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# New perspectives on communication of change in corporate identity

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**Abstract** This paper addresses a gap in the literature on communication of change in corporate identity (CI) by investigating the brand migration of Bosch in India. Based on an in-depth case study of Bosch in India, this paper develops seven propositions and conceptualises a framework for strategic communication of change in CI. The key propositions centre around strategic orientation, a constituency focussed approach, dual branding as an intermediate stage, integrating product messages with corporate messages, having a long time horizon to prevent loss of continuity, measuring effectiveness with a hierarchy of effects, and harnessing reciprocity of advertising and public relations.

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Change in corporate identity (CI) reflects the dynamic nature of markets and could be caused by a variety of reasons. The reasons include (1) change in ownership structure—through mergers and acquisitions, change in parent-subsidiary shareholding structures; (2) change in corporate strategy—through diversification, internationalisation; (3) change in competitive position—due to outdated image, reputation problems, and so on; and (4) change in external environment—caused by legal obligation or major crisis (Olins, 1996). Change in CI is thus an indispensable part of business. While change in CI signals a break from the past, it also signals intended changes in strategy, operations, product offerings, and so on. Change in CI can be a powerful outward manifestation of concurrent change within the organisation (Lomax & Mador, 2006).

Generally, the market reacts positively to change in CI and believes that the firm will carry out the promised changes (Kilic & Dursun, 2006), but sometimes change in CI leads to loss of goodwill accumulated over the years and an inward shift of the demand curve. The nature of the effect depends upon the effectiveness of the communication strategy (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006). Communication of change in CI is thus a strategic imperative for organisations.

Corporate identity literature is complex, with many cross currents; nevertheless, a few broad themes emerge. One stream is rooted in organisational behaviour and perceives the organisation as an organism concerned with distinct features and core traits (culture, strategy, and core competencies) that give the organisation its specificity, stability, and coherence (Cornelissen & Elving, 2003). The second stream is concerned with aligning corporate identity, corporate image, and corporate strategy, highlighting the multidisciplinary nature of fields related to identity (Balmer & Greyser, 2002; Gylling & Lindberg-Repo, 2006; Schultz, Hatch, & Larsen, 2000). The third stream is rooted in branding and communications literature, which focus on symbolic outward

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manifestations of the company using various techniques (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997). From a communications perspective, CI has been defined as the strategic development of a distinct and coherent image that is consistently communicated to stakeholders through symbolism, planned communications, and behaviour (Cornelissen & Elving, 2003). This stream mainly focusses on communicating and branding current CI. Otubanjo and Amujo (2012) investigated how expression of informal identity through employee behaviour can adversely impact the corporate identity communication process. An interesting piece of research by Burghausen and Balmer (2014) dealt with the relevance of corporate heritage identity for the purpose of CI management. Anteby and Molnár (2012) studied identity change and showed how repeated omission of contradictory elements in a firm's past sustains its identity. Thus, CI literature either deals with change in CI or communication of CI, but does not deal adequately with the issues and challenges of communicating a change in CI. Change in CI is far more complex than simple corporate branding; it involves issues such as—to what extent can the image be transferred from the old brand to the new brand; is de-identification with the old brand a necessary condition for successful identification with the new brand; should the communication campaign be run intensively over a short time period or should it be spread over a longer time horizon. Academic literature on communicating change in CI, as well as empirical research on the subject, is scant. The field has hence made little theoretical and empirical headway.

This paper contributes to the literature on communicating change in CI by identifying research propositions based on a holistic and in-depth case study (Gupta, 2013), which is a multifaceted examination of a situation. The approach reflects the call by scholars such as Christensen and Carlile (2009) for more emphasis to be placed on developing new theories from case-based empirical data, rather than relying on essentially quantitative, deductive, theory-testing research paradigms. Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (2002) and Cornelissen, Van Bekkum, and Van Ruler (2006) have also acknowledged the need for more in-depth qualitative research to help understand deeper issues facing corporate communications. Case studies provide a microscopic view, because of which even single case studies are a potent research technique. They bring out the interrelatedness between several complex variables and hence promote a holistic understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2009). This approach to research engages in humanistic inquiry in which the researcher's understanding arises from direct personal experience and immersion (Hirschman, 1986). According to Hirschman (1986), "The aim of humanistic inquiry should be the development of an idiographic body of knowledge consisting of tentative statements about a particular phenomenon" (p. 238).

This research uses the case study of Bosch India (see box). The change in corporate identity from MICO to Bosch is a powerful and interesting narrative of complexity in communication characterised by multiplicity of audiences, messages, business divisions, and mediums, making the task of coherence in communications particularly arduous. In selecting Bosch India as the primary vehicle for drawing lessons in communication strategy for change in CI, this research brings forth the challenges that a global brand faces when the old local brand has a strong emotional affinity among audiences. To validate the choice of Bosch India as a case study, I also analyse quantitative metrics to gauge the performance of Bosch after the campaign. In 2009 (post-brand migration), the revenues of Bosch increased but profit declined. This was largely due to the global economic recession. In 2010, the revenues of Bosch increased by 39% and profit-after-tax increased by 45% over the previous year. The change in corporate identity hence did not adversely impact the financial performance; rather, it improved significantly (Table 1).

Robert Bosch GmbH with revenues of 47 billion Euros in 2010 was founded in Stuttgart in Germany in 1886. It comprised about 300 subsidiaries and regional companies located across 60 countries. It was in automotive, consumer goods and industrial technology but automotive was the flagship business of the group. It manufactured various critical components for automobiles and was Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) for most leading automobile brands in the world. Robert Bosch GmbH started its operations in India in 1951 as Motor Industries Co. Ltd (MICO). Over the years, MICO became synonymous with quality and reliability and emerged as India's largest automotive component manufacturer. The case describes the brand migration from "MICO" to "Bosch" in India.

The change in corporate identity was carried out in a gradual manner from year 2004 to 2008. Apart from rebranding, another objective was to build the brand Bosch. The case elaborates the integrated communication strategy for change in corporate identity (CI), which includes advertising, public relations, and media strategy. It details the communication strategy adopted for different stakeholders—employees, opinion leaders, aftermarket, and OEMs. The case provides metrics for measurement of effectiveness of communication strategy allowing for a rich analysis of the extent to which brand migration can lead to transfer of equity.

Reference: Gupta (2013), Bosch in India, [hbsp.harvard.edu](http://hbsp.harvard.edu), IIMB 409

Apart from outcome variables, I also examined intermediate variables such as awareness and attitude. There was

**Table 1** Financial performance of Bosch India (Rs millions).

| Particulars       | 2004  | 2005  | 2006  | 2007  | 2008  | 2009  | 2010  |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Sales             | 23277 | 29775 | 37837 | 42796 | 45416 | 47498 | 66300 |
| Profit before tax | 5635  | 5290  | 7983  | 8560  | 8566  | 7934  | 12030 |
| Profit after tax  | 3748  | 3431  | 5480  | 6092  | 6339  | 5906  | 8590  |

Source: MICO and Bosch India annual reports, 2004 to 2010.

**Table 2** Unaided awareness\* among OEMs, car owners, media and opinion leaders (in percent of respondents, n = 352).

|       | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|-------|------|------|------|
| MICO  | 80   | 63   | 78   |
| Bosch | 61   | 66   | 76   |

\*Which are the companies that come to your mind when you think of automobile components manufacturing in India?

**Table 3** Perception about brand identity, attitude and competence in aftermarket (in percent of respondents, n = 468)\*.

|                                  | MICO |      | Bosch |      |
|----------------------------------|------|------|-------|------|
|                                  | 2006 | 2008 | 2006  | 2008 |
| Brand identity (Benchmark 73)    |      |      |       |      |
| Clarity                          | 80   | 84   | 73    | 78   |
| Appeal                           | 78   | 82   | 70    | 76   |
| Differentiation                  | 77   | 78   | 65    | 70   |
| Brand attitude (Benchmark 71)    |      |      |       |      |
| Likeability                      | 90   | 90   | 78    | 80   |
| Confidence                       | 84   | 84   | 68    | 77   |
| Loyalty                          | 62   | 62   | 52    | 59   |
| Core competencies (Benchmark 75) |      |      |       |      |
| Top quality                      | 85   | 85   | 72    | 77   |
| Reliability                      | 82   | 78   | 68    | 71   |
| Innovation                       | 83   | 72   | 68    | 70   |

Source: Bosch India.

\*Based on benchmarking of top 25% technical durables worldwide.

considerable increase in awareness of the Bosch brand post-campaign among original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and opinion leaders. Even though identity, attitude, and competence scores of MICO were higher than Bosch, the scores of Bosch improved within the aftermarket<sup>1</sup> (Tables 2 and 3). MICO was a fifty-year-old brand with a deep connect with the aftermarket and hence it was not easy for Bosch to surpass its equity easily. This quantitative evidence establishes the success of the campaign to communicate change in CI and hence justifies my choice for the study.

While the case and this research are set in the automobile component industry in an Indian context, the issues are applicable across industries and international boundaries. The paper is structured as follows: the next section describes the research methodology, followed by the case narrative, analysis and propositions. It then leads to discussion, future research directions, implications, limitations and finally, conclusions.

## Research methodology

This research follows the method outlined by Eisenhardt (1989) and Hirschman (1986).

<sup>1</sup> The automotive aftermarket consists of equipment, accessories and replacement parts sold through the retail channel.

## A priori conceptualisation

The constructs of communication of change in corporate identity were specified a priori to enable collection of specific kinds of data systematically. The constructs of “strategic communication”, “constituency-focussed approach”, “dual branding”, “integrated messaging”, and “measurement” were identified for study because of their salience. They were explicitly measured in the interview guidelines, field observations, and documentary evidences.

- Strategic communication: Communication of change in CI is largely given tactical treatment by the academic as well as the practitioner communities. It is perceived as a simple communication of new visual identity through mass media. However, the conceptualisation of corporate identity needs to change from the peripheral to the central elements, from graphic design to strategy, and from external to internal focus. A change in corporate identity does not take place in isolation; rather, there is a concurrent change in strategy or culture. Corporate identity possesses several layers, with the innermost layer being that of culture, followed by strategy and operations and the outermost layer being that of communication (Balmer, 2002; Balmer, Stuart, & Greyser, 2009). It is imperative to align the four, as the change initiated in any layer must be in harmony with the characteristics of more central layers (Schultz, Nielsen, & Boege, 2002).
- Constituency focussed approach: Corporate communication, unlike product communication, needs to address multiple target audiences, each of which has unique concerns. A constituency-focussed approach makes constituencies the most important element in the process and ensures that the needs and aspirations of the target constituency are met while designing communication programmes. The approach is outward-facing instead of inward-looking. It requires an integrated multilevel approach to communications, wherein the messages and the channels are customised to each target constituency, yet consistent with one another and the CI (Argenti, Howell, & Beck, 2005).
- Dual branding: One of the core issues of communicating change in CI is the extent of “organisational identification” prevalent in the organisation. It focusses on how employees construct meaning of who they are within the workplace based on their affinity with the organisation. It is the degree to which a member defines himself/herself by the same attributes that are believed to define the organisation (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Organisational identification is rooted in social identity theory, which describes how individuals self-categorise themselves as members of groups, and thus locate themselves in a social environment. On one hand, identified employees lead to superior performance of the firm, but on the other hand, such identification leads to resistance to change in organisational identity. Organisations can manage this challenge by “de-identifying”; that is, loosening an individual’s ties to old organisational identity and then “identifying” with the core ideology of the new identity (Corley & Gioia, 2004). Dual branding, communications, language, and rhetoric play a crucial role in the process.

- Integration of corporate and product messaging: Although corporate and product advertising are different in many ways, integrating them may harness the strengths of both. Corporate advertising is more suited for showcasing ethereal characteristics of the company, whereas product advertising is about tangible benefits (Xie & Boggs, 2006). Corporate advertising can live in the past or future—it can stimulate associations with heritage or articulate strategic vision of what is to come, whereas product advertising is more rooted in the present and typically requires contemporary iconography. Hybrid communication can showcase products to demonstrate and exemplify the organisation's core values. It could facilitate the intangible characteristics of an organisation to rub off on its product brands. In difficult financial times, hybrid communication can give greater returns on investment (Berens, Riel, & Bruggen, 2005).
- Measurement: Communication effectiveness is measured through intermediate variables such as awareness, consideration and intention to purchase (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). It can also be measured by outcome variables such as sales, revenues, trials, and profits (Assmus, Farley, & Lehmann, 1984). Product advertising is often correlated with sales as product advertising describes the benefits and key features of the product and persuades the customer to buy. Corporate advertising, on the other hand, is more abstract and hence not very amenable to measurement through outcome variables; rather, it is measured through intermediate variables. Since corporate advertising takes place over a longer duration, tracking studies can measure results over time. The benchmarks are of immense value as the measurement becomes meaningful with the addition of context (Garbett, 1983; Winters, 1983).

### Crafting instruments and protocols

Consistent with Stake (1995) and Yin (2009), data were collected from six sources of evidence—interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, documents, archival records, and physical artefacts. The case study, being rich, provided opportunity for all six sources of evidence. Research was conducted over a period of three years involving in-depth, open-ended, and semi-structured interviews with senior and middle level managers of Bosch India and its communication partners in creative, media, and public relations agencies. Within Bosch, interviews were conducted in three departments namely Corporate Communications (CC), Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEMs) and Aftermarket (which sells replacement parts). While one interview was conducted with the Joint Managing Director, four interviews were conducted with the head of CC, one with the Deputy General Manager of OEM and one interview each with the Vice President and the Head of Brand Management in Aftermarket. Among agency partners, two interviews were conducted with the Vice President of the advertising agency, five with the General Manager and other members of the planning and activation team of the media agency, and one with the senior executive of the public relations (PR) agency. Thus, sixteen interviews were conducted, lasting from about an hour to several hours and were recorded and transcribed. Apart from interviews, a number of internal reports, briefing documents,

market research reports, financial reports, briefs given to agencies, media plans and advertising creatives were examined. Visits were made to the company office. Researchers were personally immersed in the phenomenon to understand the case intimately. Archival data regarding advertisements, events, and media coverage were studied. Consistent with Patton (2002), data integrity was thus achieved with triangulations across methods. Special emphasis was placed on combining quantitative data with qualitative evidence. The study not only used multiple methods, but was also carried out by multiple investigators. A team of two researchers visited the sites, interviewed people and went through documentary evidence. This enabled analysis of the case from multiple perspectives. Convergent perceptions added to the empirical grounding of the propositions while conflicting perceptions prevented premature closure (Eisenhardt, 1989).

### Case narrative

Robert Bosch GmbH, with revenues of 47 billion Euros in 2010, was founded in Stuttgart in Germany in 1886. In 2010, it comprised about 300 subsidiaries and regional companies located across 60 countries. Robert Bosch GmbH was driven by the core values of quality, innovation, and social commitment. The group allocated 9.4% of its revenues in 2009 to research and development (nearly double the industry average), resulting in the filing of 3870 patent applications in the same year. The group was privately held with 92% ownership vested with a foundation, which ensured that profits were either ploughed back into the business or spent on charitable causes.

Robert Bosch GmbH started its operations in India in 1951 as Motor Industries Co. Ltd (MICO). Over the years, MICO became synonymous with quality and reliability and emerged as India's largest automotive component manufacturer and a leading exporter, with five plants located in the country. It not only achieved a strong market position both as OEM and in the aftermarket, but also built local connection, particularly with the aftermarket.<sup>2</sup> In the mid-2000s, Bosch India derived about 90% of its revenues from automotive technology and the remaining 10% from industrial technology and consumer goods and building technology sectors. Within automotive technology, Bosch India derived more than 60% of its revenues from OEMs and the remaining was contributed by the aftermarket and exports equally. In automotive technologies, diesel injection systems introduced by Bosch in India in 2006 contributed to the majority of the revenues. Bosch India had a dominant market share in diesel injection systems, owing to its successful and pioneering technology "common rail systems" (CRS), which improved fuel efficiency and driving experience besides complying with emission norms. The automotive industry was technology-intensive with products requiring customisation and innovation. To cater to the robust domestic demand, many automotive component manufacturers started and even expanded their manufacturing facilities in India, resulting in India emerging as a manufacturing hub.

<sup>2</sup> OEM here refers to the automobile manufacturers (e.g., Toyota) who purchase for use in their products, components made by auto component manufacturers (for e.g., Bosch).

Bosch commissioned Project B3 (Bosch Brand-Building) with the objective of changing the CI as well as building the brand Bosch in India, with a budget of about Rs. 500 million (\$1 = Rs. 53, January 2013) spread over three years. Market research was conducted before, during, and after Project B3. The research measured brand equity on the dimensions of awareness, image, and purchase intention across different target audiences—OEMs, car owners, media, opinion leaders, and the aftermarket. Before the campaign started, MICO had higher awareness than Bosch across all the target audiences. In the aftermarket, MICO scored higher than Bosch on parameters such as quality, reliability, and value for money. In the aftermarket, MICO was the more preferred brand of choice than Bosch.

### Project B3 (Bosch Brand-Building)

Bosch hired J Walter Thomson (JWT), which was the world-wide agency for the Bosch Group, for creative services; Mindshare for media planning; and Corporate Voice Weber Shandwick for public relations. The agencies were provided a common brief to align the brand architecture of Bosch in India with Bosch worldwide by applying global communication templates of Bosch in the Indian context. The target audiences were identified as employees, customers, media, and opinion leaders. The customers were classified as OEMs and the aftermarket. Original equipment manufacturers included manufacturers of cars, trucks, buses, tractors, two-wheelers, and three-wheelers. The aftermarket included wholesalers and retailers, mechanics, fleet owners, truck drivers, tractor owners, and farmers (diesel pump owners). Opinion leaders included government officials, trade associations, and industry bodies, who influenced policy-making.

A two-phased brand migration was envisaged. While the first phase (August 2004–December 2005) was the “Power of we”, which recognised the respective strengths of MICO and Bosch through dual branding and treated them at par, the second phase (January 2006–February 2008) was brand migration from MICO to Bosch that signified unified branding of Bosch worldwide.

### Phase I—the power of we

The communication channels and message strategy were carefully chosen after considering the concerns of and objectives for each of the target audiences.

#### Media

MICO was a little reserved with the media; nevertheless, it opened up for Project B3. The strategy was to conduct continuous meaningful dialogue with the media to avoid speculation and to maximise media coverage. The project was launched in the media on August 23, 2004 with Bernd Bohr, Chairman, Automotive Group, Robert Bosch GmbH, announcing an investment of Rs. 10 billion in India, out of which Rs. 5.5 billion was allocated for the launch of CRS. This signalled the significant role India would play in the growth plans of Bosch that would introduce new products and technologies from the global portfolio of Bosch to further strengthen its leadership position in India. Bosch’s active PR strategy

enabled it to gain the highest share of voice in the industry. Upon initiation by Bosch, a media company instituted an award in the automotive component category, which Bosch leveraged through PR and advertising. To educate the media about Bosch technologies, workshops were organised and familiarisation trips to Bosch facilities in Germany were arranged. Sanjay Chakravarty, General Manager & Head—Corporate Communications, Bosch, explained:

Media knew MICO in bits and pieces for spark plugs, etc., but did not know much about Bosch’s leadership status in the industry. Hence, we took 14 journalists from leading auto journals and key business dailies for a weeklong intensive trip to Germany and showcased to them Bosch plants, technologies, and R&D facilities.

#### Employees

MICO’s employees had worked in the company for generations and were strongly associated with it. The key concern of the employees was loss of identity owing to brand migration. The strategy was to increase the visibility of the Bosch brand within the company to develop confidence in the brand and provide a strong word-of-mouth publicity. According to Sanjay Chakravarty:

We were particularly sensitive about how the brand migration will go with the internal audience. Employees had apprehensions like – “will I lose my job; will I have to work more; will my salary get reduced, etc.” We wanted to take multiple initiatives to make them feel comfortable with the atmosphere of change.

Since employees had diverse cultural backgrounds, a multi-level, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural communication was planned. Implementation of the strategy was carried out at three levels—audio, visual, and verbal. In a kick-off meeting with senior executives of MICO, the “Power of we” message and anthem were unveiled (audio). A series of posters of employees in their cultural attire was designed in local languages to showcase how they connected with the company and its values. Posters reflected the spirit – “As MICO, I am part of Bosch” (visual). In all the plants, local team leaders were encouraged to interact with employees to brief them about the advantages of the collaboration between MICO and Bosch (verbal).

#### OEMs and opinion leaders

Since OEMs knew Bosch thoroughly, they were the least challenging of all target audiences. Opinion leaders were important for spreading the message by word-of-mouth. Direct mailers were sent to OEMs, highlighting the enhanced role of Bosch in India. To educate OEMs and opinion leaders about Bosch technologies, several roadshows were organised to give them hands-on experience of Bosch products and technologies. Further, a corporate campaign was launched through print and outdoor media. Internationally, Bosch stood for “Clean, safe and economical” which was combined with the “Power of we” message. Target audiences for the campaign were automotive industries, trade associations such as FICCI, CII, etc., senior bureaucrats from the departments of industry and transport, journalists, and dealers, with the total audience size estimated at 2.75 million. In media parlance, the

target audience was defined as SEC AB, both male and female aged 25 years or more in major cities (Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkata, Pune, Ahmedabad, and Hyderabad).<sup>3</sup> Since the target audience was very niche, television media was ruled out and the plan focussed on business dailies and business magazines, which had high readership. The media vehicles were chosen based on reach and cost per reach. While the business vehicles formed the foundation of the plan, automotive publications were used throughout the year, mainline dailies were used selectively owing to high cost, and strategic outdoor sites were used for continuous visibility.

### Customers (aftermarket)

The main concern of the aftermarket was “not to lose customers in the brand migration process as customers were loyal to MICO”. The segment was characterised on the one hand by the large number of contacts and on the other hand by the limited reach of mass media. Hence, the strategy was to reach out to the target segment using unconventional communication channels. K Ravi, Vice President, Aftermarket, said:

Project B3 was very important for aftermarket as MICO had a formidable presence in rural markets and commanded premium over even international brands. Even a fake MICO finds many buyers! Our target audiences could not be reached through the corporate campaigns. We needed a direct contact program to reach them.

Mindshare studied consumer behaviour in the aftermarket to prioritise the target audiences. While the two-, three- and four-wheeler owners completely relied on mechanics for buying spare parts, truckers had some knowledge of technical aspects, but nevertheless took the vehicle to mechanics for major repairs. Mechanics in turn went to retailers to buy spare parts. A senior executive, Mindshare said:

We realized that the most important target audience was mechanics followed by retailers as they decided which brand of parts to buy.

Research identified a total of 11.78 million mechanics and truckers and 1 million fleet owners in India. In media parlance, the target audience was defined as all-males in the age group of 25 years or more in SEC BCDE all over India. Truckers and mechanics were found to have lower than average viewership of television as well as press, which was further fragmented across vernacular dailies. Use of mass media was hence not considered to be effective; rather, a direct contact programme at places where they assembled was envisaged to be more impactful. While mechanics and retailers could be reached at their repair centres and shops, truck drivers were always moving on the roads and stopped over at dhabas<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> SEC is a demographic indicator designed by the Market Research Society of India to reflect purchasing power. It classifies population into A1, A2, B1, B2, C, D, E1, and E2 segments in decreasing order of purchasing power based on twin parameters of education and occupation of the chief wage earner of the household.

<sup>4</sup> Dhaba is a restaurant alongside a highway which offers cheap food, music, open air television, and a charpoy (a bed with a wooden structure knitted with jute strings), where truck drivers take breaks from their long journeys.

for food and rest and parked their trucks at trucking centres, also called transportnagars.<sup>5</sup> Many of the mechanics and retail shops were located along highways and in transportnagars besides towns and cities.

Twenty-one national highways (NHs) and transportnagars, which accounted for the majority of the truck traffic and had good infrastructure, were identified. The project was termed NH21 and was rolled out in a phased manner over three years. Sites were chosen on highways or transportnagars where semi-permanent structures were erected for one or two weeks and crowds were attracted through signages and local radio campaigns. Once a substantial number of people gathered around the site, contest-based activities/games designed around Bosch products were conducted and people were informed that MICO was being renamed as Bosch. These activities were combined with product demonstration of new Bosch diesel filters or spark plugs to educate mechanics, drivers, retailers, and fleet owners about their criticality and functionality. Specially designed vans fitted with audiovisuals visited mechanic shops to demonstrate the product and encourage loyalty. Photos of mechanics were clicked inside a specially created zone in the van and handed to them in a Bosch-branded photo frame. Bosch dealers accompanied these branded vehicles in which products were displayed and sold. Useful merchandise such as branded caps, torches, and pillows were distributed as memorabilia.

To reinforce the message with the target audience, branding of dhabas was undertaken. Branding was done in and around the area on highways before the dhabas; at the dhaba site (at the entrance, paintings on the walls, and so on) and inside the dhabas—on tables, at the counter, on the walls, and so on.

In the aftermarket, another important section of the target audience was the farmers (who owned tractors and pump sets), who typically went to mandis<sup>6</sup> to sell their harvest. The size of this audience was estimated at 16 million. They had below-average exposure to all media, and hence it was decided that they would be reached through “local area marketing” (LAM), which meant visiting important towns and mandis and conducting a consumer contact programme almost similar to the NH21 campaign. The company also reached out to mechanics and retailers in these towns. Apart from this, Bosch advertised on some unconventional channels such as trucks, local trains of Mumbai, food trays in flights, metro trains, and autos to increase its reach.

### Phase II—invited for life

While the first phase focussed on “Power of we”, the second phase which started in January 2006 had the objective of launching Bosch in all its glory by positioning it as a brand that was constantly innovating and making life better by bringing cutting edge technologies to India. Another objective was to communicate that other business sectors such as power

<sup>5</sup> Transportnagar is a dedicated area in major cities that facilitates transportation of goods by providing parking bays for trucks and facilities such as transit storage, warehouses, repair shops, auto spare parts shops, health facilities, fuel stations, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Mandi is a Hindi word which means “market”—a place where buyers and sellers congregate.

tools, security systems, and so on, were also a part of the Bosch corporate brand. The strategy was to emphasise innovation and technology in other business sectors across all communication mediums such as advertising, PR, and events. Bosch's umbrella branding was launched at the Auto Expo of 2006. The international tagline "Invented for life" was adopted while aligning Bosch India with Robert Bosch GmbH. The "Clean, safe and economical" theme was integrated with "Invented for life". The media strategy for corporate campaign in phase II was very similar to that of phase I.

The PR focus shifted from Bosch's association with investments to association with the pioneer in technology. A conscious strategy was also adopted to build relations with media in other metros as well as small towns where the aftermarket was prominent. The company also wanted to create goodwill in locations where plants were situated. Sanjay Chakravarty explained:

In 2005, we had covered the ground well in Bangalore and so our strategy was to engage with media in other cities like Delhi and Mumbai by taking big-ticket announcements there. But, we did not want to have an overnight transition from a low-key, media-shy company to wooing media all out!

On February 1, 2008, Bernd Bohr, Chairman, Automotive Group, Robert Bosch GmbH, announced in a press conference that MICO was then legally Bosch. He said:

In future, all the subsidiaries in India will bear the Bosch name. MICO remains a valuable brand for us and we will continue to use it for our products in the aftermarket segment where it is very well established!

Bosch carried out research on the parameters of awareness, image, and purchase intention to understand the impact of brand migration campaign among different target audiences. More than 90% employees felt that the Bosch name was becoming more visible in the company, with more employees associating the tagline "Power of we" with MICO and "Invented for life" with Bosch. Sanjay Chakravarty said:

There was no resentment among employees about brand migration. This is a testimony to the success of employee communications strategy. Similarly, Bosch only received favourable media coverage and there were no negative stories. This is a testimony to the success of media relations strategy.

Among OEMs, car owners, media, and opinion leaders, the unaided awareness of Bosch increased and so did the image that Bosch was the number one auto parts manufacturer and MICO was partly owned by Bosch. Among OEMs, car owners, media, and opinion leaders, Bosch scored much higher than MICO on brand personality parameters such as visionary, dynamic, successful, and gigantic. Bosch was more in the consideration and the preferred choice set of OEMs than in the aftermarket. For the aftermarket, while the awareness of MICO was still much higher than that of Bosch, Bosch scores on image parameters such as quality, reliability, and value for money improved in 2008 over 2004. For the aftermarket, Bosch scores on brand identity, attitude, and core

competencies also improved in 2008 over 2006. For the aftermarket segment, Bosch brand equity came within the tolerance level of MICO and almost reached the allotted benchmark. Within the aftermarket, Bosch scores were low for truck and tractor drivers as compared to fleet owners, garages, and wholesalers (Gupta, 2013).

## Analysis of case and emergent propositions

The analysis is the most difficult and least codified part of the process (Eisenhardt, 1989). As Miles and Huberman (1984) said, "one cannot follow how a researcher got from 3,600 pages of field notes to the final conclusions". The researchers prepared transcripts of all interviews and meetings. Evidence for the a priori constructs were identified by dividing the data on the basis of sources (Table 4). For this research, two types of classifications were used: (1) interview, field notes and documentary; and (2) qualitative and quantitative data types. When a pattern from one data source is corroborated by the evidence from another, the finding is stronger and better grounded. It forces investigators to go beyond initial impressions (Eisenhardt, 1989).

**Shaping propositions:** Propositions emerge from analysis. Unlike traditional research, factor analysis cannot be performed in qualitative research as qualitative evidence is difficult to collapse. Researchers rely on tables that summarise and tabulate the evidence underlying the construct (Eisenhardt, 1989).

**Enfolding literature:** The researchers then compared emergent propositions with extant literature and analysed queries such as "what is this similar to", "what does it contradict" and "why".

Based on in-depth analysis of the Bosch case, propositions for communicating change in corporate identity were identified. I argue that CI is multifaceted and strategic and has antecedents in the core of the organisation and consequences in the form of accumulated image formed by all stakeholders. I propose a framework for strategic communication of change in corporate identity, which comprises a wide variety of iterative loops of communication and feedback between various layers of corporate identity and the multiple constituencies of an organisation (Fig. 1). A name change from MICO to Bosch signified a change in culture from Indian engineering to German excellence, quality to innovation, local connect to global credibility. The slogan "Invented for life" was aligned with the Bosch culture of spending much more on R&D as compared to the industry. The new name hinted at the increased importance of the Indian market in the Bosch portfolio and the related changes in operations—launching new products from the Bosch portfolio, setting up manufacturing facilities in India, and so on.

The key characteristic of the framework for strategic communication of change in CI is inter-relatedness. Although the framework conceptualises the flow from the identity through communications to the image, it also works in the reverse direction because of the feedback loop. The marketing communication strategy, though rooted in the reality of identity, is a dynamic force which will try to change the perceptions of the company. In doing so, it changes the way managers see the company itself. Even though the employees' understanding of identity is influenced by the cultural milieu, the culture

**Table 4** Constructs and their evidences by data sources.

| Interviews/Qualitative  | Field notes/Qualitative  | Documentary evidence/Quantitative   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Construct: Strategic communication</b>   |  |   |
| Increased importance of Indian market for Bosch   | Packaging was changed to reflect Bosch in corporate as well as product brand.  | Bosch spends 9.4% of its revenues on R&D—double the industry average.   |
| Launching new products from Bosch portfolio   | Internally there is now more focus on innovation—strategy has evolved.   | Investment of Rs 10 bn in India   |
| Setting up manufacturing facilities in India  | Communication is done in two phases—“Power of We” and “Invented for Life”.   | The advertising campaigns and their media plans   |
| <b>Construct: Constituency focussed approach</b>  |  |   |
| Communication strategy was chosen to address concerns of each of the target audiences.  | Four target audiences were identified—media, employees, OEMs and aftermarket.  | Different communication channels were chosen for different target audiences—media were taken to Bosch factory in Germany; OEMs were approached through direct marketing and road shows; aftermarket through direct contact programmes, and employees through posters. |
| Media vehicles chosen were different for different target audiences.  | Some target audiences were more challenging to reach, such as aftermarket, whereas OEMs were the easiest to reach.   | Different messages were chosen for different target audiences. Media—investment & innovation; Employees—multilingual and multicultural communication; OEMs—clean, safe & economical; Masses—Independence day.   |
| <b>Construct: Dual branding</b>   |  |   |
| Initially MICO would be shown in advertising alongside Bosch and gradually MICO would be weaned off.  | Employees have been with MICO for decades and took pride in their association with MICO; so change in identity had to be gradual so that there would be no loss of continuity. | In the first phase, the ads had logos of both MICO as well as Bosch. In the second phase, the ads had only Bosch logo.<br>Tagline “Power of We” reflected dual branding.  |
| <b>Construct: Integrated messaging</b>  |  |   |
| Bosch featured products from different divisions—packaging, automotive, power tools to show that they belong to the umbrella brand “Bosch”. | For aftermarket, Bosch had interactive games built around products such as spark plugs and diesel filters, besides informing audiences of name change.                         | Bosch featured key products such as fuel injection system and power tools to serve as examples of its core competency of innovation.  |
| <b>Construct: Measurement</b>   |  |   |
| Measurement was done on awareness, attitude and purchase intention.   | Comparison was done across target audiences—effectiveness was low among aftermarket as compared to other target audiences.   | The research agency provided benchmark and threshold values from their repertoire of studies.   |
| Bosch tracked the movement of consumers across the marketing funnel—from awareness to consideration set to choice set.                      | Within aftermarket, effectiveness was lowest among truck drivers and tractor drivers.  | Scores were calculated by research agency on all intermediate variables. In 2008, 97% OEM consumers were aware of Bosch, 67% consumers had it in consideration set and 40% consumers in choice set.<br>Research was done at regular intervals.                        |

will change in response to the beliefs of the employees (Ind, 2000). When communications was trying to alter the perceptions of stakeholders from quality, trust, and likability (core values of MICO) to innovation, global character, and dynamism (core values of Bosch), the employees’ perception of the company also changed. The market research conducted

at the end of Project B3 showed that the employees strongly associated Bosch with the latest technology and new product introductions, indicating a change in corporate identity itself. The organisation’s audience is not restricted to consumers; rather, it encompasses a range of audiences—government, key influencers, and media—communities that have their own



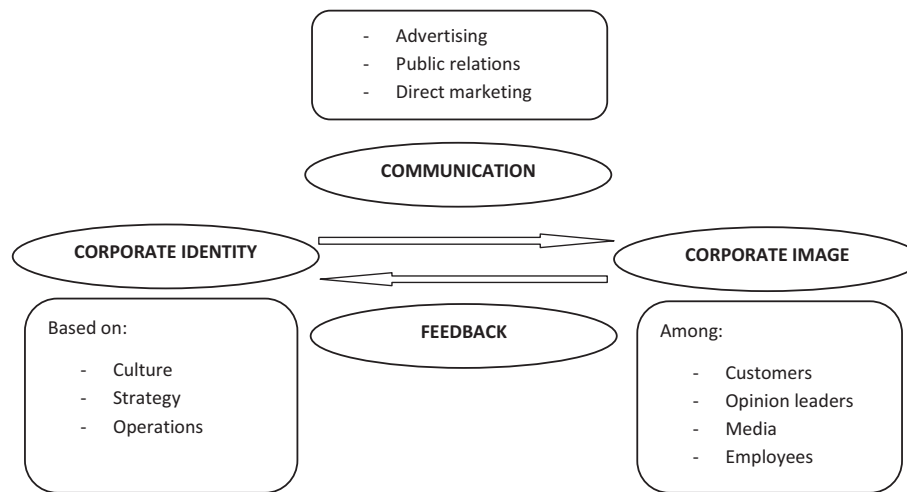


Figure 1 Strategic communication of corporate identity.

agendas for attending to what an organisation says or does. Strategic communication tailors the messages to the information needs of different audiences.

It can hence be concluded that:

**P1: Strategic approach enhances effectiveness of communication of change in CI.**

Although the framework adopts a sequential approach from identity through communications to image, in practice it would be better to reverse the flow and follow a constituency-focussed approach to communications. Organisations need to identify their target audiences and choose messages and media strategies that resonate with the target audience (Table 5). Corporate messages, which are relevant to investors, may not be relevant to consumers. While employees would be concerned about job security, investors would be interested in understanding future growth prospects and consumers would want to know about benefits from new technologies. Multiple target audiences will hence lead to multiplicity of messages. Companies thus face a challenge of ensuring consistency in their communication. Bosch had multiple messages but all of them were related to the core positioning of technology and innovation. One way of ensuring consistency is by keeping the messages "strategically ambiguous" (Eisenberg, 1984), which would allow different

constituencies to construct multiple interpretations, none of which may be strictly right or wrong. Corporate messaging thus possesses a high level of abstraction and is found in CI in the form of taglines, mission, goals, and plans as it enables agreement on abstractions without limiting specific interpretations.

It can hence be said that:

**P2: Constituency-focussed approach enhances effectiveness of communication of change in CI.**

Employees had a strong affinity with MICO because of their long association with and the strong reputation of the company and hence derived much of their identity from the company. Dual branding can serve as an intermediate stage between old and new brands and help in de-identification with the old brand (Ettenson & Knowles, 2006). Phase I of the Bosch communication campaign was essentially that of dual branding which had the MICO logo on the left-hand side and the Bosch logo on the right-hand side, with the gap between the two bridged by the tagline "Power of we". The execution was unconventional as in dual branding the brands are usually placed close to each other and hyphenated. Nevertheless, the communication subtly told employees that Indian engineering was no longer enough and German innovation was needed to excel in the global marketplace. Dual branding would thus facilitate

Table 5 Constituency-based approach to communicating corporate identity.

| Constituencies     |                     | Messages  | Media   |
|--------------------|---------------------|---|---|
| Primary            | Secondary           |   |   |
| Customers          | All constituencies  | Corporate advertising, product advertising          | Advertising, direct contact programme, direct marketing |
| All constituencies | Media               | Public relations                                    | Press releases, interviews, familiarisation trips       |
| Opinion leaders    | Customers           | Meeting social and political expectations           | Advertising, one to one meetings                        |
| Communities        | NGOs, media         | Building local connect                              | Philanthropy, events                                    |
| Employees          | Customers, families | De-identification with old, identification with new | Town hall meetings, memos, newsletters, intranet        |

identification with Bosch. Besides de-identification, dual branding can also facilitate transfer of core values from the old to the new brand. Dual branding allowed MICO to introduce attributes of “local”, “quality”, and so on, that were not associated with Bosch. It can thus be stated that:

***P3: Dual branding can be an intermediate stage for communicating change in CI.***

The Bosch case illustrates how product messages can be blended with corporate themes. Bosch featured key products such as fuel injection systems, close circuit televisions, packaging machinery, and power tools that served as examples of its core competency of cutting edge technological innovation, in its advertisements. The on ground activation programmes conducted by Bosch for the aftermarket included interactive games built around products such as spark plugs and diesel filters, besides informing audiences about the change of name. Considering the high cost of advertising, companies can create such hybrid advertisements, which promote a company’s products or services and simultaneously communicate a message about the organisation as a whole. Product managers can also use these hybrid advertisements smartly to survive budget cuts. It can be thus said:

***P4: Integrating product messages with corporate messages will bring efficiency in communicating change in CI.***

Most CI changes are communicated within a span of a few months by launching an advertising blitzkrieg. Owing to quick implementation of the new structure, substantial uncertainty sets in and erodes organisational identification with the old without establishing identification with the new. There is loss of continuity, creating the perception that changes were implemented with an act of force rather than incrementally. It also often results in an unclear personal future for employees, especially during mergers and acquisitions. In contrast, Bosch communicated the change in CI over a period of three years in phases. It ensured that the transition was smooth and there was no backlash, particularly among employees. A longer campaign period may be particularly relevant for organisations that have strong identification among employees. The duration of the campaign would also be influenced by the multiplicity of target audiences. While most corporate campaigns engage with multiple stakeholders, it was particularly complex for Bosch as the customers were B2B as well as B2C. It can thus be said:

***P5: Communicating change in CI over a long time horizon will prevent loss of continuity.***

The effectiveness of change in CI campaigns can be researched more successfully than product advertising. The effectiveness of product advertising is usually measured through actual sale result; yet advertising is just one element of the marketing mix. On the other hand, change in CI campaigns cannot be associated directly with sales and revenue and rather concern themselves with intermediate measures such as awareness, attitude, and intention to purchase, which are more readily researched. Such campaigns can be measured

using tracking studies with benchmarks as was done in the instance of Bosch (Garbett, 1983; Winters, 1983). Pre-, during and post-studies as done by Bosch show the movement of the brand along important variables and thus indicate effectiveness of campaigns. Also, comparisons can be drawn among different target audiences. For instance, after Project B3, while the awareness and attitude towards Bosch was positive among overall target audiences for the aftermarket, within group analysis revealed that awareness among truck drivers was still below the threshold level. It can thus be stated:

***P6: Effectiveness of communication of change in CI can be measured through hierarchy of effects.***

Rule of reciprocity exists between advertising and editorial content, and high levels of publicity in mass media are hardly obtainable without significant advertising expenditure. Advertising revenues are obtained from the marketers that advertise their products and services in mass media vehicles. Yet the same media provide coverage of these products and services to their readers. There is hence bound to be pro-advertiser bias in editorial content (Rinallo & Basuroy, 2009). Trade media would be more afflicted with this bias as their revenues are dependent on a few advertisers. When there is a change in CI, companies usually allocate a separate advertising budget for communicating the change. Since advertising and public relations go hand-in-hand, companies must leverage the opportunity and secure media coverage. Bosch advertised through different types of media, including trade magazines, and received good publicity. It can be fairly assumed that some part of the media coverage could occur because of the reciprocity rule besides the company’s smart public relations strategy. This questions the premise that publicity is unpaid, which assumes independence of advertising and public relations. Peer pressure from competing publishers also affects coverage decisions. If some publishers cover a given company, other publishers would also start reporting about that company, as leaving a company outside the ambit of coverage would raise questions about the credibility of the media. Hence, communicators must attempt to make inroads into select publishers, which would open doors to other publishers as well. It can thus be stated:

***P7: Reciprocity of advertising and public relations must be harnessed for effective communication of change in CI.***

## Theoretical and managerial implications

This research has laid the foundation for making the phenomenon of communicating change in CI more strategic and theoretical. There is scant research on communicating change in CI even though the construct of corporate identity has attracted much attention. This research has identified propositions for communicating change in CI, which can be empirically tested in future research. Further, it has given recognition to “communicating change in CI” as a subject distinct from “corporate identity”.

Communication of change in corporate identity is generally treated in a tactical manner and there is more focus on

outward manifestation of change, such as change in visual identity—name, tagline and logo. However, a change in CI is not only a change in visual identity but also a concurrent change in strategy, culture, and operations. Hence, managers must plan communication of change in CI in a holistic manner. Since an organisation has multiple stakeholders, the communication strategy must customise messages for each stakeholder group, such as customers, suppliers, and media, and use channels which can reach the target group.

Often, communication of change in CI is done suddenly, with media blitzkrieg, which leads to loss of continuity and erosion of entrenched brand values. Managers can explore dual branding as an intermediate stage so that there is a smooth handover from the old to the new brand. Communication can be carried out over a longer time horizon to ensure seamless transition.

This research indicates that messages in communicating change in CI need not be uni-dimensional. Instead, messages may communicate the multi-dimensional values of the new brand. Efficiency can be achieved by integrating product advertising with corporate advertising. Managers must use both public relations and corporate advertising to communicate change in CI in a cost-effective manner. Managers must not correlate corporate communication with sales, but with measures such as awareness, attitude, and preference.

## Limitations and future research directions

Case research makes generalisations to theory and not to populations (Yin, 2009). This study identifies seven propositions for communicating change in CI and has the potential to spur research pertaining to them. However, the propositions are based on a single case study, which makes generalising a challenge. Future research can identify multiple case studies from a mix of B2B and B2C to analyse if communication of change in CI is different for the two contexts. Such research could see the inter-case similarity and dissimilarity in the evidence of the constructs. Another limitation of this study is that it is restricted to generating propositions, which are tentative concepts. Future research can test these propositions empirically.

Testing can be accomplished through secondary data (e.g. advertising in media), primary data (e.g. employees' perceptions of dual branding) or a combination of both. The propositions are amenable to testing largely by means of perceptual measures (for instance, employees' perception of internal communication of the company), though in some instances, objective measures can be useful (budget for advertising across stakeholders). Perceptual measures can be tested on a five-point scale; for example, employees' perception of intensity of communication of change in CI can be measured on a scale of "very high", "high", "moderate", "low", or "very low". Some of the dimensions can also be measured with archival objective data such as customer satisfaction reports, employee satisfaction surveys, and so on.

One method of research could be a survey of corporate communications managers to collect their opinion on the various propositions as constructs. Structural equation modelling can then be applied to measure the effect of constructs on effectiveness of communication of change in CI.

## Conclusion

This research identified an important gap in the literature of communicating change in CI effectively. The paper merged the two constructs of communication and corporate identity to identify new perspectives on communication of change in CI. The study was based on an in-depth analysis of a case study on Bosch. In-depth interviews were conducted with senior people and archival data were analysed. The richness of the case context enabled development of seven propositions and conceptualisation of a framework for strategic communication of change in CI. The key propositions are: to include strategic orientation in communication, a constituency focussed approach, dual branding as an intermediate stage, integrating product messages with corporate messages, to have a long time horizon to prevent loss of continuity, measuring effectiveness with hierarchy of effects, and harnessing reciprocity of advertising and public relations. Future research can test these propositions empirically. Some ideas about types of measures that can be used for testing the hypotheses have been provided in the paper.

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