

# Brand Platform as an Element of a Company Marketing Strategy

Nadezhda A. Goncharova<sup>\*1</sup>, Tatyana Zh. Solosichenko<sup>2</sup>, Natalia V. Merzlyakova<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>*Ural State University of Economics, 620144, Russia, Ekaterinburg, 8 March Street, 62.*

**Abstract-** The gist of this article boils down to the comprehensive understanding of the company brand by consumers of linguistic services in a turbulent competition. Development of a brand platform is a stage in building a marketing strategy, which is the foundation for creating a brand. The effective marketing strategy of the company should include the stage of developing a brand platform and be at the forefront in importance, among other issues. Moreover, how the company promotes itself in the market, how it promotes itself in the minds of consumers, partners, suppliers, and the media will determine the successful achievement of its strategic goals. Despite the crisis situation, difficult political situation and high rates of foreign currencies, there is still a need for the population to learn English. In this regard, the formation of a marketing strategy and its brand platform of the linguistic center in this market are important, because without it the market will belong exclusively to competitors. Based on the brand platform, the company management understands what consumers are interested in and plans a policy for further development. As part of the marketing strategy, a brand platform was proposed for the company. Based on the selected target segment, positioning was carried out based on three points of differentiation: the result for everyone, the simplicity and uniqueness of the methodology and the learning speed. Final positioning concept is formulated in the paper.

**Keywords:** brand platform, marketing strategy, consumers, planning, positioning, consumer perception, image.

## 1. Introduction

In the present economic conditions of the market, when tough antitrust laws are in force and more and more new organizations and firms are opening every day, the issue of competitive promotion for a company takes a key position. The competitive environment has become even more turbulent, in the struggle for leadership positions in its industry, the company needs to exert maximum efforts and always “keep abreast”. In addition, today's consumers are no longer the gullible inhabitants of the epoch of the industrial economy, who had to buy what they had, on the basis of orders formed above. Today, consumers can show off their legibility in quality, names, brands and many other

things that people previously did not attach importance to. In this regard, the effective marketing strategy of the company should include the stage of developing a brand platform and be at the forefront in importance, among other issues. And how the company promotes itself in the market, how it promotes itself in the minds of consumers, partners, suppliers, and the media will determine the successful achievement of its strategic goals. Despite the crisis situation, difficult political situation and high rates of foreign currencies, there is still a need for the population to learn English. In this regard, the formation of a marketing strategy and its brand platform of the linguistic center in this market are important, because without it the market will belong exclusively to competitors.

## 2. Market Review

Over the past decade, the need to learn foreign languages has more than doubled. This was facilitated by increased demands in the workplace for language skills, a growing flow of tourists abroad, etc. The situation did not change significantly even in times of crisis and Western sanctions: consumers still remain interested in traveling abroad and improving their communication skills with an emphasis on the future [1-20]. Among other things, programs for studying English and other foreign languages in general education institutions and non-core higher education institutions do not provide graduates with a real opportunity to speak a foreign language freely. Consumers can learn this language for years, but still remain on the frontier of knowledge of the theory, but inability to put it into practice. The reason lies in the fact that the Russian language training system still does not meet modern requirements. According to the European standard, a threshold level of proficiency in a foreign language is reached in 240–300 hours of classroom training, which is sufficient for practical use of the language in everyday situations. In Russian secondary schools, it takes 300-500 hours to study English or German, the program of a non-language higher education institution still includes an average of about 300 hours. In theory, graduates of Russian universities should be proficient in the language, but in practice most of them cannot communicate, ask

elementary questions, and receive information through written and oral speech. This problem of consumers is exactly what commercial language centers are solving today. The marketing impact of such centers has a significant impact on the development of the entire market for linguistic services. As in any other market, the foreign language teaching market has changed over time, new fashion trends have appeared on it. One of them is the departure from traditional methods of learning to unique techniques. Today there are so many of them that consumers are no longer actively responding to such positioning. Today it is necessary not only to say that the language center will teach you using an exclusive method, but also to confirm this in practice. In Russia at present there are about 20 different methods of teaching foreign languages, which are paid classes on courses. One way or another, 60% of the techniques can be attributed to the varieties of the currently popular communicative method. The pricing policy of linguistic centers is quite mobile, due to the high level of competition; companies simply do not have the opportunity to significantly inflate prices for their services. To the adequate prices are added and widespread discounts and bonuses, club cards and other ways for customers to save on training. Recently, family subscriptions to attend courses in various foreign languages have become particularly popular.

In the market of the city of Ekaterinburg in Russia are:

- original local schools, which have one office for classes with students, very often such schools offer a club format of classes, when the most important thing for consumers is not learning, but lively communication on different topics [21].
- Interregional domestic projects that transfer their learning experience from the region to the region;

As an example, it is worth citing a very dynamically developing inter-regional project "YES". The first school under this name began to work in 2002 in Yekaterinburg. Then the branches of the school opened in Chelyabinsk and Moscow. At the end of 2008, the total number of YES schools in these cities, as well as Tyumen, Ufa, Novosibirsk, Perm, Kazan, Naberezhnye Chelny, was 31 branches. And the network is not going to stop there; the plans include expanding the coverage area in the regions. Linguistic centers actively use various advertising tools to promote their services. The language school "Alibra School" is especially different: among all other competitors, it has outdoor advertising in the subway and on buildings, effective contextual advertising in Yandex and Google, and radio advertising. The hypothesis of our research is

expressed in the following thesis: "consumers generally have a low level of loyalty, and therefore most companies seek to find a distinctive advantage from competitors and, using positioning for the target audience, convey to it the benefits and values that consumers will receive in addition to the service".

Most linguistic centers try to match their image and create the most pleasant and comfortable learning environment for their clients. Thus, we note that the market of linguistic services today is really specific. It is characterized by:

- High level of competition;
- Constantly rising consumer demands;
- The need to constantly improve teaching methods, improve the quality of services;
- The influence of external factors (economic, political, etc.).

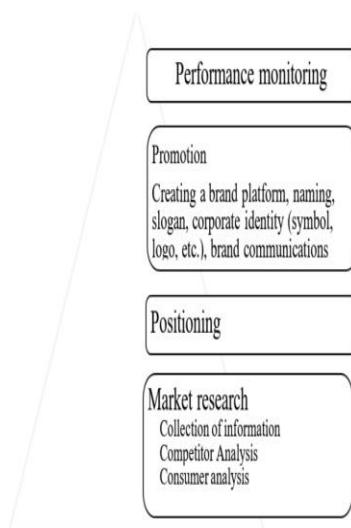
### **3. A Methodical Approach to the Choice of a Marketing Strategy**

The choice of a marketing strategy in which the company's brand platform is an integral part of the modern market is influenced by many internal and external factors and, as a rule, based on a huge amount of information (marketing research, competitive analysis, etc.). Therefore, the implementation of marketing strategies is a sphere of risky decisions in the face of uncertainty. The choice of marketing strategy should be approached gradually, initially forming it in the most general form, and subsequently, as information accumulates, complementing it with details. Thanks to this approach, the company will be able to avoid serious mistakes, since none of the existing technology development strategies provides the perfect course of its implementation. Despite the large number of scientific works performed in the field of decision-making methodology, there is no universal panacea in this issue in the world. As M. Meskon correctly noted: "Making decisions is usually easy. It is difficult to make a good decision" [22]. The problem of choosing marketing strategies is not only that it is influenced by numerous external factors, the consequences of which are difficult to predict in the future, but also by the fact that the person who makes the decision influences the choice. Another obstacle for making effective marketing decisions is their basing on incomplete selective research or on the use of non-objective statistics. P. Dickson and J. Shapiro speak about this in their works.

From the point of view of a rational choice theory, these problems can be minimized by the following actions:

- know the possible alternatives;
- know the consequences that are possible for each alternative;
- select criteria and determine their importance for comparing alternatives;
- make decisions that will provide the greatest result at the lowest cost.

The marketing strategy provides an opportunity to analyze the current position of the company in the market, determine its desired position and develop measures to achieve it. Westwood J., Kotler F., Lisin DA, Novikov AS and many other scientists form an idea of the marketing strategy development process, in our case, the author's approach is to deepen the "positioning" stage, which involves not only traditional actions, but also an emphasis on the formation of a brand platform. A brand platform is a broad understanding of the brand philosophy and an effective strategy for developing and managing a brand comes down to three major steps: to find a need, solve it with a product or service, promote a solution to the market. Graphically, this can be represented as follows (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** The main stages of brand development

Secondary and primary data on consumers will give the basis for the development of the positioning vector. To interpret the results, we calculated the averages for each parameter of each of the selected clusters. Based on the data, we can distinguish the following segments:

- "connoisseurs of convenience and quality", women and men aged from 22 to 40 years, with a stable average monthly income on average about 25-35 thousand rubles;
- "Connoisseurs of comfortable education with experienced teachers at a good price", women and men aged 20-30 years, with an average income of about 20-30 thousand per month;
- "connoisseurs of time and money", women and men who are not married, with an average age of 22-30 years and income of about 22-35 thousand per month;
- "Connoisseurs of a high-quality brand, a non-standard approach to learning and a quick result", women and men aged 20-28 years, with an average monthly income of 25-35 thousand rubles;
- "lovers of good quality education and monetary benefits", men and women aged 22-35 years, with an income above the average, about 30-45 thousand rubles. per month.

Positioning is the basic stage of brand development, which includes both the definition of competitive advantages and the definition of the brand's "niche", its position in the minds of the target audience. This is the starting point for the subsequent development of the brand's name, communication image and visual style. The main emphasis in positioning when building a brand platform is the definition of points of differentiation and the construction of a perception map (perceptual map). They are used to develop the concept of positioning. They allow you to visualize the segmentation of the market by the 2 main parameters and find a niche in which your product will be the only or best option. Brand positioning should be understandable and clear for both consumers and company employees. The target audience should clearly understand the difference between your product or service and your competitive advantage. Before you engage in positioning and building a brand platform on this basis, you need to know what the company is striving for and what its main plans are. On the basis of the study, taking into account the identification of the degree of influence of environmental factors and setting goals, we developed a marketing plan that allows you to get in the forecast development in the field of product, pricing and communication policies of the company (Table 1).

**Table1.** Marketing plan

№	Event	Date	Description	Budget, RUB.
1	Work with negative reviews (for example on Flump)	June 2018	– preparation of competent official responses to negative reviews; – encouraging existing customers to fill out feedback on courses and their successes.	–
2	Development of a single corporate identity center	June-August 2018	New name, logo, corporate colors, design elements	10000-15000
3	Work with the website	June-September 2018	– improve the structure: remove duplicate materials and too intrusive widgets, make the content more understandable; – to redesign the site in accordance with the new corporate identity	20000
4	Establishing an online cash register	until 01/07/18	New mandatory condition for organizations with the hiring of workers.	36 000
5	Moving to a new office	October-November 2018	Office space Address: st. Rosa Luxemburg, 49, Onegin Plaza Business Center, 8th floor Year built: 2011 Square: 117m <sup>2</sup> (4 rooms) There is underground parking, there is open ground parking. Modern building security system. Convenient location: 7 minutes to Geologicheskaya metro station. Utility Payments: Not Included Air conditioning installed.	81 900 ruble per month+ communal payment (3000-5000 rubles) x 32 months.
6	Interior design in the new office	Stage I: October-December 2018  Stage II: January-December 2019	– furniture purchase: blinds, a sofa and a coffee table in the hall, shelving, shelves mounted, etc. – painting walls, placing stands and posters; – equipment purchase: 2 projectors, 1 laptop; – sign on the door; – sign office logo; – design registration.	250000-300000 rubles
7	Recruitment	October-December 2018	Office manager at the reception, 2 teachers	9500 (salary) per month
8	Staff training and motivation	October-November 2018	Teacher training, general meetings on current issues and strategic plans	–
9	Customer service	From October-December 2018	– calling the old and new customer base: an invitation to a new office, information about opening new destinations – E-mail newsletter to customers	–
10	Development and ordering of new souvenir and printing products	From October 2018	– souvenirs: silicone bracelets, pens, pencils, balloons, flags, traveler sets (with drawing), water bottles, etc.; – printing: notebooks, notebooks, series of stickers, business cards, pocket calendars, wall calendar, posters, folders, folders, gift certificates, flyers, booklets, letterhead, cube-blocks.	120000-150000 rubles

11	Development of an advertising campaign promoting a new brand	From October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Lead page in a new style;</li> <li>– development and placement of advertising on Google Adwords and Yandex Direct;</li> <li>– update design soc. networks, posting on them about launching a new brand;</li> <li>– accommodation in social. networks of paid and free announcements of new courses;</li> <li>– development of advertising leaflets and booklets;</li> <li>– organization of partner exchange programs for clients.</li> </ul>	5 000-10000 per month  5 000 per month
		From December 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– advertising on City-format near the BC;</li> <li>– distribution of leaflets near the BC;</li> <li>– advertising in elevators BC.</li> </ul>	60 000 per month
12	Holding PR events to create a favorable company image	From December 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– open day for everyone;</li> <li>– presentation of new programs;</li> <li>– contests with prizes;</li> <li>– drawing certificates for training.</li> </ul>	5 000
13	Opening of a spoken English club with a native speaker	February 2019	4 lessons per month on weekends (3 hours)	10000-15000
14	Opening a new direction: corporate training in spoken English	March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– work with offices of the Onegin Plaza business center;</li> <li>– Preparing VIP offers for large companies, writing business letters and telephone calls.</li> </ul>	–
15	Launch distance learning	August 2019	Drawing up an online training program, recruiting customers	3000-5000
16	The launch of a new course "Business English", its advertising support	May 2019	Development of the methodical program, teacher training, advertising, recruitment of groups	5000 per month
17	Consumer Monitoring	From December 2018	Conducting online surveys, developing customer feedback systems	–

Thus, the initial investment of the company should be about 500-600 thousand rubles.

#### 4. Marketing Strategy Implementation

To implement the marketing strategy and achieve the strategic marketing goal in 5 years, we need to develop positioning for a new promising segment for us: "Connoisseurs of a high-quality brand, a non-standard approach to education and a quick result" and a brand platform. To determine our current position and the

position of our competitors, we surveyed the target audience, inviting consumers to come up with 6-7 associative adjectives for the linguistic centers known to them that best describe the company. The centers most often named were Talisman, Yes, Consul and Alibra as representatives of the linguistic services market in the city of Bratislava, so we took them as the basis for building positioning. All the data obtained were analyzed and presented in the following figure (table 2):

**Table2.** Current service perception<sup>1</sup>

«Studema»	«Talisman»	«Alibra school»	«Yes»	«Consul»
<i>effective</i>	<i>high quality</i>	modern	comfortable	skilled
<i>high quality</i>	<i>effective learning</i>	unique	inexpensive	fascinating
for adults	stable	interactive	available	<i>effective</i>
unique	large	<i>high quality</i>	demanding	available
interesting	popular	<i>guaranteed result</i>	<i>high quality</i>	modern

<sup>1</sup> Compiled by the authors

experienced	with a large assortment	for all ages	for children and teenagers	for all ages
successful	successful	successful	<i>productive</i>	convenient
	for all ages	widely advertised	for all ages	diverse
	demand	experienced	leader	<i>quality</i>
	leader	diverse	famous	

On the basis of the associations obtained, we generalize the perception of the target audience of the educational center “Studema” and its competitors and denote the current positioning (Table 3).

**Table 3.** General consumer perception and positioning

Companies	General consumer perception	Positioning
«Studema»	Efficient unique service with great experience and quality for adults	High-quality training with guaranteed results using a unique method for adults
«Talisman»	Successful and stable brand leader for all ages with a wide range and high quality	High-quality foreign language training for people of all ages close to home
«Alibra»	A modern, unique and widely advertised brand, with guaranteed results for all ages.	Unique, modern learning for all ages with guaranteed results
«Yes»	Comfortable, affordable and in demand center-leader, at a low price for children and teenagers	Affordable, high-quality and comfortable education for children and teenagers
«Consul»	Qualified and modern center with a wide range of quality for all ages	Modern language training from qualified professionals, accessible to everyone

Based on the selected points of differentiation, we constructed several positioning maps according to the following parameters: speed of the result - the level of complexity of the methodology for understanding and mastering; level of performance - the uniqueness of the methodology; price - confidence in a good result; short course duration is a guarantee of results. Each of the

proposed positioning concepts was evaluated with the involvement of the target audience. 47 respondents took part in the survey. They conducted the assessment according to criteria from 1 to 3, where 1 is the minimum score and 3 is the maximum score. The results we recorded in table 4.

**Table 4.** Evaluation of positioning concepts

Positioning concept	The trust	Unambiguity	Long term	Uniqueness	Memorability	Highlights product features	Meets Target Audience Needs	Total score
1	1	3	3	2	3	2	2	16
2	3	3	2	3	1	2	2	16
3	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	11
4	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	9

Thus, the concept of positioning based on the creation of a new subcategory has the greatest consumer appeal. Concepts 1 and 2 can be the most effective positioning strategies for the Studema educational center in many respects. The first positioning concept: “the first linguistic center in which you speak English simply and naturally in record time!” Is unique, long-term and highly memorable, it emphasizes the properties of the service, meets the needs of the target audience and differs from its competitors. The only weak point of this concept is the low level of consumer confidence. The second positioning concept: “the first linguistic center in the city, which teaches you to speak English fluently as your native language!”, On the contrary, inspires trust among the target audience, has a higher level of uniqueness and is extremely unambiguous. However, even though the concept emphasizes the

properties of the service and meets the needs of Central Asia, it is completely unmemorable and is lost among other competitive offers. To level the weaknesses in positioning and multiplying the strengths, in our opinion, the most effective solution would be to combine the two positioning concepts into one. Thus, we will get the final concept of the company's positioning: “The only linguistic center in the city, where everyone can learn to think and speak English, as in the second native language in a short time: just naturally, without textbooks and cramming!”[23] And it will be based on three points of differentiation: the result for everyone, the simplicity and uniqueness of the method, speed. Let us turn to the development of external attributes of our brand: new naming, slogan and elements of corporate identity. To develop the name of our linguistic center, we conducted an

appropriate analysis of the names of competitors and obtained the following results (Table 5):

**Table 5.** Naming language centers

Objective	Indicative	English studio, English Studios, International Communication Club, Oxford Language Center, English Club, Alliance Francaise, Native Speakers Team, Anna Lebedeva Studio
	Functional	Free talk
Associative	Rational	Consul, InterStudy, Global Ambassador, Lexxis, Britani, Italeka, Japan
	Emotional	Talisman, Yes, Ascolta school, Alibraschool, Anglomania, Columbus, Meridian, Academician Bob, Brighton, S'COOL BUS, Aptech English, Smile, Ryusei, Forwards

Most language school names refer to either index or emotional types of names, since it is these types that allow consumers to learn not only about the company's business, but also its character (as in the emotional type). Based on the brand platform we developed, the character and personality of our brand created for English language courses, we considered the following names as options: Lingua time, A-spring, Lingvist, Simple Skill, Lingua-formula, Language time, ESL, Quick sense, FOReign Jump, "Immersion."

As a result of a small survey of the target audience, we stopped at the name "Foreign Jump" and recognized it as the most appropriate. This name is emotional and is associated with something bold, resolute and purposeful. It is translated into Russian as "foreign leap" or "leap into a foreign language", which reveals the brand's personality: not a slow treading on the spot, but an instant, literally from the first lesson, immersion in the language. It is as if Neim confirms that you will receive guaranteed progress and results in a short time. In addition, this name is not similar to any competitor name, which most often uses the word "English" as a descriptive word, and the studio, club, school, club, studio, team, center are used as the index word. "Foreign Jump" sounds confidently and aggressively, very succinctly and pleasantly in sound. The initial letters of the first word are suggested to be highlighted

in capital letters, which form the English preposition "for", then the name will also mean "to jump" - that is, conversational English courses to jump as a breakthrough in your skills and abilities. Our brand has completely received such naming: "Foreign Jump", spoken English courses on the ESL method. We deliberately did not create a brand for the entire center, highlighting only one of its components that are viable at the moment. In addition, the word "courses" is associated with the acquisition of knowledge and skills in a faster way than, for example, a school. In the naming, we added the name of the method by which we are trained to show the uniqueness in the market and the differences from competitors.

The name of our courses "Foreign Jump" was taken as the basis for the logo and they added a recognizable attribute of the English language: Big Ben and the slogan: "Speaking English is easier than it seems!" are key elements of the core identity of the brand [24]. Any planning ends with an assessment of the effectiveness of the activities carried out. We interviewed 30 respondents and suggested that they rank the criteria that allow them to form the company's image, and then assess the importance of each of them on a 10-point scale. As a result, we received a weighted average rating for each criterion (Table 6):

**Table 6.** Evaluation of the image of the educational center "Studema"<sup>2</sup>

Criteria	Specific gravity	average rating		Weighted average	
		<i>actual</i>	<i>forecast</i>	<i>actual</i>	<i>forecast</i>
Center's net reputation	0,13	7,7	8,8	1,0	1,1
Professionalism of teachers	0,16	8,9	8,9	1,4	1,4

<sup>2</sup> Compiled by the authors

Memorable corporate identity	0,08	3,2	8,6	0,3	0,7
Service culture	0,09	8,6	8,9	0,8	0,8
A wide range of programs	0,08	2,1	5,7	0,2	0,45
Flexibility at work	0,07	8,7	8,7	0,6	0,6
Learning efficiency	0,13	9	9,2	1,2	1,2
Value for money	0,16	8,8	8,8	1,4	1,4
Cabinet Equipments	0,05	6,4	8,9	0,3	0,4
Terms of payment	0,05	8,7	9,4	0,4	0,5
Total:	1	72,1	85,9	7,6	8,55

Thus, the perception of the company's image after marketing activities, in our opinion, will increase from 76% to 85.5%.

## 5. Conclusion

As part of the marketing strategy, a brand platform was developed for the company. Based on the selected target segment, positioning was carried out based on three points of differentiation: the result for everyone, the simplicity and uniqueness of the methodology and speed. The final positioning concept was formulated as follows: "The only linguistic center in the city where everyone can learn to think and speak English, as in the second native language in a short time: simply, naturally, without textbooks and cramming!"

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