Selling the Brazilian atmosphere in a Slovakian brand: the Açaico case.

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Abstract
Given the centrality of the relationship between communication, consumption and advertising in contemporaneity, this article examines a Slovakian brand named Açaico, which appropriates some Brazilian features and references to build its identity. In this context - through graphical elements, music, and some stereotypes - the company seeks to translate the “Brazilian atmosphere” in Slovakian territory trying to position itself as an irreverent, ecologic, healthy and funny brand. Data collected through Açaico advertising on Internet and in shops provided the material for the analysis in this work. We conclude it, highlighting the current tendency to appropriate foreign elements to materialize communication and marketing strategies in another country. This article is part of the partnership project between ESPM (São Paulo, Brazil) and Paneurópska vysoká škola (Paneuropean University – Bratislava, Slovakia) started in February 2016.

Keywords: communication and consumption; advertising; branding; Slovakia; Brazil.

Introduction: advertising, communication and consumption

Advertising and marketing are leading and intertwining landmarks of contemporary branding. From countless interactive campaigns using traditional

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formats like printed ads and television commercials to the use of internet and mobile media, companies are increasingly blurring the lines between online and off line to communicate products, brands and services.

In an extremely competitive environment, organizations seek to use various languages aiming to captivate their audience and establish empathy with them. About this, Chevalier and Mazzalovo (2007, 132) say that a brand - using multiple narrative resources - can influence some relationships between individuals, giving them the feeling of belonging to a social group. In this sense, brands are systems that produce meanings to consumers (CHEVALIER; MAZZALOVO, 2007, p.135) and, nowadays, could be a potential strategic tool to create many kinds of dialogue with them.

About this subject, Rocha (1985, p.108) lectures that in the advertising field there is a kind of “magic” and a constant reinterpretation of contexts: a cigarette can turn itself into a sign of health and sport practicing, an alcoholic beverage might become an icon of love, and a powerful car can start a party full of good-looking people. We realize, in this communication ecosystem, a complex flux of cultural appropriations that manifests itself in many formats, using different references from varied fields of knowledge. Languages, images, symbols, colors, characters and even cultural features from a country can be used in an advertising discourse with the goal of selling some product, brand or service and persuade specific consumers. With so many possibilities, the advertising mimics fictional narratives in its discourses, establishing a subtle game of illusion and reality in the contemporary context (CARRASCOZA, 2012, p.118).

The previous idea of “communication ecosystem” offers an interesting view of the subject of this paper. Based in the words of Scolari (2008, p.26) we understand that ecosystem metaphor as an ambient full of narrative exchanges, media hybridizations and mediations. One environment where technologies, speeches and cultures converge; and, as in an real ecological ecosystem, each new element added to the equation reconfigures more or less the whole ambient.
On a first moment, this scenario of multiple brands using persuasive advertising strategies may mistakenly sound like an ambient of extreme and alienated consumerism, but to consume certain brand or product is much more than to buy one object from a company. So, it is important to highlight what we understand as consumption in this article. Here, consumption may not be confused with voracious consumerism, and the mere inconsequential acquisition of products. In the discussion proposed in this paper, we understand consumption as the result of social and cultural practices strongly related to the subjectivities of the actors and the social group to which they belong (CASTRO, 2014, p.60). It is important to clarify that when we consume, we are not just buying or using a product/service/brand, we are communicating something and creating relationships with everything and everyone around us (CASTRO, 2014, p.60).

When a consumer chooses to buy a particular product/brand, he is buying a universe of meaning, ideas and attributes that will be part of his/her identity in the midst of a certain social nucleus. In this scenario, we can understand the mediatic environment as a privileged field to study cultural appropriations, which certain companies use in their advertising campaigns. Within this scenario constructed through fluid boundaries, with many platforms of communication and an environment formed by the "magic" (or illusion) of the media, we can also find a very fertile field of thought about communication, consumption and advertising.

From these initial thoughts, we aim to discuss the Açaíco case. We intend to observe how a European company uses symbols, references, stereotypes and the atmosphere (in a metaphorical way) from another country (in this case, Brazil) to compose brand identity and differentiate its products. We emphasize that the discussion between a Brazilian and a Slovakian author, about the theme proposed in this paper, resulted in a very rich reflection about the contemporary media field.
The **Açaíco brand: born Slovakian with Brazilian soul**

*Açaíco* is a Slovakian brand created by * Açaimania Europe Company* that distributes its products for more than 450 stores beyond the borders of Slovakia (such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Germany, France, Portugal and Croatia). The owners of the company, after a trip to Brazil where they tried the açaí berry, decided to import the fruit to Europe. The raw material is imported frozen from Brazil and, in Slovakia, is industrialized and packed as juices, ice creams, yogurts and desserts.

Originated from the açaí palms from northern South America, açaí berry is a fruit historically (and internationally) associated with a healthy lifestyle, surf, hot weather and the Brazilian atmosphere – features that * Açaimania Company* explores deeply in its communication and marketing strategy. Nowadays, the advertising efforts from the company focus on digital media, mainly on Facebook content, blog posts and some commercials on its YouTube site. It is important to highlight that social networks have become an active part of the communication mix of every company. They give companies the opportunity to engage more customers in their work, as they allow them to talk about themselves with the whole world, about their opinions, their experience and also about their brands. (GALERA, 2015, p.264).

Acknowledging the prominence of digital networks in today’s *Mediapolis* (SILVERSTONE, 2007), it is important to highlight that the Internet field can be considered a privileged space for social communication/interaction, marketing, brands and products. A company like * Açaimania* explores the online communication trying to connect its brand *Açaíco* with a broader audience using youthful language and a colorful layout in every piece of campaign. In the contemporary times, there is a wide relationship between advertising, technology and media platforms. In this context, we can find the emphasis on promotional and marketing aspects that (re) shape

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individuals, organizations, the working field and entertainment (DAVIS, 2013, p.193).

In the next topic we will discuss how Açaimania Europe Company creates its advertising pieces using Brazilian stereotypes/icons/symbols to achieve a differential factor in the European central market.

The Açaiço advertising and the strategic use of the Brazilian atmosphere in European territory

For the purposes of this article, we analyzed the Açaiço online advertising observing its Facebook posts, content from the official site, the official blog and YouTube videos. We also observed Açaiço products in some stores and supermarkets in the Slovaksians cities of Bratislava and Košice.

To create the brand’s identity, the company uses (sometimes in a wrong way, as we will see forward) some preconceived ideas and stereotypes from Brazil, like forest illustrations, exotic animals, vibrant colors and a logo stylized with a “savage” typography, as we can see in the following image:

![Image 1: Açaiço branding identity in Facebook’s header](https://www.facebook.com/acaimianiac/). Last access: April 5th.


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5 The translation for the phrase “Açaico drink: vždy poruke” is “Açaico drink: always at hand”.
On the packing of the beverage, we can see a highlighted phrase that says “original Brazilian açaí berry” and, in the middle of a strange jungle, one chameleon looking the four products, giving an exotic aura to the advertising piece (even the chameleon not being a typical Brazilian animal). We can clearly see an appropriation of some icons and ideas from an exotic mood translated to an international reality. Lippman (1972, p.151), in his well-known text about stereotypes, says that our culture defines the outside world for us; so, in the complexity of everyday life we tend to see some aspects in a metonymic way. Taking the part for the whole, we see certain aspects stereotypically. Through the stereotypes we can refer to the French glamor, the American way of life, the Bolshevik spirit and the Brazilian happiness, establishing a metonymic relationship (LIPPMAN, 1972, p.158).

Image 2: Açaíco happy Easter post image in Facebook’s timeline⁶.


⁶ The translation for the phrase “Veselú veľkú noc” is “Happy Easter”
Another interesting piece to analyze in our work is the Facebook post image with “happy easter” wishes previously reproduced (Image 2). In the picture, it is possible to see the same chameleon from image number 1, but now there’s another character in the ad: an aye-aye, a typical mammal from the island of Madagascar.

It is possible to create an exotic Brazilian mood using signs and elements from other cultures. One individual who has never visited Brazil or knows nothing about the country can understand this appropriation as something funny, picturesque and very common in Brazilian territory. As recalled Carrascoza (2012, p.109), the advertising discourse is built on a shared cultural knowledge between the creative minds behind a campaign and its audience; in Açaico case, we understand that the company uses such exotic elements aiming to construct an aura filled with one stereotyped Brazilian mood (colorful, savage, funny etc.). In this case, anything is possible, even using animals that are not from Brazil to create a Brazilian exotic atmosphere for the product.

Image 3: Açaico poster distributed in Slovakian supermarkets⁷.

Source: Picture taken by the authors in Billa Supermarket at the town of Košice (April, 2016).

⁷ The translation for the phrase “Zaži silu pralesa na vlastný jazyk” is “Experience the jungle power in your mouth”.
The previous poster (Image 3), distributed in some Slovakian supermarkets and natural products shops, reinforces the previous idea. In this advertising piece, we have another a giant anaconda coiled on a tree and a colorful macaw flying around an açaí berry bowl.

The stereotypical aura of nature, good mood and fun from the Brazilian territory is also strategically explored on the posts from *Açaimania* blog. In the example below, we can read a short story involving one of the company owners - Peter Matuška - who traveled to Brazil to surf, to have fun and to keep quality control of the product. Even the internal image of the company is built from the idea that it is a serious work, but it is also fun because it has a Brazilian soul.

Image 4: Açaico blog promotional post


Peter Matuška is also starring a short documentary about Brazil, the origins of açaí berry and the *Açaico* brand⁸. In the video, we can see Matuška rowing a boat in the middle of an exotic river surrounded by dense vegetation, happy people surfing on the beach, several wild animals, one rustic stilt house on the riverbank, a man climbing up one tree to harvest the açaí berry and other scenes showing Brazil as mysterious, exquisite and surrounded by nature. Words like “relaxed”, “happiness”.

⁸ The short documentary can be seen in YouTube in the URL <https://youtu.be/Mn19vpRx65s> or in the company’s official site in the URL <http://www.acaimania.com/sk/o-nas/acaico-dokument-video>. Last access: April 5th.
“energy”, “entertainment” and “health” are repeated many times during the scenes of the documentary.

Image 5: Screenshots from Açaico brand documentary


One point to be highlighted here: Brazil is a wide country, full of different cultures, signs and typical elements. There are many Brazils inside Brazil. Açaico brand – in its documentary and on advertising ads – strategically appropriates a more familiar image of the country: a land of forests and happy mysterious people surrounded by natural beauties. We emphasize that, in any moment, we criticize negatively the stereotypical strategy used by Açaimania Company in its brand. In this work, we seek to understand the delicate entanglements that arise from this complex scenario of cultural appropriations.

There are many other campaigns and advertising pieces from Açaico that reflect these points discussed until now. We clearly see, in this context, how a cultural appropriation from one country could be reframed in a new ambient. Regardless of stereotypes used, it is possible to understand how the Brazilian mood could be the
“fuel” to create a brand with an exotic aura. Next, we will present some final thoughts about our study.

**Final thoughts**

Consumption has become a studied theme in the work of many researchers. Authors such as Castro (2014), Featherstone (1995), Slater (2002), McCracken (2003) and Garcia-Canclini (2005), among others, discuss the consumption from different disciplines/perspectives and help us understand it as a core element of our contemporary culture.

By discussing the Açaico case using Brazilian elements to create a Slovakian product, we hope to demonstrate how strong the relationship between consumption, stereotypes and brands can be in the contemporary advertising context. We understand that the situation presented here points to some interesting directions in the social appropriation of cultural features from a country in today’s media panorama, challenging a company that seeks to have some unique characteristics in a very competitive market.

Through advertising, a company like Açaimania could appropriate and recreate foreign features to communicate a product with a Brazilian mood, in a country like Slovakia. Even with some distortions and stereotypes, an advertising campaign could communicate with efficiency an idea about a specific product like Açaimania.

It is essential to reinforce that advertising is “a relationship between a producer (or distributor) who advertises, an agency that creates the ad, a medium that carries the ad, and an audience of consumers to whom the ad is directed” (SCHUDSON, 1986, p. 168-169). Based in this idea, we perceive a constant cycle that moves the advertising ecosystem, but, according to Trentmann (2006, p.11), certain consumers, in their daily lives, use different ways to consume a brand, a product, service or even an advertising campaign; so, it is fundamental to use coherent
strategies, languages and cultural appropriations to communicate something to be bought by an audience. As we discussed previously, to consume a product, brand or service is an act full of meaning and social belonging in the context where advertising plays an extremely important role in the contemporary promotional culture.

About this last idea, it is very important to highlight that promotion aspects for a brand or a company assume new meanings and are strategic tools for a brand like Açaíco, and creates its identity and try to sell the Brazilian mood in several Slovakian products. Wernick (2000, p.303) teaches us that in the nowadays scenario, promotion is one aspect embodied in significations, and it is ramified by socialization practices, psychological strategies and habits, and cultural/aesthetic norms and values. But in the first instance, promotion is a mode of communication, a species of rhetoric. It is defined not by what it says but by what it does, with respect to which its stylistic and semantic contents are purely secondary and derived.

We clearly see these features and cultural aspects materialized in the Açaíco promotional/advertising pieces discussed in that work. The strategic rhetoric used by the company selects the most relevant/positive cultural elements, symbols and stereotypes to be used in the campaigns; and as we saw, sometimes, the company even uses some non-Brazilian elements to lend an exotic mood to its product Açaíco. It is worldwide known that at the present year of 2016, Brazil is going through a serious economical and political crisis. However, the elements used by Açaíco are not linked with any negative impressions, and the company chooses to use only the positive atmosphere of the country in its communication, eliminating any bad association with its product.

The delicate relationship between consumers and brands/companies in the contemporary environment seems to require special care. Companies have an “arsenal” of resources to use in advertising and promotional strategies, but must select the most meaningful and adequate to communicate something to different audiences.

Undoubtedly, this is a field wide enough to be explored, and the content is far away to be exhausted. With this brief text, we hope to cooperate with communication,
consumption, media and advertising studies, and to look forward to new and productive discussions about this topic in the future.

References


