy, but today, as an icon, it is also becoming part of the social structure in which we live, and a part of the system of organising things around us. We conform to the brand, we believe in it and sometimes even identify with it.

That can also be explained on the example of the Lado brand. Although the Ensemble strives towards the technical preciseness of its performances, it also tries to feature the personality of each of its dancers, particularly in the solo parts, in order to evoke an intensive impression and/or emotion in its audiences. Lado transmits the joyful experience of traditional song and dance, while the audience often accompanies the performances with applause even before they end, reacting to the moments that are emotionally or stage-wise demanding and attractive, so that the applause in some way becomes a measure of the brand's success.

Skoko explains what makes up the power of the brand.² The first element is *brand awareness* and that is linked with the percentage of the target market population that is aware of the existence of the particular brand based on the spontaneous or stimulated reaction. *Associations linked with the brand* emerge from experience and that is all those feelings, beliefs and knowledge that the consumers have of the brand. The brand is reinforced by the *observed quality of the brand*, that is, the assessment of its overall excellence based on concrete qualities. And finally, *brand loyalty* that relates to the frequency of adherence to it in relation to alternative brands.

Furthermore, in personification of the brand notion, Skoko mentions two of its parts – *mind and heart*. The *mind* part consists of the rational facts that speak of the brand itself, while the *heart* part constitutes the emotional values and associations attributed to it.

Today's consumer values differ from those previously. Increasingly more is spoken now of *the emotional or experiential branding*, upon which cultural branding relies almost exclusively, while in the first place it rests the commonplaces of psychology and sociology.³ Consumers are attracted to products that have an influence on their satisfaction and that comprise the essence of emotional marketing and branding. Although it could be claimed

² Skoko, Božo, *Važnost i mogućnost brendiranja destinacija*, Sveučilište u Zadru, accessible at: www.unizg.hr/fileadmin/rektorat/dokum, [8 February 2011]

³ Vranić, Dean (2009) *Brandom do potrošača, she.hr* [online], accessible at: <http://www.she.hr/karijera/brandom-do-potrosaca>, [8 February 2011]

that quality is the most important factor, emotional branding supersedes the rational aspect since, spanning over the orientation to quality, it has drawn nearer to the demands and wishes of customers. Vranić comes to the conclusion that products emerge in factories, while brands are created in heads. Therefore, it could be said that the brand begins where the rational ends. The foundation of a brand is the emotional link with the consumer and it is in that link that the brand lives. Consequently, the emotional link with the brand is key to its success.⁴ When one speaks of the emotional components of a brand, paramount in the case of the cultural product, emphasis should be placed on the valuable cognition regarding the fact that information is not stored only in one part of the brain.⁵ Information or ideas, such as branding are, are scattered in various parts of the brain. They are processed by a group of nerve cells that are connected with data distribution by the hierarchic principle. The groups in that process are in a state of constant growth, culminating in three main systems that deal with the basic types of information: *knowledge*, that is, the concrete characteristics of the product; *experience*, that is, the information that refers to the way in which the product is used; and, finally, *emotion*, that is, the emotional information and its value system outcome in various dimensions – bad or good, attractive or repellent. For an idea to be put to use, it must have data from all three systems. The clearer the associations, the better defined the idea, the brain will more easily process the information.⁶ The brain is capable of recognising only one idea at one specific moment, while only three to four can exist simultaneously. Those that we know well or are personally important to us can be recognised more quickly and they are the ones that will most probably influence our decisions.

Furthermore, research has shown that the brain does not differentiate the idea of a brand from any other that has emerged from the three main systems.⁷ Thus, for a brand to come to the conscious mind simply and quickly, it must have pure and clear associations in the modules of knowledge, experience and emotion. That is the reason for which advertisers and all other communicators must consciously address those areas. In other words, the identity of the brand must be clearly projected in the sense of its name, characteristics and slogan. Marketing-communication companies must be mentally orientated – information

⁴ According to Vranić, one of the most successful examples of emotional branding was the advertising campaign for *Dove* cosmetic products. The managers decided to engage ‘ordinary’ women and conquer the public with the slogan *Dove – the Campaign for Real Beauty*. The ads were an instant hit. Women had feelings of liking and connection with the ‘ordinary’ women and decided that they would buy *Dove*. As Vranić says, that was not because of the Q10 ingredient, but because of the ingredient of closeness. Accessible at: <http://www.she.hr/karijera/brandom-do-potrosaca>, [8 February 2011]

⁵ Kralj, Siniša; Šimunić, Mladen, *Centum istraživanja* [online], *Neuroznanost i marketing*, accessible at: <http://www.centum.hr/Contactus/tabid/60/Default.aspx>, [8 February 2011]

⁶ That means concretely that brands must have clear associations in all three systems. Unless that happens, the brand will not be able to be used as an impetus for the decision to buy. The demand for association clarity emerges from the brain’s organisation or, to put it more clearly, the competition that takes place within it. Since items of information are stored individually in various parts of the brain, they cannot be utilised until they are integrated into the mental work space. The work space has limited capacity, only for the most relevant information upon which human beings act. *Centum istraživanja* [online], *Neuroznanost i marketing*, accessible at: <http://www.centum.hr/Contactus/tabid/60/Default.aspx>, [8 February 2011]

⁷ *Centum istraživanja* [online], *Neuroznanost i marketing*, accessible at: <http://www.centum.hr/Contactus/tabid/60/Default.aspx>, [8 February 2011]

on the brand must enter into “the mental work space”, the specialised network that is the basis of complex conception, so that it can integrate into the existing perception of the brand, or be stored in its long-term memory. Only that information that enters into the work space has a chance of influencing the decision on purchase. That means that advertisers must convince the consumer to devote at least a part of mental attention to the campaigns since, if the advertising message fails to attract attention, it will have a completely unclear and short-term effect. Communication should not penetrate to the consumer at a junction at which he/she is closed towards it, because that would certainly have a negative effect on the brand. Hence, selecting new channels of communication such as the web, cell phone and the like is an exceptionally sensitive issue. That should be done in a manner that will not hamper the user, but rather the complete opposite, offering a certain desirable supplement to the service already being used. For example, each additional Lado project such as *Veronika Desinička*⁸ or *LadoElectro*,⁹ is a supplement to the standard programme upon which such projects have no impact. In that way, the fundamental value of the brand is preserved and it is clearly defined that such projects are additional values that do not influence the existence and value of the *basic product*.

In the process of branding not only the institution but also its activity, the Lado Ensemble endeavours to bring people together with its cultural product. The singer-dancers and musicians transmit an experience to the audience and take it back into the past, while the diversity of the choreography attracts people from all the distinct regions of Croatia. With its vocal concerts, Lado presents the spirit of the old traditional songs and evokes nostalgia and a feeling of pride in that way. The link between the public and Lado is strong due to the awakening of different intensive feelings such as pride, nostalgia, merriment and joy. In that way, the brand gains in the uniqueness and exclusivity that successfully positions Lado on the Croatian culture market, as testified to by the results of research published by the *Jutarnji list* and *Glas Slavonije* newspapers.¹⁰

Speaking of cultural branding as a category within emotional branding, it can be concluded that a brand, which served initially as a means of identification at a moment of establishing an emotional link with the consumer, later becomes what we call a brand (Pavlek 2009). Pavlek emphasises that organisations that understand the needs and wishes of consumers, their world of imagination, and their motivations as well as their frustrations and social interactions, can establish successful relations. To understand the consumer is to understand the emotional quality that he/she rarely expresses, while numbers and statistical indications are of no help in this area; rather it is necessary really to draw closer to

⁸ A folklore ballet with singing, choreographed by Dinko Bogdanić, composed by Davor Bobić, premiered at the Croatian National Theatre in Varaždin in March 2007.

⁹ A recording produced by the Lado’s singer-dancers Boris Harfman and Hrvoj Crnić Boxer, combining traditional songs performed by the Lado Ensemble with *house* music. R. Harfman also conceived the *Tanac* and *Kontrada* choreography as part of that recording project.

¹⁰ Piteša, A. (2009.), *Hrvati vjeruju u tradiciju, jedini uljez je Teatar Exit: Tržište kulture – Exit, HNK, Lado i Lisinski naši vodeći kulturni brendovi*, [Croatians Believe in Tradition, the Only Interpeloper is the Exit Theatre: The culture market – EXIT, the Croatian National Theatre, Lado and Lisinski (concert hall) our leading cultural brands] *Jutarnji list* daily, 9 April, p 34; Levak, T. (2009), *Imamo brendove, ali za proboj u svijet treba nam više novca!* [We have the brands, but to penetrate into the world we need more money], *Glas Slavonije* newspaper, 14 November, pps 28-29

the consumers employing knowledge from the fields of psychology, communicationology and sociology. That is what is regarded as one of the focal tasks of a successful CEO, who does not expend time within “opaque crystal palaces” but enters into the “soul of living people” (Pavlek 2009).

In more recent times, utilising among other the notions of new communications tools and the needs of the public, Lado enters into “the souls of living people” in various ways, while it has also done that through its direct performance activity over the past sixty years of its existence. So it also reveals to the public forgotten traditional artistic values and presents to them the spirit of the past through stage movement. The Ensemble’s objective is to present its new programme both in the larger cities in Croatia and in smaller towns, particularly in towns and regions in which it has collected artistic material and prepared specific theme programmes such as *Dragi naš kaj* [Our Dear Kaj], *Na moru i kraju* [On Sea and on Land], *Šokački sastanak* [Sokač Get-Together], and the like.

In addition, Pavlek claims that the brand is not merely a label as indicated by earlier definitions, but instead – an experience (Pavlek 2009). This is a completely new aspect of the brand in relation to the time when it was most important to design specificity and to denote and protect it. The brand also becomes a psychological phenomenon within which the perception of the consumer, and the sociological, for example, brand-icons are seen as relevant, and when acceptance of the characteristics of a brand by a group or by individual segments of society is taken as the criteria,. Besides being connected to products and services, brands can also be connected with people, places, and institutions, that is, with various elements that are in accordance with their needs, wishes, habits and lifestyle or even when they create them. When brand-icons are being analysed, it is clear that these are a matter of ideas, responses to consumer needs, and symbols to which consumers adhere, in which they have faith and with which they identify.

Along with their functional characteristics, products provide entry into the world of experiences. That is in keeping with the definition that states that the emotional response to modern brands is created among people on the basis of promises and the anticipated and delivered values (Pavlek 2009).

Consequently, what makes a brand is its emotional relations, its experiencing and value, but also its cultural relevance. Constant innovations are sought from a brand that aims to be up-to-date, these ensuring it competitive precedence and uniqueness on the market. For example, the *Nestlé* factory replaced all the artificial colouring that it was using in its sugar coating on its well-known *Smarties* by natural¹¹ products, thus adapting to the contemporary trend towards drawing nearer to Nature in all aspects of life. It probably expanded the circle of its consumers in that way to those who have opted for a more natural way of life. In addition, brands such as *Barbie*, *Motorola*, *Nike*, *Sony*, *Podravka* and *Gillette*, fulfilling the demands of the market and consumers, base their existence on the constant setting of trends and an innovative quality. Each shift away from expected quality, speed, changes and adaptations to those demands, requires a certain time for consum-

¹¹ Red, pink and lilac *Smarties* get their colour from cochenile, yellow riboflavin, orange carotenes, and the brown ones from vegetable coal. For quite some time, no alternative could be found for blue, but since spring 2008 blue *Smarties* have been on sale once again, getting their colour from the marine algae *Cyanobacteria spirulina*; Etnografski muzej u Zagrebu (2009) *Moć boja – Kako su boje osvojile svijet*, p 107, Zagreb

ers to adapt, primarily because of their emotional stance towards the brand. Those who do not change their recipes, for example of specific types of beer or cola, usually find a firm emotional support, create a myth about the product, emphasising the experience of consumers and the experience of an entire social group. In world terms, when the brand is becoming the most highly valued company asset, while managers with successful world companies are primarily orientated to creating and maintaining a strong brand, not leaving that to individual internal sectors or external specialised services, our practice in Croatia is still far from contemporary professional trends.

When speaking of branding a cultural product, it is important to stress, among other, the key strategy of communication with the public (Skoko 2009:18). Public relations in culture are marked by exceptional complexity. Museums, libraries, artistic groups and independent artists are only some of the culture groups that compete on an everyday basis for public support in the form of donations, sponsorship and other sources of funding. The majority of cultural institutions encounter the funding problem and cannot independently ensure, in full, funds needed for the implementation of programmes and promotional activities. Additional difficulties that accompany public relations in culture in Croatia are the media that follow culture – they are largely specialised and culture is monitored by a closed circle of people, while mass media devote little press space to culture or completely ignore it. One of the ruling public relations undertakings in culture activities is the so-called *event management*. Exhibitions, concerts and shows provide an ideal opportunity for direct communication with all the target public (*face-to-face*). For an event to be organised in a high quality way and for it to be interesting, it must be accompanied by communication activities that will ensure positive publicity, but also positively intoned informal communication. So cultural institutions, ahead of any other segment of non-profit relations with the public, are faced with the imperative of originality and innovative quality in communication with that public. Only original, innovative and creative projects and activities will attract public attention and contribute in that way to the creation of the identifiable image of a cultural institution (Skoko 2009:18).

Renata Fox states that the key element in public relations is publicity, that is, the publication in the media of important news about the organisation (2001:15). Veracity is a major advantage in publicity. In other words, the public is more inclined to have faith in articles and journalist reports than in advertisements and TV-clips. Fox explains that, by way of publicity, an organisation can stimulate demand for a product/service, place in the public eye the commercially important news and favourably present it through the media. A *circle of virtues* emerges as a result of nurturing relations with the public and the media – the media assist in creating a positive public conception of the organisation and, for its part, a positive public conception attracts the media (Fox 2001:15).

With present-day satiety with various pieces of information, it is important to present a brand or events connected with it as a news item that editors will recognise and insert in their news media. Neil Everton defines news (2000:6) as something new, true and interesting; however, he does say that such a definition open questions such as – to whom is the news item new, whose truth is in question and how interesting something is.

Various definitions of branding and brands speak of how the branding process changed and was perfected over time, how the body of concepts spread, along with various ac-

tivities connected with brands and branding, such as design, public relations, advertising, and the like. The Lado Ensemble built itself up gradually as a brand and endeavoured, as part of its marketing activity, to utilise the new branding techniques in order to present traditional art through contemporary channels of communication with the public. Hence, Lado created a recognisable logo and its trademark dark-red colour, compiled its Internet page and Facebook profile, designed recognisable posters and visual publicity materials and, along with its basic activity, organised congresses, exhibitions, educational activities and similar, all with the objective of its branding and positioning on the culture market.

IV. Communications strategy in the cultural product branding process

In order for public relations to bring about the desired result, a communications strategy has to be developed. The appropriate strategy reduces the number of obstacles to communication and increases the possibility of the success of any communications assignment whatsoever.

Due to the fact that Lado is a brand that creates, nurtures, represents and communicates traditional values, it may be concluded that Lado's communications strategy has a strong emotional foundation that never fails to intrigue the public. Experiencing what Lado communicates through its performing activities, the public keeps on coming back, as is shown by the full concert halls and the media reactions.

Communication is a complex process whose success is not always guaranteed (Fox 2001:15). The message sent and the message received are never identical, and the meaning that two sides allocate to joint communications symbols need not necessarily be the same. The form and content of a message depends on the skill with which the sender transforms the intent of the communication into communication symbols, and on the skill with which the recipient interprets those symbols.

Communication cannot be defined as a process of emission, reception and utilisation of information, while the communications process itself assumes the existence of at least two partners. Communicating is the exchange of information between a sender or emitter and a receiver or recipient. It unfolds in an enclosed system which, along with the emitter and the recipient, makes up the communications channel or medium, the feedback and the *static* in the channel.¹²

There are four elements in a successful communications strategy (Rouse 2005:88):

- the communicator's strategy
- the public's strategy
- the channel's strategy
- the message's strategy

¹² *Mali pojmovnik odnosa s javnošću i komunikacija* [online], Visoka škola za odnose s javnošću i studij medija, accessible at: <http://www.vskairos.hr/PRedavanja.html>, downloaded: 8 March 2011.

The channel's strategy and the message are applied to the transmission of the message by way of the channel.

The Lado Ensemble's objective and assignment is to research, collect, artistically arrange and present on stage the loveliest examples of Croatia's rich music and dance tradition. Lado's main message to the public – *Lado – the Custodian of Croatian Heritage* – is set on that foundation. It is from those basic messages that the other constant information emerges, which Lado communicates to its own public and the public in general, such as information on the performing bodies and the sub-groups – the *Ladarice*, the *Vocalists*, the *Orchestra*, the treasury of traditional costumes, and the dual nature of the Ensemble - the choir and dance ensemble, etc.

Along with its performances, which are the direct and most effective method of communication with the public, Lado sends out its message through various media, through interviews with Ensemble members, PR articles, advertising and publicity material, and the like. Lado's communications objective is to present the public with the various forms of perception of the Ensemble as a music-stage-performing-artistic entity.

V. Conclusion

Brands are part of everyday life and they have come about from the consequences of globalisation. Along with the product that it represents, the brand also includes the quality of the organisation, and the way it does business and communicates with the public. Large corporations invest a great deal of effort in advertising campaigns by way of which they communicate their brands to the target public. Offering its brand, the organisation also offers its promise that it will supply the consumer with a specific medley of characteristic benefits and services, which will warrant quality to the consumer. The organisations must select the ways in which they will differentiate themselves and stand out in relation to the competition. Consumers are motivated to buy because of the feeling that the brand gives them, particularly when a cultural product is in question. Since we live in a world that is changing at ever-increasing speed, it is also necessary to react quickly and to undertake all that is necessary in order to achieve long-term competitive advantage on the market. In an environment in which everyone can be equal, while quality is no longer so expensive, differentiation of products become more important. Nonetheless, the functional value and characteristics of a product do ensure its participation on the market, but not also its success. Brands succeed today, not only because of their competitive characteristics, but also because they represent clear values.

Although it may be concluded that Lado is a successful Croatian brand and that it meets almost all the criteria of an emotional brand, there still remain strategic steps to be taken to advance the communications process. The brand's uniqueness and its specific place on the culture market in Croatia open up the opportunity for the Lado Ensemble to set and impose new rules in communication with its target public, with the purpose of further branding of its institution and its artistic activities. All the Ensemble's particularities and distinctive characteristics place Lado in the integral cultural product category that attracts

the public with its high-quality performances, the emotions that they evoke, its mission, vision and the educational character of its activities. However, durability on the market requires investment, both in the quality of performance and in communication with the public and stakeholders, in nurture of the image and brand as well as in advertising and other marketing activities.

Contemporary communication tools have given rise to many new possibilities in Lado's communication with the public, such as, for example, opening the Ensemble's official profile on Facebook, creating multi-media content on its web-page, modernising Lado's visual identity design, expanding the existing publicity material, and the like.

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