

AAD 610: Lexicon Essay

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The purpose of this essay is to explore one potential marketing strategy for the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (JSMA) on the University of Oregon's campus in Eugene, Oregon. I will look at the marketing strategy of rebranding, explore lexicon terms, and identify the relationship between these terms and the marketing strategy of rebranding. I will pull hypothetical examples to illustrate my points from the use of rebranding as a marketing strategy for the JSMA.

Marketing Strategy: Rebranding

The marketing strategy I would like to focus on for the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art is rebranding. Rebranding is a complex—and often costly—strategy that impacts the organization's visual representation (logo, for example), but also instigates a re-haul of the organization's projected identity. Rebranding is an intense marketing strategy because it involves a shift in how the organization is advertised and represented. Often, the primary component to rebranding is a logo redesign, but really a rebranding effort should seek to redefine your organization. Sometimes this move is in an effort to pull away from negative PR, or an effort to differentiate your organization from a competitor. Rebranding spurs a change, not just in logos or stationary, but in experience, aesthetic, values, and environment (web and otherwise).

According to *The Atlantic*'s "How Brands Were Born: A Brief History of Modern Marketing" article, branding itself began as a way to differentiate your product or service from competitors. Quality was king 60-70 years ago, controlling the market. But once the "golden age of quality" began—1970s but more aggressively for the past 20 years—creating a brand that could stimulate loyalty and assure recognition was a

matter of thriving or dying as a business. Rebranding, then, involves the complex procedure of re-making your organization's identity, and there are a myriad of reasons why an organization might take on rebranding as a marketing strategy.

There are two primary realms of rebranding, as defined by Laurent Muzellec and Mary Lambkin in their article “Corporate rebranding: destroying, transferring, or creating brand equity?” These are *evolutionary rebranding*, which is a more gradual approach, inciting minor changes. It is considered a natural part of the lives of organizations and businesses. *Revolutionary rebranding*, by comparison, is representative of a major change in ideology and aesthetics. The general concept of rebranding as used in marketing literacies veers more towards this idea of revolutionary rebranding, where the entire ethos of the organization shifts and aesthetics change to reflect that large change (Muzellec and Lambkin, 2005, pg. 805-806).

Rebranding for the JSMA is an effort to cap off evolutionary rebranding that has been occurring in the museum since 2008. While the JSMA does not have a bad reputation that needs correction, it does have a target audience that feels alienated from the museum. The JSMA is an academic, university museum. As such, it serves the university. Roughly 30,000 people in the university are students, and many students feel like the JSMA is not for them. Since JSMA's Executive Director, Jill Hartz, came on board in 2008, she has been working to change the museum's image and practices. As the JSMA is entrenched in the University of Oregon, Hartz has worked to reestablish the JSMA as a UO museum. The JSMA holds academic classes, works with faculty to have relevant exhibitions, has a free student membership program, hires

student workers, and created the JSMA Student Member Advocacy Council to give students a voice in the institution. Even with these efforts—goliath though they have been—the JSMA is still seen by many students as unapproachable. Students do not know that the museum exists, or do not think that it is “for” them.

Rebranding as a marketing strategy will allow the JSMA to take these University-focused initiatives and express them visually to their audience. The JSMA does not need to rebrand their identity entirely—they have been doing that slowly since 2008. What rebranding will allow them to do is adopt a sleeker, more modern logo that has a graphic component to it (and is not just textual, like their current logo), which will alert people to a change in the museum’s identity. Rebranding could also provide the JSMA with a tagline—Where Art Lives. The rebranding strategy will be aimed at courting two specific audiences: students and members. The JSMA’s membership base sits at about 1,000 members, a small fraction of the ~130,000 population of Eugene. As the city’s art museum (as well as the University’s), JSMA serves the community beyond the UO.

The purpose of rebranding the JSMA as a marketing strategy is twofold. First, it is important to retain a recognizable identity for current stakeholders. The JSMA is the art museum for the University of Oregon, but it is also the museum for the community of Eugene. There is already vested interest in—and attachment to—the JSMA from the Eugene community and general public. Second, the museum needs to become more approachable to students. A modern, clean label, collateral, and website redesign will contribute to this new, sleeker identity. I would argue that JSMA’s gradual repositioning

as an institution furthering the University of Oregon's mission actually makes rebranding the next logical step in its transformation.

Lexicon Terms

audience: the target group that an organization is trying to reach or engage. A group (usually of people) who engage with an organization's programming, events, performances, galas, and everything else they do.

literacies: this term refers to competencies and social skills, especially with an eye towards media. As the term suggests, literacies can be compared to fluency, to the understanding of navigating a language—whether it is verbal or graphic, text-based and rooted in special terminology or visual cues. This term in the context of media is attributed to Henry Jenkins.

SWOC/T analysis: a SWOC/T analysis stands for: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges/Threats. It is an exercise to find these components of an organization (or event, or program) and use them as tools for planning.

third place/space: I advocate that third place and third space are different concepts. Third place is a place that is not home (first place) or work/school (second place). It is a place where you can go—usually a public place—and feel like you belong, or are welcome. Third places can be coffee shops, libraries, movie theaters, bars, etc. Third space can be less physical. It can embody memory (place keeping, for example) in a very tangible way. The Internet is both third space and third place.

focal point: The focal point is where one's eye is drawn. This can manifest in a multitude of ways. A focal point can represent the anchor artwork in an exhibition, or

the first part of a website that attracts your attention. A focal point is your first impression.

How Terms Inform Rebranding Strategy

The most poignant way that the lexicon terms inform the strategy of rebranding is via the idea of language and, indeed, literacies. Understanding the language an organization uses is an important beginning to developing **literacies**, but the true challenge is turning it around and trying to understand and utilize the language that your target audience uses. In the case of the JSMA, not considering literacies can be distancing to a wider audience—an art history Masters student might appreciate a label filled with jargon, but the freshman who is deciding between biology and human physiology might be put off by the language. Rebranding is a marketing strategy that, hopefully, can take a multiplicity of literacies into account. In rethinking the identity of an organization, literacies are a key component to communicating with constituents. What does media literacy look like in 2016? How can JSMA rebrand to address the changing landscape of media literacies? Rebranding can address this temporal concern, especially when coupled with other marketing strategies like social media.

The **audience** goes hand-in-hand with literacies, really. Who is the rebranding trying to target, and who will be participating in the organization who was not participating before? Audience is a truly important component of rebranding, especially if the purpose of a rebrand (and there are often many purposes) is to attract or expand impact. In the case of JSMA, rebranding could be targeting students and

potential members. It is also important, especially in marketing, to have a specific audience in mind. It is difficult to market effectively to “everyone.”

A **SWOC/T** analysis is a crucial part of any marketing plan. It will inform how to proceed. The marketing strategy will need to address challenges, especially. The SWOC/T analysis can help a rebranding effort find direction and evaluate where change is needed. It also relates to some of our other lexicon terms; a SWOC/T analysis can pinpoint audiences who are being missed by current marketing efforts. It can also define strengths of the organization, which could turn into focal points of a marketing strategy. At any rate, the SWOC/T analysis is a useful exercise that can help guide the rebranding strategy.

Third place/space is difficult to merge with rebranding, unless the organization in question is trying to completely alter how their target audience views the organization’s physical or virtual space. This is assuming, as well, that the organization *is* a third place/space, and not merely a second place (work). Luckily JSMA is a third place/space, and promoting that aspect of the museum’s identity is something that rebranding could tackle. Rebranding could display the museum as a place where people (the target audience, for example) feel like they can spend time, feel like they belong. The addition of a tagline to JSMA’s brand could contribute to this feeling of third place, or perhaps the way that JSMA is marketed in social media.

The **focal point** brings to mind aesthetics and design. Rebranding can take the opportunity to reevaluate focal points in design, especially as concerns the logo of an organization. The JSMA’s current logo is weighted so that there is no particular focal

point. The logo I designed to rebrand the JSMA has a very specific focal point, complete with framing to ensure that the center is where the viewer's eye is drawn. Focal point is a key part of any organization's brand. Rebranding as a marketing strategy can refresh focal points, redesign websites and collateral to make focal points relevant and deliberate.

Rebranding Strategy & Terms Examined

Marshall McLuhan, in his article "The Invisible Environment: The Future of an Erosion," says "environments are not just containers, but are processes that change the content totally. New media are new environments. That is why the media are the message" (McLuhan, 1967, p. 165). This quote stuck out as an argument for rebranding as a marketing strategy. Rebranding is a process that changes content and container, and pushes for a new (or renewed) aesthetic. Environments are far-reaching and not merely physical. In 2016, our environments are legion. We are surrounded by digital space in the form of social media, websites, email, text messaging, smartphone apps, and more. When McLuhan said that "new media are new environments," he could not have better predicted our technocentric world. Rebranding efforts will not completely shuffle and revamp programming and content. The JSMA's permanent collection won't be swept out the door to accommodate a new brand. That would be frivolous and wasteful. The content itself does not necessarily need to change, but awareness around the content does. It also would behoove the JSMA to consider relevant literacies when translating content into social media posts, monthly e-news letters, etc.

Henry Jenkins said that “participatory culture shifts the focus of literacy from one of individual expression to community involvement” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 4). This argument summarizes beautifully what can happen when an organization listens to its target audience. The outcome of a media literacy-minded rebranding effort is a feeling of greater community. A rebranding effort can unite audiences under the aesthetics, values, and shared literacies adopted or put forth by your organization. For this reason, a SWOC/T analysis paired with considering literacies is a key portion of the rebranding process. Ideally, you would like to align your targeted audiences with the organization, and staying relevant and current with media communications and language is an important first step.

I find that social media is often an underutilized tool in marketing the JSMA. says that social networking sites “offer a way to keep in touch with existing communities that users belong to offline” (The New Media Consortium, 2007, p. 4). Rebranding social media to be more inclusive of student interactivity will ultimately lead to a greater buy-in from that target audience. Potential members will have ways to reach out to and engage with the museum other than direct mailings. Communication is key here, because it is a necessary concern of the rebranding strategy. How do you communicate that your brand is changing? How do you use rebranding as a way to reach out to previously un-targeted populations? I think there is a lot of potential here for intersecting rebranding with an invitation to communicate and participate.

References

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