

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Identity and image audit in the UEB Sancti Spiritus basic electric organization

Auditoría de identidad e imagen en la UEB de la organización básica eléctrica Sancti Spiritus

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Abstract The research was conducted at the Basic Business Unit of the Sancti Spiritus Basic Electric Organization, within the context of an organizational change process linked to the strengthening of the socialist state enterprise in the updating of the Cuban economic model. This scenario included new regulations, such as the Social Communication Law, which reinforced the importance of communication, identity, and institutional image. The objective was to design an identity and image audit model for this unit. Qualitative methods were used, with a descriptive design and an interdisciplinary approach, taking into account cultural and individual factors in the construction of identity and image. The proposed model includes phases and steps distributed across four components: functional, cultural, commercial, and visual, involving managers and workers in a synergistic manner. The results showed favorable conditions in the entities of the Electric Union for the implementation of the model, which was characterized by being structured in phases, flexible, self-manageable, and aligned with other institutional processes, in accordance with the Regulation for the Implementation and Consolidation of the State Business Management and Direction System and the Social Communication Law.

Keywords identity and image, communicative processes, cuban companies.

Resumen La investigación se desarrolló en la Unidad Empresarial de Base de la Organización Básica Eléctrica Sancti Spiritus, en el contexto de un proceso de cambio organizacional vinculado al fortalecimiento de la empresa estatal socialista en la actualización del modelo económico cubano. Este escenario incluyó nuevas regulaciones como la Ley de Comunicación Social, que reforzaron la importancia de la comunicación, la identidad y la imagen institucional. El objetivo fue diseñar un modelo de auditoría de identidad e imagen para dicha unidad. Se utilizaron métodos cualitativos, con un diseño descriptivo y enfoque interdisciplinario, considerando factores culturales e individuales en la construcción de identidad e imagen. El modelo propuesto abarca fases y pasos distribuidos en cuatro componentes: funcional, cultural, comercial y visual, integrando de forma sinérgica a directivos y trabajadores. Los resultados demostraron condiciones favorables en las entidades de la Unión Eléctrica para implementar el modelo, el cual se caracterizó por ser estructurado por fases, flexible, autogestionable y alineado con otros procesos institucionales, en coherencia con el Reglamento para la implantación y consolidación del Sistema de Dirección y Gestión Empresarial Estatal y la Ley de Comunicación Social.

Palabras clave identidad e imagen, procesos comunicativos, empresas cubanas.

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Introduction

In the current global context, organizations are changing as a mechanism to improve their performance and competitiveness. Companies have to adopt new management models characterized by flexibility, openness, horizontal structures, the importance of establishing relationships with the environment, and innovation as a strategy to improve their competitiveness and positioning in globalized markets (Chango-Galarza, 2023; Lalaleo-Analuisa et al., 2023).

Currently, the substantial changes in the economic, political, social, and technological fields that have taken place in the international arena and their direct impact on the Cuban economy considerably transform the environment and the way of operating in organizations, with even more differentiated environmental conditions, there is a growing importance among Cuban managers and organizations to raise their quality standards, be competitive and remain in the market.

Like other modern management methods, identity and image management can be used in social systems and organizational forms that differ significantly from their original environment (Fonseca-Martínez & Brull-González, 2020).

Consequently, universal studies of identity and image become relevant (Limonta et al., 2020). The conceptualization of a logo or a brand is as basic as the analysis of organizational behavior, interpersonal relationships, and the examination of the entity's leadership, as these are aspects that dignify and decide an organization's future (Brull-González, 2006; Bone-Chevez, 2020).

This gives the organizational image a place of attention to positively influence the existing communication problems of its identity, culture, and social behavior, such as those in the business sector (Gonzalo, 2018; Ramos-Farroñán & Valle-Palomino, 2020; Andraus et al., 2020; Rodríguez-González, 2021).

Considerations such as these lead to a review of the public's role, appealing to the strategic improvement of internal and external communication so that institutions are motivated to define and maintain their image on the basis of a unique, national, and local identity, in line with their main mission, which would benefit their positioning among their external publics.

Article 25 of the Social Communication Law expresses the responsibility of professionals dedicated to organizational communication and the need to carry out image audits. Although Decree 281/2018 does not explicitly set out the concept of audit, it does establish that the Communication Management Manual must contribute to achieving an image that distinguishes the company and promoting the institution's identity in each of the information programs (Romeo-Rodríguez, 2020).

To reaffirm the identity, protect and update the company's

brand, integrated audits of the communication of the identity and the formation of the organizational image must be carried out, where the parts that make up the identity and the image are examined and structurally defined to make feasible the analysis of the perceptible elements, capable of contributing to the strategic functioning of the institution, about its current corporate purpose as a way of rescuing and forming values (Ramos-Farroñán & Valle-Palomino, 2020; Ueda-Valderrama, 2020).

In the electrical sector, entities do not always give due importance to achieving and maintaining an efficient corporate identity and image. Suppose we add to that the fact that within the service-providing institutions, there are few image and identity studies, in the specific case of the Basic Business Unit (UEB) of the Basic Electrical Organization (OBE) of Sancti Spíritus. In that case, it is projected as an institution in constant growth, perfectly capable of providing its services and responding to the development of the province, an entity whose work, achieved by the unity of its workers, has made it possible that, from academic activity, various disciplines and various approaches are studied.

For this reason, it is necessary to achieve a greater connection with the characteristics of the environment, with the particularities of the development of science and innovation, the rescue of the values that make up the national and local identity, and the current growth of the social responsibility of socialist state companies, are elements to highlight the need to seek practical solutions to the communication problems of these institutions, based on studies aimed at reaffirming their identity and organizational image.

Although the particular characteristics of each organization entirely determine the need to carry out an identity and image audit, it must be carried out periodically. The professional experience of the author of the research - an employee of the UBE OBE Sancti Spíritus (as it will be called from now on) - leads her to affirm that the communication management has been spontaneous, which influences the fragmentation and improvisation of communicative actions, poor definition of some elements that form the current identity as a whole, part of the founding history is unknown, little structuring of policies, strategies, and guidelines that centrally advocate for identity and image, which suggests the need to study further the characteristics that identify the entity, in its homogeneity and singularity and make them known, to this is added the importance of rescuing and preserving the central values of the entities of the sector in correspondence with its history and consequently, with the processes of management of identity and image in the Provincial Electric Company in general and in the UEB OBE Sancti Spíritus in particular.

The objective of this research is to design an identity and image audit model for the UEB OBE Sancti Spíritus, in ac-

cordance with its practices and situations, that can promote the principles of integration of organizational communication, the reaffirmation of its identity, and the positive growth of its image and thus contribute to an upward positive perception of the public.

According to Cuervo (2019), communication as an integrated system is today a fundamental variable of the complex and multifaceted organizational structure that supports companies' strategic projects. It is dedicated to the analysis, diagnosis, organization, and improvement of the complex variables that make up the communication processes in organizations in order to improve the interrelationship between its members and between them and the external public, which leads to better functioning of the company or institution and the strengthening of its identity (Trelles-Rodríguez, 2018; Trelles-Rodríguez et al., 2022).

The Social Communication Law approved in Cuba states that social communication in organizations enables the coordination and materialization of relationships between their internal and external audiences, allows the strengthening of the identity and organizational culture, as well as the consensus of members around their values, norms, strategic objectives, plans, and projects (ANPP, 2023).

This law establishes that communication processes in organizations respond to institutional, business, social, or other interests according to their mission or the economic or social activity they carry out. The highest officials are the directors of the organs, agencies, and entities of the State, mass and social organizations, and media organizations in their respective spheres of competence.

As part of their evolution, organizations have focused their attention on the intangible, and in this way, communication has changed its function by incorporating action and strategy. In this sense, and according to Costa (2019), the intangible values in every organization are identity, image, culture, communication, and corporate reputation.

The integration of identity into the image constitutes a dynamic, structured, and reinterpreted process, fundamentally through the values, beliefs, and standards of conduct of the organizational public. Its meanings are assumed from a process of learning and assessments that translate into behaviors and attitudes depending on the identity and culture of the public. In this way, as the influences of the media, the influence of internal public, and the influence of the environment are exerted, the identity traits of the organization come closer to the image, which indicates the degree of mutation of the perceptions of the public and the relationship of meanings that are formed (Aimetta, 2021; Brull-González, 2006). Currently, three concepts are integrated into the institutional communication system: identity, culture, and image, in a close dialectical relationship.

In social communication, image auditing can be described

as the diagnostic process through which an organization's internal and external communication systems and practices are examined and improved at all levels (de la Fuente Chico, 2019; Naula-Tenelema, 2020).

According to Villafañe-Gallego (2017), an image audit is a specific instrument for evaluating an entity's corporate image based on a focused review of the company's policies that have the greatest influence on said image. This research should be considered a priority for the institution because, based on the results obtained, new policies for communication management will be modified or drawn up.

In the current context, a comprehensive audit of the company's identity and image (Rodríguez-Rad, 2015) is essential. This audit is the basis for knowing what we are and how different audiences perceive us. In this way, clear objectives can be established and, according to these, towards which attributes we should aim and act (Bone-Chevez, 2020; Vire-Riascos, 2019).

Among the scientific background of the audit models, at the international level, the best-known and most applied proposals in Cuba are analyzed: Audit model oriented to the professional management of the corporate image in Spanish companies (Villafañe-Gallego, 2017); Image audit model oriented to the corporate strategy of the company, focused on communication (Costa, 2019) and the Image audit model oriented to the analysis of the logical flow of communication (Sanz de la Tajada, 2013), in addition to bachelor's, master's and doctoral theses at the national level, it is decided to take as a starting point for the present research, the methodological proposal of Brull-González (2006), taking into account that it has been designed for the context of a Cuban media outlet.

The model formulated is based on an organizational reality. Its objective is to examine and structurally define the parts that make up the identity and image of the UEB OBE Sancti Spiritus in order to make feasible the analysis of the perceptible elements capable of contributing to the strategic functioning of the institution. The audit assumes the characterization of the identity and, at a second level, the examination of the existing image about its current corporate purpose as ways to define, conserve, strengthen the identity, and promote the image from the perspective of the entity itself, so that the communication implicitly carries the competitive capacity of the institution as a whole.

Methodology

The research is developed from the qualitative methodological perspective, a non-experimental design and a descriptive type, from this perspective different methods of the theoretical, empirical level are applied, such as: analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction, historical-logical, techni-

ques and instruments were used for the collection of information, scientific observation, survey, interview, each with its specific samples, selected at intentional criteria by the purpose of the study. To carry out the interviews and surveys, the following typical subjects were determined: the director, commercial and operations specialists, and personnel directly linked to the attention of the population and the management of communication.

Data triangulation analyzes all these methods and techniques in an integral and complementary manner. This allowed for better results in characterizing the elements related to identity and image in the UEB OBE Sancti Spiritus.

Results and discussion

The results obtained from the analysis of the categories with the corresponding dimensions through the results of the instruments applied during the investigative process and the comprehensive analysis contribute to the proposal of the model for the audit of identity and image, as shown in Figure 1; the main objective of the analysis of documents and interviews as research instruments is to determine the specific information that the model must contain to adapt to the fundamental characteristics of the process within the UEB OBE Sancti Spiritus.

Communications to internal audiences are predominantly in digital format, which is why some employees do not receive all the information. Furthermore, the emphasis on using this electronic communication system restricts face-to-face communication and impacts the formation of ethical values.

On the other hand, the cultural component shows a high morality and personal influence, which shows that the entity works on the conceptualization of values, highlighting dedication, solidarity, professionalism, quality, sense of belonging, social responsibility, and humanism.

Within the commercial component, the entity keeps updated with digital technology. This possibility has allowed it to carry out a large number of tasks and raise the level of public satisfaction. This is evident in the interviews carried out with the external public, which significantly influences the organizational image of the entity, granting it reputation and prestige.

In analyzing the visual component, it is worth highlighting the use of various logos not patented or established in the Electric Union's Visual Identity Manual. Another corroborated aspect is that the entity does not have its manual or one adapted to its business context.

In terms of the image that the public has, it was found that the internal public is the main thermometer for making the entity known and fitting into the environment. The most

commonly used means for organizational communication with the public are, in order of priority: social networks, email, meetings, and staff.

The results in the cultural component of the image indicate that the job satisfaction that the center provides to the internal public is found in the working conditions and the salary the workers receive. In this same module of professional satisfaction, the following points are to improve to achieve a good image: working conditions, interpersonal relationships, and social and professional recognition.

The formation of an organization's public image is primarily influenced by its human capital, contribution to the territory's social development, history, traditions, and customs accumulated in its culture, and provision of services.

According to the criteria consulted in the commercial component, the image is based on the commercialization of electric energy and its commercial services. Electricity is a transcendental service in the current times of technology, and when it is missing for some predicted or unexpected reason, the public becomes indignant, and the entity's image is affected. The generation deficit and the lack of material resources to respond to the demands of the external public in recent times have also affected the organization.

The logo, symbol, and publications strongly influence the visual component of the organisational image. To support the organisation's image, the identifier and publications must be communicated more effectively.

The institution must seek congruence between what it does and what it says, between what it produces and provides, between the organization and its internal publics, between internal and external publics, between the organization and its external publics, and between the organization and society.

The model proposal is assumed as an alternative that establishes the direction from a broad and global perspective of the actions aimed at solving the problems detected in a particular segment of human activity, as shown in Figure 1.

The model's components are justified by the institution's organic activity, its dynamic culture, and the need to project it to its audiences. Each of its parts, the functional, the cultural, the commercial, and the visual, expresses interrelated subsystems, which the institution must assume as a structured whole to harmonize the three elements proposed - identity, communication, and image - with the organization's environment, focusing its objectives on the audit.

The audit is based on identity, reflecting its responsibility to society. The UEB OBE Sancti Spiritus will be evaluated first by determining its identity, defining the four parts dealt with in the model, and assessing its identity in a global context. The identity will then be examined qualitatively by the components of greater stability that come from its founda-

tion.

This assessment allows us to understand the entity's identifiers. These features characterize and distinguish it from its competitors and within that business system and from the public's perception of the UEB OBE Sancti Spiritus.

The components determined in the model are used to develop the elements of the image, which is considered a fundamental component for the institution's strategic management. It has a cumulative and lasting value in the public's minds. It has an intangible value that is imposed as an organizational need and transcends all the institution's communicative actions.

Part of this phenomenon is the existence of an integrated and fragmented image, taking into account the three levels of image reading (auditory, visual, and audiovisual) and the accessibility of the public to the knowledge generated in the organization, as expressed in the first chapter of this report.

The implementation of the proposed model—characterized by its flexibility—would contribute to giving a systemic and organic character to the communication processes of the UEB OBE Sancti Spiritus by that organization's missionary purposes and with the Social Communication Policy of the Cuban Government and State, approved in 2018, and the Communication Law approved in 2023.

The last phase involves analyzing and processing information using different techniques to interpret the current conceptualisation and objectification of identity and image. The

results of the applied research are prepared in a summary report. The public's perception of identity is assessed on an objective and subjective level. The components and elements that make up the essential communication processes of the entity are analyzed, and how they are interrelated.

The causes and effects of identity and image phenomena are investigated based on the criteria and the techniques used in the diagnosis. Functional characteristics are examined, and cultural and visual characteristics are related to communication.

Communication principles and normative precepts are required for an identity to be consistent with its image. These principles generate regulations that preserve the organization's mission and contribute to its management policy and operational objectives.

The examination of the image in correspondence with its identity does not aim to place one element above another but rather to bring the identified features closer to the image perceived by the public, both internal and external, as shown in Figure 2.

According to Brull (2006), defining identity in terms of its current social purpose and forming a positive or negative image is recommended to determine the congruence of identity and image and their proportional relationships. The institution must seek congruence between what it does and what it says, between what it produces and offers, between the organization and its internal public, between internal and

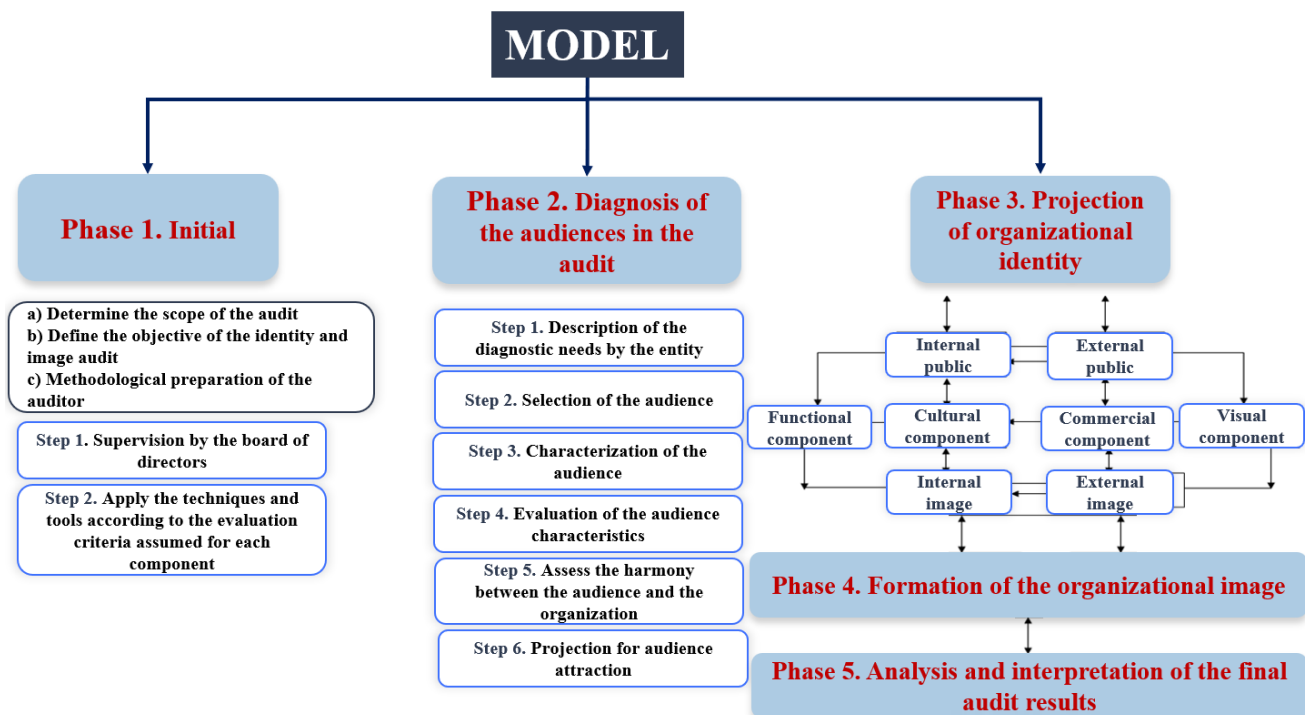


Figure 1. Model proposed, adapted from Brull (2006).

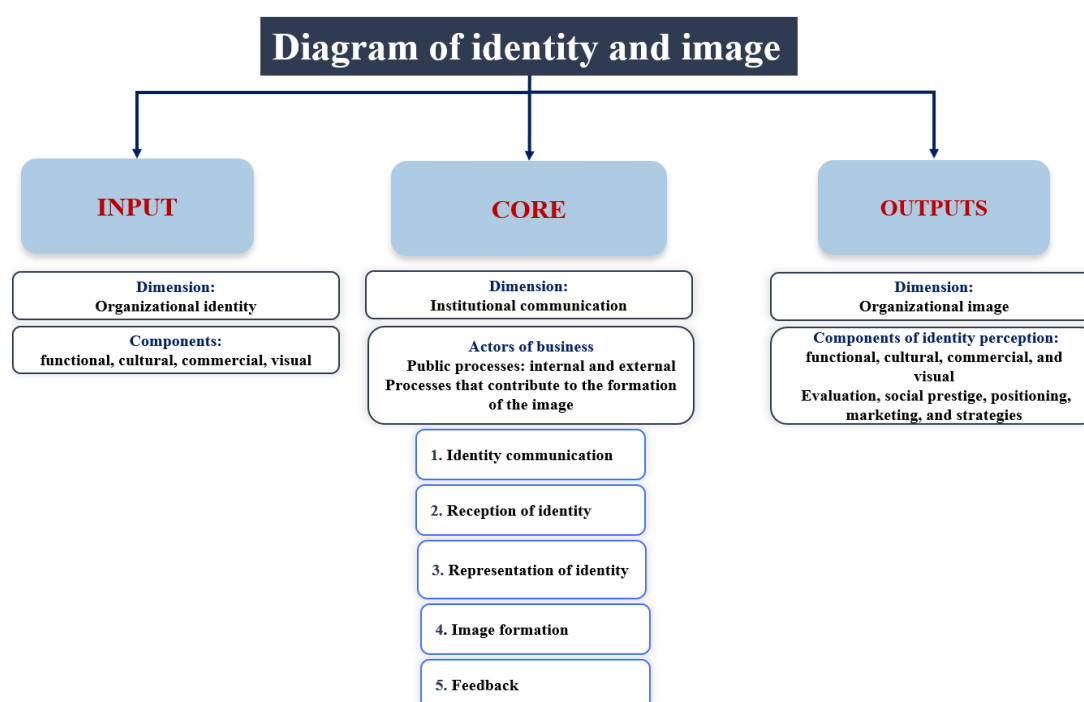


Figure 2. Relational diagram of identity and image, based on the proposal of Brull (2006).

external publics, between the organization and its external public, and between the organization and society.

Finally, Table 1 provides an analytical summary of the congruences between identity and image and their proportions.

-High congruence: When there is a harmonious relationship between the elements that define the identity and the organizational image.

-Low congruence: When the components and elements of the identity are not defined. When perceived in correspondence with a part of the defined identity. When little is perceived concerning the current identity.

-There is no congruence when the elements and components are not perceived according to their identity.

-Proportional relationship when what is perceived is balanced with the current identity.

The implementation of the proposed model, characterized by its flexibility, would contribute to giving a systemic and organic character to the UEB's communication processes,

following that organization's missionary purposes and with the Social Communication Policy of the Cuban Government and State, approved in 2018, and the Communication Law approved in 2023.

In this way, the model contributes to guiding the management of corporate communication, in which all its audiences take part, mainly the executives, who play a leading role in the core of the identity.

Conclusions

The bibliographic review reaffirmed the strategic relevance of managing intangible assets for organizational success, highlighting the need for planned and coordinated efforts to align corporate identity and image with institutional goals. In the case of the Base Business Unit of the Basic Electric Organization (UEB OBE) in Sancti Spiritus, the analysis revealed a lack of strategic planning in the management of identity and image. Although the importance of the topic is acknowledged, the absence of structured auditing processes

Table 1. Congruence matrix: Organizational identity and image

Key or relation Identity-Image	High congruence	Low congruence	There is no congruence	Relationship proportional
Component				
Functional				
Cultural				
Commercial				
Visual				

limits the ability to assess and improve these elements, leading to empirically developed actions. In response, and in accordance with the Regulation for the implementation and consolidation of the State Business Management and Direction System, it is essential to adopt an audit model that is phased, flexible, self-manageable, and synergistic with other institutional processes to ensure effective identity and image management.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Author contributions

Yailen Franco-Cordero, Dámaris Valero-Rivero and Elsa Ramos-Ramírez: Conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, supervision, validation, visualization, drafting the original manuscript and writing, review, and editing.

Data availability statement

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Statement on the use of AI

The authors acknowledge the use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies to improve the readability and clarity of the article.

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