

New strategies at the sales point: design in franchises

In the last ten years, the Spanish have seen growing up around them offers for products and services which arrived with a different style, with a different communicational language, with a non-conventional presentation. These last few years, their surroundings have become well-stocked with establishments managed by some kind of franchise.

Nowadays there is nothing strange in deciding to go shopping for fashion and accessories at shops such as Adolfo Domínguez, Camper, Rodier or El Caballo; in making a quick stop at lunchtime at places such as Burger King, Pans & Company with a Coca Cola, or ordering a take-away at Telepizza; hiring a car at establishments such as Hertz or Avis, or booking at a hotel in the Hilton or Novotel chains.

All these companies, and many more, have become central to our shopping habits; they make up a core of establishments around which we create new commercial centres in large cities and all of them have something in common: their management model is what is known as a franchise system.

It would be silly to doubt the contributions the franchiser offers the franchise holder to make business management easier, but what defines the success of a franchise is its communication model, a style so much «its own» that it manages to positively distinguish it from the competition.

Any good franchise is the result of joining forces. The businessman, the franchiser who owns the brand and the visual signs which identify it, and the «know-how», transfers it to the franchise holder, who will get from the former the training necessary to successfully develop his business and the right to use the brand name and the different franchise communication elements, in exchange for a one-time fixed amount (the down payment) and a variable annual amount (perhaps a fixed part and a variable one), depending on sales, which will be for paying communication expenses such as publicity, handbills, etc. and the different services the franchiser will supply for the duration of the contract.

Every franchise contract between franchiser and franchise holder is signed for an area of the city or country, contained in the contract, the franchise radius, from which the model contract takes its name.

To charge a down payment and a percentage on sales from the possible franchise holder, the business proposed must be an original proposal, easily reproduced in the different areas where development is foreseen; it must also be shown to be profitable and, finally, that there is a current and future demand for the product or services offered and that it is not only a passing fashion.

Although we can find franchise chains in several sectors of activity (industry, distribution and services), I will reflect on the latter two as these are the most wide-spread on the market and thus those which give us greater elements of communication, which is the aim of this study.

In the design of a franchise, we must distinguish what I call *four stages, four feelings*:

1. The idea: public impact.
2. Development: captivating by design and content.
3. Introduction: seducing the franchise holder.
4. Communication: customer loyalty.

I intend to develop the content of each concept according to the design applied to communication in each case.

The idea: public impact

A franchise will only be successful if its proposal is really original.

Impact is achieved when a businessman finds a formula for attending to our unsatisfied needs, for solving our problems: one-hour dry-cleaning, fast food, quick printing, etc. have all become successful franchises.

Franchises which succeed satisfy new needs because they immediately attract market interest (investors and customers). Because of this, in the next few years, we must think of the contributions design will have to make towards developing new models, which I will classify as follows:

Development of new/old sectors of activity

Specifically, *agriculture, fishing and livestock*.

In this sector, there is a growing unsatisfied demand for products such as:

- Biodynamic agriculture.
- Biological products.
- Agricultural products in extra quality and size.
- Stores specialising in one product with myriad presentations.
- Prepared food.

In this country, and in different market sectors, there is a growing demand for agricultural products obtained from biodynamic and biological agriculture, with no chemical products applied during the development process. These products are currently difficult to find outside large cities, and even their distribution is scarce as it requires some adapting of shop design and their presentation and communication: we will speak of this in the introduction stage.

International fruit and vegetable market requirements imply exporting the best products in the field, while the local market takes up inferior quality and size; only a few shops in large cities sell these products at expensive prices. Thus, shop design and product presentation are key elements for «seducing» the customer.

The structure of a family as a couple who both work outside the home has developed a market for prepared food, and is giving way to a second market, that of stores specialising in one product with myriad presentations: the first of these were the Comtesse du Barry shops, specialising in diverse duck and goose meals. After this came the cod shops, ice-cream shops, sweets shops, etc.

New formats for new / old publics

- Yuppies.
- Young couples.
- Children with free time.
- The disabled.
- Retired people.
- The «golden age».

Altogether, they make up the most important groups of new consumers.

The first are the group of young people dubbed *yuppies*, young people with a good cultural base, professional training, below thirty, with high buying power. They want services such as:

- Travel to different places, adventure trips.
- Fashion and accessories (sport, city, leisure).
- Fitness and appearance (gyms and beauty establishments).
- Sophisticated leisure-time activities.
- Specialised training.
- Hobbies (manual activities and crafts).
- Games for grown-ups. Specialised computer programmes.
- Specialised cultural offers: books, records, CDs.

A second group is *young couples*. In most of them, both work outside the home. Except for businessmen and liberal professionals, their buying capacity is somewhat limited (mortgage, car payments), they seldom go out, and they want home services: food, leisure, housekeeping, etc.

They are good customers of prepared food shops and hobby shops.

A third group is *children with free time* who have growing needs for activities which will channel or direct their energy while their parents are at work. Franchises are springing up related to different activities: sports, arts, educational play, all directed towards entertaining children out of school.

Smaller houses and flats now makes parents have children's parties outside the home, with professional entertainers. Companies offering these services will attend a growing demand which has only been partly covered by some burger chains and *Funparks*.

A fourth group is made up of *the disabled* and other people with specific needs, such as:

- Development of adapted self-employment businesses.
- Shops specialising in adapted products.
- Shops with products and services for the blind.
- Shops with products for the left-handed.

A fifth group which we have called *the retired*, characteristically have a lot of *free time and high earnings*.

This group demands:

- Activities adapted to leisure: adapted travel and sport.
- Group activities: clubs for specific activities.
- Stimulating mental activities: leisure clubs, stimulation workshops, games, etc.
- Housework: help at home.
- Arts and crafts.
- Services at home: food (professionally prepared diets, personally adapted).
- Leisure and consumption products.
- Help at home: video-assistance.

And the last group is what is fondly called *the golden age*, who will require the following:

- Specialised help at home.
- Adapted residences.

Development: captivating by design and content

We now know that a good idea is not enough to make a success of a franchise; we must develop a good image of it to make it attractive to the franchise holder and the customer, and a plan for business management which will make the franchise holder's investment profitable.

To achieve all this, what is known as the franchise «bible» is developed. This is a set of communication and management elements which allow the franchise holder to develop his business successfully. We could classify this set of elements in the following way:

- Visual constants and manual of graphic identity rules.
- Descriptive project of the premises.
- Business management computer programme.
- Marketing plan and franchise expansion plan.

We will refer in the following lines to the role played by design in defining the visual constants and the applications manual and, most especially, in the descriptive project for the premises.

Designing the visual constants of a franchise—logotype, symbol, corporate colours, and typography—cannot be, as some claim, just the result of a bright idea from some creative mind in publicity aided by a good graphic design programme; it is the conclusion of a series of previous works which I will briefly describe.

The visual constants aim to invade the collective subconscious of the sector with a series of images which, at a minimum cost, allow our business to be remembered spontaneously on the market and customers to distinguish us from the competition. Because of this, it is important to begin by defining clearly who we are and where we are going; specifically, where we want to be on the market and what our culture is going to be, and for this there is nothing better than a market study to know what our «niche» is, that which will allow investment profits for the franchiser and the franchise holder.

Let us begin by sounding out the opinion of the prescribers: product and service suppliers close to our model, and then the customers, both ours and the competition's.

As a result of these studies, we will know what kind of premises manufacturers and tradesmen, and possible clients, expect: we will have a solid base from which to develop the visual constants and the descriptive project of the premises. We will know, quite specifically, *our position*.

What will we call our franchise?

Now we can sit down with our franchiser and look for a name for the franchise which will clearly express the activity we carry out: a short name, ideally a couple of syllables, with phonetic stress on the last syllable and, once we have accepted the name, we have to register it. Sometimes the name of the franchise does not correspond to that of the franchise society and it is essential to take it to the patent office to get the corresponding certificate. Now, from this moment on, the creative minds can begin to work.

The symbol must have some connection, albeit remote, to the activity we carry out; we must not forget that it will be the element that allows customers to remember us spontaneously. It must be clear and completely identified with the aim of our business.

The visual constants must be easy to reproduce, the symbol must not blur when it is reduced, must be easily read at a distance because, as we will see later on, the façade lights, as well as the monopost, will be an inducement for our franchise. In either case, we cannot wait for the customer to be on top of us before he recognises us.

When we choose corporate colours, we must think about the bases they will be used upon: many pantones

lose colour when they are printed on paper because it absorbs the ink, and we lose the expected effect. We must not forget that corporate colours are printed on glass, furnishings, pottery, etc. We must study whether the corporate colours correspond to the «ral» range for pottery, because sometimes the pantones and the rals do not correspond, and when we print we find that there are serious difficulties in coordinating material for one and the same corporate colour.

Although a manual of graphic identity rules should not be something which suffocates the franchiser, we must foresee the different applications of the corporate colour and so we must make an exhaustive identification of elements to be used in the different environments of our activity.

From the market study we carried out with different groups (manufacturers, suppliers, customers, etc.) we should have as a consequence the model of premises for our activity to be carried out; we should have a profile of the variables which will be very useful when we carry out *the descriptive project of the premises*, to which I have referred before.

To begin with, we should know the optimum surface of the premises and what proportions should be given to the several areas: the minimum length of the façade and, in the case of distribution franchises, the quantity of products per family and reference which must be present on the premises and what their turnover ought to be, as this will make us give more or less storage space to the project.

It is also important to know what the product or service price level ought to be, and the consumer segment we are aiming at, as it would be senseless to develop a franchise for extremely expensive perfume in premises with mass-production furniture, or to sell cheap teenage throw-away fashion in a shop with lacquered furniture and mirrors, marble floors, and music by Albinoni. Along the same lines, it is convenient to know in what areas of the city the franchise will be set up, if the franchise radius will be small or large, and the minimum population which an area must have to set up a franchised establishment.

Let us suppose we have taken in all this information and we are ready to attack the descriptive project of the premises. We will distinguish five elements:

- The environment.
- The façade.
- The shop window.

- The personnel.
- The establishment: the sales area and the auxiliary sections.

The environment

An important element about which we can usually do little or nothing.

In shopping centres, where we frequently find franchises, the environment, decoration, and setting are defined by the shopping centre's policies and tends to control quite strictly any action from merchants.

Sometimes, the management of the centre will allow us to put out tables and even parasols in the outside areas, especially when we are talking about a fast-food establishment. This is a good opportunity to decorate the surroundings with our corporate colours on parterres, parasols, and even on the furniture.

In the case of distribution franchises we can often find, in these circumstances, merchandising elements which act as an inducement to the establishment, such as giving out leaflets or calling attention to special offers on the premises.

We can also take advantage of some decorative elements of outside decoration such as parterres to give a «subtle» reminding touch to the franchise.

Restrictions tend to be different for establishments on the streets: there are increasingly more protected spaces in cities, which make us work with merchandising elements on the outside, which can be picked up after closing the establishment.

Sometimes what is known as urban furnishings near the establishment can be a fantastic place to place franchise publicity and signal it is near.

We must take note that some exterior elements can spoil our business image:

- The state of the pavement.
- Sidewalks and kerbs.
- Streetlamps and lights.
- Gardens, hedges, etc.

All of which are Town Hall's responsibility, but which are basic for the image of our shop. We must, therefore, contribute to their upkeep and be observant when the Town Hall neglects them.

The general upkeep of the environment reinforces the customer's first impression.

The façade

This is the first communication element between customer and brand.

In the façade we can distinguish:

The walls

In my opinion, the façade should have the minimum amount possible of wall, except for those that support the building. The rest should be shop window. The shop should «come out» into the street by means of the outside windows. On some occasions, this can make lineal creation difficult, especially in small establishments, but we will look at this problem later.

Paint and wall-coverings

It covers that part of the façade not taken up by windows. When the corporate colour or some complementary colours allow, we should choose it, but carefully: there are some colours that, when painted onto a large surface, give us an effect quite different from what we intended. Let us say that instead of attracting customers it frightens them off. If this is so, we should play with neutral colours, applying corporate colours in small touches, according to rules set out in the manual.

We should not forget that some citizens have a tendency to emulate Dalí and Miró on the walls of our establishments. For this reason, we should always use coverings that can be easily cleaned.

Outside lighting

This is our first chance to reproduce our logo and the symbols of our franchise, using corporate colours and the typography we have chosen.

Good lighting should let our franchise be identified by passers-by at least twenty metres before arriving, and by people driving by at a speed of no more than 20 Km/h.

If we cannot see the lighting till we are upon it, it doesn't work.

It should be just as effective day and night, with the lights on or off.

If possible, we should take into account that nearness signs and monoposts play an important part in identifying our franchise.

For the former, urban furnishings (which we men-

tioned before) are a good support, especially now that publicity spots are disappearing from our cities.

Monoposts are very expensive and cannot be afforded by many franchises, especially distribution franchises, and allow our establishment to be identified from a considerable distance. This requires an extremely clear corporate image.

Outside windows

Although they are part of the shop window, we will look at them separately and analyse the role they play in the design of the establishment.

Perception of the establishment from the street is through the outside shop windows.

These windows need not be flat or perpendicular to the ground; on the contrary, they should take on forms which attract attention. In the California establishments in Madrid, the façade is trapezoid and the windows are held by iron hoops in a position oblique to the street, which gives them a unique aspect.

At any rate, outside windows don't have to be colourless and boring; we can personalise them with corporate colours, repeating the logo or franchise symbol at an adequate distance from the ceiling or the floor, or both.

Whenever the budget allows, we ought to install plated windows, as it will give us greater security and will let us avoid metallic curtains that are both unaesthetic and impede the view of the windows and, therefore, of the shop. It is also worth it to contract an alarm connected to a security central.

Entrance and exit doors

In distribution franchises, and whenever dimensions and shape of the premises allow, we ought to install an entrance door and a separate exit door which will allow us to fix an obligatory course through the shop and will make the customer go through the whole store instead of just going to buy what he came for and leaving without buying anything else.

We also can control customers better if we place the cashiers at the exit door.

In service franchises, these details are irrelevant.

Door-handles

Although it is an insignificant detail in the overall franchise design, we ought not to forget these little details which give an establishment personality. The franchise symbol could serve perfectly well to this end.

The frames

Both door-frames and outside window-frames must be given the importance they deserve and, above all, we must not forget that they must be perfectly integrated in their surroundings.

Cleanliness

Although it seems obvious, we can only take advantage of all our previous efforts if we take care of their upkeep and good form, especially their cleanliness.

The shop window

Although, as I said before, the establishment ought to go out into the street through the outside windows, we can exhibit novelties, special offers, LSP's, etc. in these windows without, however, impeding the view of the inside of the establishment.

In the outside window we should distinguish different elements:

Inside windows. Of course, these must always be perfectly clean, especially on days when the shop window is «done up».

The walls. The walls are an inseparable part of the shop window; we must not forget them when decorating the establishment. Independent of the colours chosen for the rest, the walls of the shop window should be painted in neutral colours which will harmonise with any decoration we may choose, now or in the future.

The floor of the shop window should respond to the needs of the kind of business; if it is a fashion and accessories business, possibly carpeting would be the most adequate, as we can stick in pins and thumb-tacks which will be very useful when we are exhibiting

our product and, in this case, the walls could be hung with the same material.

The furnishings for the shop window need not be fixed. We can play with decoration, supports, and furnishings adapted for each case.

Choosing and placing our product

This will take place according to the establishment's marketing plan; sometimes we will stress novelties, others advertise or promote special sales, join a local festivity, announce a special event, or simply exhibit a product or service which does not have a great public demand in an attractive way.

It does not respond, therefore, to something random; generally, it responds to one or several of the following motives:

- Showing new products or services offered.
- Introducing a new line of products or services.
- Calling attention to a specific line of products or services.

Product exhibition should be outside the boxes in which the manufacturer has sent them, unless these give an added value to the product.

Light and colour

When designing the establishment, we must foresee good general lighting and, most especially, in the shop window. «Doing up the shop window» is a kind of «mise en scene». The star is the product, but it must be tucked up by the decoration, the costuming, and the lighting. Only thus will we attract the audience.

Each time we change the shop window, we must reorient the lights, stressing the central motive of the decoration so as not to distract attention towards what is complementary.

We must take special care with the colours we use when preparing a shop window. We should take into account existing theories on colour and apply them in product exposition, both in the shop window and in the shop interior.

As a general rule, Abraham Moles proposes:

- Black on white / white on black.
- Black on yellow / yellow on black.

- Red on white / white on red.
- Green on white / white on green.
- Blue on white / white on blue.
- Blue on yellow / yellow on blue.
- Red on yellow.
- Green on red.

Of course, red on white, yellow, or greenish blue will create shop windows with a strong visual impact.

Prices

We must not forget that by law we must place selling prices on articles in shop windows, and although in some cities authorities are stricter than others in this aspect, we must consider the support and printing of prices in the ensemble of elements to design for our franchise.

Posters

Unless we have someone very handy on the premises, we should not do printing by hand.

We can obtain very dignified emergency posters with very simple computer programmes.

In other cases, the franchiser will provide the franchise holder with all signs, posters, photographs, and other merchandising elements needed to do the shop window.

When shop windows are kept the same for a long time, the franchiser can send his decorating team to the franchise point; in other cases photographs and precise instructions are sent so that a local window dresser or the franchise holder can develop the window design proposed.

LSP elements

They are used to announce a new product or service, stress some of their characteristics, etc. They can be provided by the franchiser or the manufacturer or, exceptionally, the wholesaler.

I would like to stress here the increasing role manufacturers are playing when creating communication elements intended for the sales point.

The manufacturer has to understand that efforts to create a better brand image can vanish into thin air if it is not well taken care of at the sales point. This is where the customer encounters the brand and where

he decides between the manufacturer's brand or the competition's.

There are quite a few distribution franchises where only a part of products offered are exclusively the franchiser's, while the rest are acquired prestige brands which will later collaborate with the franchiser, from the establishment, to promote, before the customers, new products and their characteristics and collaborate in promotions and salespeople's training.

We must not forget that the shop window is our best salesperson: it works twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, doesn't take holidays, and has no salary or social demands. In return, it only demands that we keep it clean, well-lighted, and give it a little attention every once in a while.

Personnel

This is an extremely important communication element, both in verbal communication and in body language.

Except in very elite establishments, it is useful to define a uniform for establishment personnel whose design will be set by the rules manual which we have previously referred to.

The physical appearance of the people who work in the establishment creates a general opinion about the business in our customers' subconscious, and sometimes also in their conscious.

Dealings, courtesy, attention, knowledge of the product or service, etc., make up an image for the customer of our personnel and the franchise establishment.

The establishment

The sales area

In it, we will distinguish the different aspects which make up our design objectives.

The walls

In distribution franchises, these will mainly be covered by establishment furnishings. In service franchises, on the other hand, they will be an important deco-

ration element in which we must play, one way or another, with corporate colours or with colours within their range.

The floor

In most cases, there are rules for floor characteristics; if this is not so, the salespeople's and customers' comfort must be a priority over any other decoration concept, although we must not forget that the flooring is part of the establishment and must be related to the ensemble of decorative elements.

The ceiling

In the case of fast-food franchises, the ceiling material must be easy to clean, preferably eliminating plaster and other porous elements which attract smoke and odours. In service establishments plastering can hide pipes and lighting which can be unaesthetic, and plastering can also allow certain doses of creativity and fantasy, especially in decoration, and which in some cases we can take advantage of.

The furnishings

These can be specially designed for us and, in this case, their price is always excessive. If the franchiser assumes the cost for pilot establishments, those which are owned by the franchiser, these furnishings will be a reference when we later go to catalogues of manufactured furniture, intending to personalise them by the use of corporate colours and we will settle for designing a piece of furniture which will be emblematic for the shop, such as the information desk, a test sofa, a chair, etc. Otherwise, the investment which the franchiser would have to make in furnishings for the establishment would make it unprofitable.

When we speak of an establishment's furnishings, in distribution franchises we are talking about cupboards and wardrobes, cabinets for exhibition or central tables, wall exhibitors, etc. I will not analyse here each of these elements of a business, as I believe there is enough bibliography on the market which explains lineality, turnover, or level values, but I would like to stress the role played by some elements of furniture in these establishments.

The central expositor table

They are placed at the entrance of the premises and are the first furniture element customers see when entering the establishment. In large food surfaces, manufacturers pay to exhibit their products here: the importance of this location is beyond question.

This location allows us to stress and promote novelties.

Wall expositors

They stress characteristics of products shown on the side.

Brand lighting

As I mentioned above, collaboration between manufacturers and franchisers will become increasingly closer. They will collaborate in communication campaigns, personnel training and education, in an active presence of the manufacturer in the franchise establishment, their personnel and brands, lighting, LSP's, etc.

The shop must be an extension of the shop window and in this sense the walls should speak to us. The establishment should be alive, and from all sides of the premises we should receive messages which induce us to buy; because of novelty, price, quality, etc. For this, we will use different information elements. I will not enter into their contents, but we should stress at least the following:

- Posters.
- LSP.
- Catalogues.
- Wastepaper baskets.
- Ashtrays.

The auxiliary sections

They must be as much an object of our attention as the sales area or the shop window.

We will distinguish the following areas:

The waiting room

In some service franchises where the customer has to wait, there is an evolving concept of the waiting-room. Here the customer can find useful information

about the franchise philosophy, the network, etc. There is information that is useful to the customer, as well as attentions such as hot and cold drinks, snacks, etc.

The toilets

In most franchise establishments, customers rarely use the toilets, but they must not be neglected, as they are an extension of the shop, its atmosphere, and its details, and will, in any case, improve or worsen the customer's image of our business. Cleanliness, soap, paper, hand-drying, and the general state of upkeep are important elements to take into account in this case.

Sometimes, the customer will have to go through the area where employees have lockers and/or showers; in this case, we must insist on what we said before about the toilets.

In any case, we should know that once we have designed the description project for the premises which we have been discussing, this must be installed first in pilot establishments and then in franchised establishments. Of course, we must never let our guard down and, therefore, we propose that in every visit the franchiser pays to franchised establishments, the basic points we have referred to be checked. For this, we offer a questionnaire/test such as the following:

<i>Visit to store:</i>						<i>Date:</i>
	<i>Score</i>					<i>Observations</i>
<i>Environment:</i>						
Gardens	1	2	3	4	5	
Sidewalk	1	2	3	4	5	
Kerbs	1	2	3	4	5	
Streetlights	1	2	3	4	5	
Urban furnishings	1	2	3	4	5	
General upkeep	1	2	3	4	5	

And, following the same structure, the following points:

Façade: Walls. Lighting. Outer windows. Doors. Doorhandles. Frames. Outer lighting. Paint. Cleanliness. General upkeep.

Shop window: Inside windows. Walls. Floor. Furniture. Support elements. Shop window lights. Product placement. Prices. Posters. LSP elements. Upkeep. Cleanliness. General appearance.

Personnel: Uniform. Shoes. Cleanliness. Courtesy. Service. Information.

Establishment: Walls. Floor. Ceiling. Furniture (Side; End; Central table; Heads). Wall exhibitors. Brand lighting.

Shop: Front. Exhibition. Merchandise placement. Prices. Customer info. Promotions. Information desk. Computer & communic. Information supports (Posters; LSP; Catalogues). Wastebaskets. Ashtrays. Lighting. Upkeep. Cleanliness. Order. General atmosphere.

Auxiliary sections: Waiting room (Customer info.; Att: coffee, drinks; General atmosphere). Toilets (Cleanliness; Odours; Soap, paper, drying; Upkeep; General atmosphere). Storage (Order; Cleanliness; Upkeep; General atmosphere). Dressing rooms/showers (Order; Cleanliness; Upkeep; General atmosphere).

At the beginning of this paper, I spoke of four stages corresponding to four feelings in the evolution of a franchise model. The two which are left correspond to the steps which follow on the design of the model.

Third stage: seducing the franchise holder

This is a key moment in the evolution of the process, when we have designed all the elements which shape a franchise, when we have fulfilled «the bible»; we then go on to introduce pilot establishments, and we will be in a condition to develop a communication campaign for captng franchise holders. For this, we will design a leaflet to introduce the franchise, a simple leaflet which must, however, provoke curiosity in the candidate to get to know the model we offer: it must make him move.

A prestige leaflet is a selling leaflet, and its aim is to captivate the candidate and move him to buy a franchise.

Fourth stage. Communication: customer loyalty

The moment has arrived to receive our customers, to check whether all the mise en scene we have prepared for them is enough to attract them to our establishment and make each and every one of them a loyal customer for our franchise.