

Special Information:

Hans Domizlaff – Immortal Master of Brand Management

Hans Domizlaff's Revival

“These days, individuals, firms cities, regions, countries, and continents all market themselves professionally, often through aggressive sales techniques. Indeed, having a bad reputation or none at all is a serious handicap for a state seeking to remain competitive in the international arena. The unbranded state has a difficult time attracting economic and political attention. Image and reputation are thus becoming essential parts of the state’s strategic equity. Like branded products, branded states depend on trust and customer satisfaction. We talk about a *state’s personality* in the same way we discuss the products we consume, describing it as ‘friendly’ (i.e., Western-oriented) and ‘credible’ (ally), or ‘aggressive’ (expansionist) and ‘unreliable’ (rogue)”. Branded states – the harbingers of a postmodern politics based on style ‘as much as substance?

In his remarkable article “*The Rise of the Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation*”, Peter van Ham¹ profoundly investigated the importance of people’s idea on a product, a company, an organization, a state – and its repercussion upon long-term success. “*Perception*” is the buzzword, which at its best is coherent with objectivity, as image should correspond to identity and words to action. The *vehicle abridged* to transport this idea is the “*brand*”.

However, there is an undisputed “*Father of Brand Management*”, immortal even if forgotten for decades, rediscovered recently and more and more quoted in articles relative to branding and promotion: *Hans Domizlaff*, the Master of Brands in The Roaring Twenties, the “*Urfaust in management, advertising and marketing thought*”, as contemporary Anglosaxon counterparts would have called him.

In 2006, dedicated enthusiasts met to preserve and develop Domizlaff’s basic ideas on brand management and founded a specific Association: the Hans-Domizlaff- Archiv e.V. www.hans-domizlaff-archiv.de. –

Brand Management – the Non-Violent Power of Form

Since the mid twenties one of Domizlaff’s preoccupations had been the propaganda techniques of the young *German Republic*. Domizlaff pointed out that the opportunity was being lost to advertise the new form of government and gave voice to *his astonishment that no one seemed to be able to pupularize the new state*.

In his book “*Propagandamittel der Staatsidee*”, first published in 1930, he described in which way propaganda could be used to promote the ideas of the state and how this could become a method of ruling public opinion. This was to be done by a special ministry in charge of all public presentations of the government. He proposed to appoint a “*censor*” who was supposed

¹ Peter van Ham, Senior Research Fellow at the Netherlands Institute of International Relations „Clingendael“, The Hague; source: Foreign Affairs September/October 2001 (www.foreignaffairs.org/articles/VanHam0901.html)

to look after the *coherence of the national style*. The flags, decorations, uniforms, all those “insignificant” attributes of government were to be designed as vehicles of the idea of the state. With regard to meaning, *form shouldn’t follow function, it ought to be an expression of the state system*. The “invisible”, non-violent power of form could rule people much better than physical violence or restricting laws.

If being determines consciousness, then someone who designs the being of a people will determinate its consciousness. Later on the Nazis, by means of their “Propaganda Ministerium”, showed how ideas can become an armoury of the mind, even capable of destroying their creator at the moment he uses them against humanity and the powers of life. Ever since, the notion of propaganda has been associated with the atrocities of holocaust and fascist dictatorship.

Gaining Public Confidence – a Continuous Effort of Managing the Brand

While Domizlaff was working for private companies, he created brands for the public market according to a method he used to call “*Markentechnik*”. He made his first experiences in the field of consumer goods but soon he noticed that his idea of “*Markentechnik*” comprised much more than just the process of developing brands. In order to spread out its wings fully, *the brand has to become a dominating idea* in the mind of all those engaged in the process of creation and production. *It is not enough to name and design a product and tell others to sell. At first, a brand is just an idea, but then it becomes a living creature, an organism on its own.* Producers, sellers and consumers are parts of its system; the more they grow in number, the more the brand grows.

Seen superficially “*Markentechnik*” seems to be a method of ruling people, of being successful, but it is nothing less than a description of *evolutionary processes, teaching survival if one is capable of finding one’s own way to evolve.*

But Domizlaff was not only a man of deep thought, he was also able to give expression to his thoughts. His book “*Die Gewinnung des öffentlichen Vertrauens*” (*Winning public confidence*) was published in November 1939, a few weeks after world war II had started. The subtitle read: A textbook for “*Markentechnik*”.

In 2007, this *classic evergreen of brand management* has been republished.²

² German edition, No. 7 Hamburg 2005, www.marketing.journal.de English edition to follow suit.