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Strategic Brand Design: Conceptualization Through Semiotics' Levels

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ABSTRACT

This paper shows the brand concept process for IT sector of a University. The aim was to project the position of the brand from the semiotics' levels – pragmatic, semantic and syntactic. It was observed each level as phases of brand concept process. So, the pragmatic level joined the management aspects of the organization, as the market trends and business strategies; the semantic level involved the signification side of the target people, applying qualitative methods and tools for generating inspirations according to their expectations and needs. Finally, the objective and subjective data were changed into tangible information, in other words, in the gestalt form of the brand. It was observed that the method allowed more understanding about the project scope, through the structural axis of the concept, that integrating both the business as human needs, to establish brand decisions, both as aesthetics, as strategically.

Key-words: Design. Semiotics. Branding.

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Design Estratégico de Marcas: Conceituação Utilizando os Níveis Semióticos

RESUMO

Neste trabalho, apresenta-se o processo de conceituação de marca para o setor de tecnologia da informação em uma instituição de ensino superior (IES). O objetivo foi projetar o posicionamento e a identidade da marca a partir dos níveis semióticos – pragmático, semântico e sintático. Procurou-se visualizar cada nível como fases integrantes no processo de construção do conceito; assim, o nível pragmático reuniu os aspectos de gestão da organização, como tendências de mercado e estratégias de negócio; o nível semântico, por sua vez, compreendeu os processos de significação dos públicos-alvo envolvidos, aplicando-se para isso métodos qualitativos e ferramentas para gerar inspirações de acordo com as expectativas e necessidades do público-alvo; finalmente, no nível sintático, os dados objetivos (pragmáticos) e subjetivos (semânticos) foram transformados em informações tangíveis, isto é, na forma gestáltica da marca. Observou-se que o método possibilitou maior entendimento do escopo do projeto de *design*, por meio da elaboração de eixos estruturantes do conceito, que integraram as necessidades do negócio e os fatores humanos para estabelecer tanto as decisões estéticas, quanto as estratégicas para a marca.

Palavras-chave: *Design*. Semiótica. *Branding*.

1 INTRODUCTION

One of the most important features of the *design* is its mediator role between a product and the people with whom it interacts, producing meanings for their target audiences (Santaella, 2005). In this work, it was sought to see the *design* product in its holistic comprehensiveness, covering not just objects or images, but also experiences, in the case of this work, connected with the organizations. Thus, in this research the *design* is treated in its strategic bias, in the production of brand identities that corroborates the business targets and their human aspects. It was developed a *design* conceptualization method, which used organizational management tools, aligning the business objectives data with the human aspects, gathered through qualitative techniques in order to translate such substrates into tangible, representative and strategic information for the brand management. The study application venue was the Superintendence of Computer Sciences of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte.

2 BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REVISION

2.1 IT MARKET

Information technology (IT) is one of today's most comprehensive fields. In its definition, the information technology concept comprises far beyond the data processing, information systems, software engineering or the relationship *software* and *hardware*, as IT also involves the human, administrative and organizational aspects (Keen, 1993 quoted by Laurindo, Shimizu, Carvalho& Rabechini Jr., 2001). In other words, the IT sector manages the organization technology, in its aspects of intelligence and infrastructure. In this sense, the information technology can be used both, to reduce the information boundaries, enabling the data stream and fostering communication, as well as in the opposite way, in the data confidentiality and secrecy (Stallman, 2012). Foina (2001, quoted by Medeiros, Alloufa & Araújo, 2011, p. 195) states that IT "is the set of

methods and tools, mechanized or not, which aims to ensure the quality and punctuality of information within the corporate network". Observing the IT market and impact comprehensiveness, it is possible to verify that such a knowledge field communicates with public and private sectors, working in the social, political and economic environments.

For Pilati (2013):

> Information technology makes feasible complex business processes, while also contribute to better understand the competitive environment in which the company is inserted. Thus, IT is a "type" of technology meant to assist the information management necessary for administrators make right decisions.

According to the author's way, Drucker (2006) emphasize that knowledge is something fundamental for the decision making process of the manager. Therefore, the IT resources provide speed in receiving information, allowing for a constant data updating, as it can allow the manager a sharper view of the landscape and a better response time to problems and challenges. On the other hand, Taurion (2014) certifies that in the Information Technology Management (ITM) there is a large gap faced by most managers, dividing them between pragmatic decisions and processes maintenance and urgency to innovate for the market.

In this sense, Taurion says that IT must be understood as a strategic item of an organization, but is often seen as an operational arm. Thus, the company owners are unaware of the IT role and for this reason they understand it as something that is "very expensive, but necessary so that the business can work", demonstrating lack of knowledge about the strategic position and the delivering value that IT can provide. Within this context, the question is: how can IT establish a coherent organizational culture with these trends and then resound it to its partners and consumers?

2.2 *DESIGN* AS BUSINESS STRATEGY

In view of this challenge, the *design* is included as an activity which, similar to IT, it operates strategically for the business and can serve as a response to a changing technological scenario aiming at the innovation. For Heskett (1997, cited by Nojimoto, 2009, p. 30), the *design* can be

understood as "a process of creation, invention and definition separated from the production means". Thus, the *design* produces a previous thought that will pervade the process, which presupposes a strategic planning in relation to what will be developed. Landim (2010) points out that, currently, the *design* role is constantly improving and evolving. If at its emergence in the early twentieth century, the *design* was limited to the graphic and artifacts production, the macroeconomic changes in the world have required from it new demands, especially when observing the technology user. For Vianna Vianna, Adler, Lucena and Russo (2011), the *design* has assumed a strategic role in the organizations as the way of thinking, previously used only in the designers' creative process, has begun to be adopted by company managers. This *designer*'s way of thinking would be the abductive reasoning, which, unlike inductive (logical, rational, Cartesian), sees the phenomenon - brand, product or service - as from several strategic angles, covering not only the corporate environment but also the target audience behavior. According to Mozota (2006), the *design* in an organization should be inserted as a core management:

- ***design* as strategy:** controls the *design* return/investment, the business performance and the brand value;
- ***design* as process:** research methods in *design*; manages the *design* functional aspect;
- ***design* as style:** integrates the marketing and corporate communication sectors and manages the *design* pattern.

There are also, according to the author, four essential strategic aspects of the *design*, listed in Table 1, below.

***Design* as Differentiator**	*Design* is a competitive advantage resource on the market through the brand value, the customer loyalty, the added value and the suitability to the consumer.
***Design* as Integrator**	*Design* is a resource that enhances new product development processes; *design* is a process that favors a product line architecture, innovative models oriented to the user, etc.
***Design* as a Transformative Tool**	*Design* is a resource to create business opportunities; to enhance business competences to cope with the changes; or (in advanced cases of *design*) as expertise to better interpret the company and the market.
***Design* as Business**	*Design* as an enhancement tool in the sales and better profit margins more brand value, market share gains, better return / investment; *design* as a resource for society as a whole (inclusive *design*, sustainable, etc.)

Table 1: Four strategic aspects of the design
Source: Adapted from Mozota (2006)

2.3 *DESIGN* E BRANDS MANAGEMENT

According to Gomez, Mateus Cardoso and Rosa (2013), one of the *design* strategic activities in an organization is the brand management (*branding*). According to the authors, the *design* integrates the brands management with two other subjects: marketing and advertisement. The first is responsible for the business sales strategy; the second, for the message communication. It is thus inferred that the *design* needs to articulate the business strategic factors (marketing) and verbalize them in an appropriate way, through the channels (advertisement) where the communication with customers, employees and partners occurs. Martins (2006) describes the brand management as "the set of actions related to the brands management. Such actions are actions that, taken with knowledge and competency, lead brands beyond their economic nature becoming part of the culture, and influencing people's lives".

Thus, the brand project includes providing cultural meanings to people's experience with the organization. In this sense, there is a relationship between the intangible, in other words, the image of the brand for the people, and the tangible, that is how it presents itself, in other

words, its identity. According to Olins (1988, cited by Strechlau, 2003), the identity of a brand is based on the following aspects:

- products and services: what is made or sold;
- environment: where it is made or sold;
- communication: how it is displayed what is done or sold.

Continuing this reasoning, Strechlau (2003, p. 21), citing Kepferer (1992), points to a clear precedence of identity in relation to the brand image:

> the identity necessarily precedes the image, due to the fact that prior to portray the idea which is in the public's mind, it is necessary to establish what will be exactly portrayed. The consumer forms an image through the synthesis of the meaning and interpretation of all the signals issued by the brand: brand name, visual signs, product advertising (...).

Hence, it is advisable to lay down suitable guidelines to materialize the brand identity, that is, the way it is presented and received by its target audiences. Thus, besides the data objective measurement, it is required to obtain qualitative data of the collective imaginary. According to Kaplan and Duchon (1988 cited by Dias, 2000), the main characteristic of qualitative methods is the necessary data interpretation. Liebscher (1998 cited by Dias, 2000) states that qualitative methods are suitable when the phenomenon studied is complex, of social nature and does not tend to quantification. These methods should be used when the understanding of the socio-cultural context is necessary for the research. Thus, it is possible to obtain a variety of perceptions with smaller samples.

2.4 SEMIOTICS AND VISUAL LANGUAGE IN *DESIGN*

Semiotics (from the Greek *semios* [sign {symbol}]) is the study of signs or symbols. For Charles Sanders Peirce, one of its main founders, sign is all that represents something to someone in a particular context. Niemeyer (2003, p. 19) understands that the signs are, in essence, of representative character "to make itself present, to be in place of

something, of not being the something itself. The sign plays the role of mediator between something absent and an interpreter present". For example, a traffic light is a kind of sign, which indicates, through colors, the vehicle traffic permissions. Semiotics is then a study of the language established by the signs, since the dynamics between the signs produces a code, which can work as a message to be decoded by the receiver. In this sense, what would be the *design*'s relationship with the semiotics?

According to Gomes Filho (2009) the *design* is an activity that deals constantly with the psychology of form (Gestalt), which can produce meanings for people, providing different approaches of the visual information. According to Mager (2008, p. 4), "we can state that *design* today grounds its projects on the perception that it will cause on the people, in the interaction with user". The product of the *design*, be it an artifact or a graphic expression, has then meaning and communication assignments through visual expression. Emphasizing the relationship between semiotics and *design* Gomes Filho (2006) provides some guidelines for the *design* visual reading, called **semiotic dimensions** (Table 2).

Syntactic Dimension	The syntax is the set of relationships that exist between the units: words, signs and symbols that form the vocabulary. In *Design*, it is the conceived and produced object as it is presented and that can be described by the order of its constituent elements. It is the structure of the product seen in its whole.
Semantic Dimension	Semantics is the science of word meanings and studies the language, trying to establish relations which exist between the signified and the signifier. In *Design*, the semantic dimension is the dimension of the object itself and the thing signified. The signification of the product.
Pragmatic Dimension	In *Design* it is the logical dimension, they are the functional laws of the object utility, it involves its technical, constructive, instructive description, ergonomic, technological standards, and so on.

Table 2: The *design* semiotic dimensions
Source: Based on Gomes Filho (2006)

The author also emphasizes that these three dimensions are related to each other in a relationship of interdependence. As to the comprehensiveness of such semiotic reading, he states that "it can be employed for the analysis and interpretation of practically any type of product in the communication relationship between user and object" (Gomes Filho, 2006, p. 116). Hence, understanding the brands creation as a *design* and of communication product (Gomez et al, 2013; Santaella, 2005), such **dimensions can be considered in their conception process.**

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 STUDY OBJECT

This topic will deal with the process of strategic brand conceptualization for the IT sector at a higher education institution (HEI). The venue was the Superintendence of Computer Sciences of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (SINFO/UFRN). The SINFO is responsible for managing the university technology through networks infrastructure, servers, and also for the development of integrated systems for academic management. Such systems are used by students and by the faculty at the level of education, and by the units' servers (departments, pro-rectories, etc.). In addition, the SINFO works in partnership with around 30 teaching institutions and the federal government in the maintenance of these systems distributed in *open source*.

With the aim of expanding solutions aimed at its systems and services users, SINFO has invested in the past few years in several upgrades on the technological infrastructure solutions, besides improvements in the systems and applications, investments that reach approximately R$ 18 million in the Institution annual budget (UFRN, 2015). Considering the use of the systems by a community, which, summing up the servers and the students, totals a number of 40,667 users, the Superintendence of Information Technology plays a vital role at the

University running, exerting a direct impact in the computerization of educational processes and public management, all currently integrated into the systems developed and maintained by the organization.

In this sense, it has become timely to investigate the intersections between the user experience and the brand experience offered by SINFO, in order to understand the organization essential aspects, experienced by its internal groups (employees) and external (academic community and partner institutions). As from these surveys, essential guidelines have been established for a brand strategy which reflected the reality and the organizational vision.

3.2 METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

It was drafted a method of brand conceptualization based on the semiotic dimensions of the *design* proposed by Gomes Filho (2006). The layout is illustrated in Figure 1.

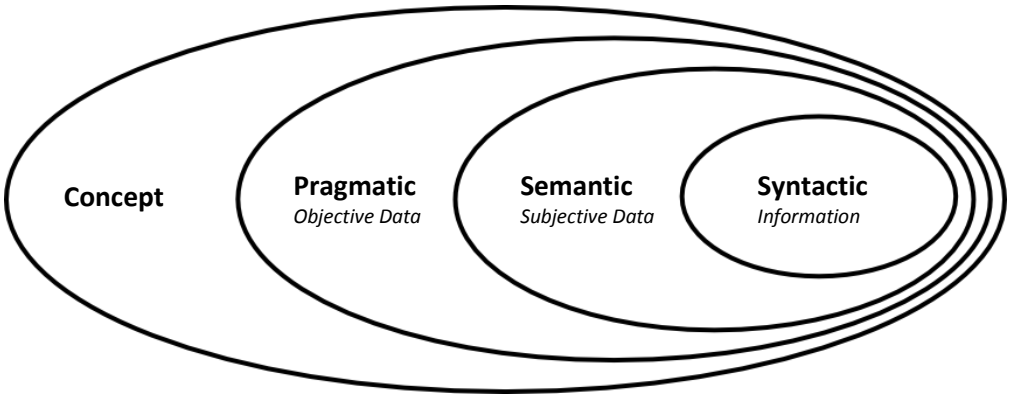

Figure 1: Conceptualization method using semiotic levels

This method adapts the semiotic dimensions understanding applying them in the *design* conceptualization process. Thus, the dimensions become phases or levels that operate interdependently in the concept. In the specific case of this study, the final concept is the brand, understood as resulting visual information of the pragmatic, semantic and syntactic levels:

- **the pragmatic level** gathers the organization objective data, through strategic diagnoses (for example, SWOT[1] analysis) and *desk*

[1] **SWOT** – *Strengths*, *Weaknesses*, *Opportunities* and *Threats*

research (market trends, etc.);

- **the semantic level** collects the subjective data of the target audience, seeking its perception regarding the business and its expectations and needs;
- **the syntactic level** is where the *design* works in the transformation of objective and subjective data translating them into information, visual forms, tangible to the end user.

3.3 PRAGMATIC LEVEL

This phase was consisted of market data and of organizational management – The concept objectives' data. Surveys were conducted on the IT market trends, as well as an organizational mapping using the SWOT analysis tool - which assesses the positive and negative points of the internal and external environments. In Table 3, below, it stands out, briefly some surveyed points.

Internal Environment	**Strengths**	**Opportunities**	**External Environment**
	- Recognition of the University internal and externally - Systems provide the University growth management - Diversity of systems and APPS (Applications [software]) - Technological and services competencies - Experienced employees	- Innovation tendency in the products and processes in the IT area - Deepen the relationship with users - Generate trust to the partner institutions - Deliver value to the University through efficient technologies - Extend the service to other government institutions which have not yet IT infrastructure	
	Weaknesses	**Threats**	
	- Deficiency in the IT activities planning at UFRN - Weak alignment between SINFO and supporting local units of UFRN - There is no pattern of consolidated *design* - Absence of brand and corporate culture management - Internal / external communication	- Changes in the University management affect the planning of the Superintendence - University demands come into imbalance with the cooperative institutions - Loss of experienced employees to the labor market - Cyber crimes committed at UFRN Network	

Table 3: SWOT Analysis

As of the internal and external diagnosis, strategies have been drawn for SINFO, based on the SWOT analysis and on the market trends

(included in the introductory topic of this work):

- demonstrate to the University the impact of its products and services in the institution's efficiency;
- know the real needs of its target audiences, offer suitable solutions that conquer the users' respect;
- to value the employees' competencies, defining what they are in order to optimize and / or to promote new processes;
- to value the human being, seeking greater transparency and motivation of employees and of partner institutions;
- differentiate the deliveries, through the processes improvement;
- implement an organizational culture of innovation;
- apply efforts on building up an excellent internal channel, and a transparent external communication and of credibility;
- spread the brand philosophy, reaffirming the discipline of compliance with the recommended best practices, as a requirement for the organizational culture in order to generate institutional credibility;
- be attentive to the trends in higher education management in order to create a flexible culture to new realities and expectations.

3.4 SEMANTIC LEVEL

At this phase, the pragmatic data are confronted with the semantic aspects, in other words, with people's perceptions about the organization. Therefore, this level comprises the subjective data. Thus, it was used qualitative methods for this approach, through interviews with the users of the SINFO technological services, namely, the academic community (students, servers, etc.). So, a group of 10 participants filled out questionnaires containing questions regarding the use and the importance of technology at the University. Table 4 presents the questions and it is highlighted some of the users' responses.

"How do you think the technology could help to deal with information relating to the University?"
"Facilitating the conveying of information relating to the subjects, to the faculty and even to the administrative matters for the students, making them more inserted in academia and making them stay abreast of what is happening at the University." "In the agility of academic and administrative processes, in the reliability and in the information dissemination". "Through notifications of facts that personally we consider important. Such as scholarship opportunities, lectures, etc. " "(...) Communication [of the systems] with applications [apps] in the classes for easing the learning, not only in interactive classes but also in the field classes with demonstrations and use of 'computers'. Communication among sectors in a more dynamic way, etc".
"Name one or more words that remind you of 'technology'."
"Innovation, creativity, modernity." "Information Technology, Computing Science, the fact of being always updated, performance, availability." "Innovation, trends, future, robotics, silver color, space, rocket, agility, transformation, music, processes."
"Do you know or have already heard about the Superintendence of Computer Science of the University?"
Everyone has stated "Yes."
"In your opinion, what a body such as the Superintendence of Computer Science could do to improve your experience with the technology at the University?"
"Increasing the coverage of the wireless signal throughout the campus, being attentive to the quality of service, even being to a large area." "I am not well acquainted with the services, but I know it takes care of the sites and of the [academic system]. But it could propose lectures for the students gain better knowledge of the services. To make mechanisms that may facilitate the student's learning, such as applications – apps – of studies." "To facilitate communication among sectors over the internet, not only to solve problems that require speed and practicality, but also to broaden the information and knowledge exchange."

Table 4: The questionnaires responses

After collecting these responses, the subjective and objective data obtained in the two phases were organized in the **inspirations frame**. This resource was developed to organize the process data and generate guidelines and inspirations for the concept. The table is comprised of four columns: inputs, sources, structuring axis and inspirations. The capturing of important data for the concept; the source indicates its origin; as from the inputs it is created the concept guidelines, called structuring axes; then terms and inspirational keywords are conceived to serve each axis.

In Table 5 are listed each of the axes and inspirations generated in the semantic phase.

Inputs	Source (s)	Structuring axis	Inspirations
Need for improvement in internal communication and improvement of the organizational processes and practices [1] "Communication among sectors in a more dynamic way, etc." [2]	SWOT Analyses [1] Questionnaires PA [2]	Processes	Team, Staff, Collaboration, Integration
"Applications (apps) on different platforms to make the information available" [2] "Through notifications of things that we personally consider important. Such as scholarship opportunities, lectures, etc. " [2] "(...) The student could better filter the information to get only what he needs" [2] "To be attentive to trends in higher education management in order to create a flexible culture in relation to the new realities and expectations" [3] "Transformation" [2]	Questionnaires PA [2] Business Strategies [3]	Flexibility	Elastic, Movement, Metamorphosis
"But [the SINFO] could propose lectures for the students gain better knowledge about the services [carried out by SINFO]. Make mechanisms that may facilitate the student learning, such as applications (apps) studies, etc."[2] "(...) I think to enhance the experience, the focus should be on ways to educate and put into practice, in a general way at UFRN, the use of all the tools currently available in the [systems]." [2] "SINFO needs to work the management and the knowledge transfer, in order to perpetuate its organizational culture." [3] "Need for technical capacity building in the IT teams"[1]	Questionnaires PA [2] Business Strategies [3] SWOT Analyses [1]	Communication	Learning, Education, Arrows, Direction, Collaboration
"Advancement performance, trends, agility, future" [2]	Questionnaires PA [2]	Technology	Perspective, Speed, Light
"Several administrative processes are currently replicated digitally made through the system, and physically on paper, which makes the rework unnecessary" [1]	SWOT Analyses [1] Research *Desk* 4	Institutional	Strength, Confidence, Greatness, Respect, Pattern, Contemporariness, Updating
"Technological Innovation Project which enables researches (faculty and students) in the SIGs / UFRN and personnel qualification" [1]	SWOT Analyses [1] Research *Desk* 4	Research	Investigation Curiosity, Magnifier lens, Discovery, Expansion
"Cyber Crimes committed on the UFRN Network" [1] "(...) Bearing in mind that the academic, administrative and personal information are important assets to be safely kept and carried forward in UFRN, the SINFO offers services so that such assets are not vulnerable to the known risks and minimize the impact of unknown risks." [4]	SWOT Analyses [1] Research *Desk* 4	Security	Solidity, Closure, Height, Vertical

Table 5: Structuring axes and inspirations for the brand

Based on the data obtained from the strategic analyzes and quotations from questionnaires it was created the structuring axes and inspirations for the brand (Figure 2).

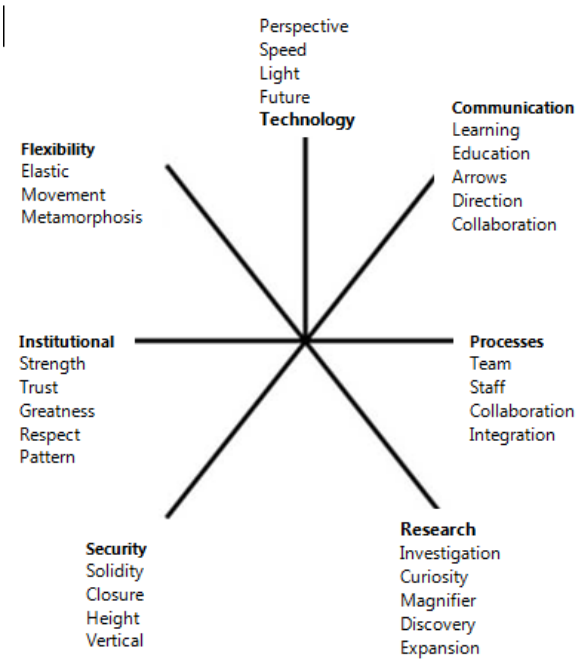

Figure 2: **Structuring axes and inspirations for the brand**

After establishing the axes, the semantics phase ends with the drawing up of inspirational panels, which are collections of images representing each axis and its keywords (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Inspirational Panels (*mood boards*)

There is, in Figure 3: (1) panel of the processes which brings images related to the staff, integration etc.; (2) panel of technology, referring to the perspective, light and speed; (3) panel of flexibility containing inspirations such as elasticity, springs, metamorphosis and transformation; (4) institutional panel, with images related to standardization, reliability and modernity; (5) panel of communication, referring to the learning and direction; (6) panel of research, representing expansion, research and curiosity; (7) panel of security, with solidity images, closure and verticality.

3.5 SYNTACTIC LEVEL

The organizational data, originated from the pragmatic phase, were aligned to the subjective aspects in the semantic phase, which sought to align the business objectivity with the target audience subjectivity. So it was prepared two ideas that sought to establish a visual language that included the structuring axes of the brand.

Figure 4: Idea 1

The idea 1 (Figure 4) seeks to translate into its visual syntax elements of the brand, such as flexibility, metamorphosis, modernity, technology, integration etc. The symbol emphasizes the issue of integration and the flexibility, using an organic color (green), which forwards to the metamorphosis idea and the humanization of technology. The typography of the brand name is designed in order to reflect institutionality, through a neutral color and letters in upper case; on the other hand, it also conveys the idea of modernity, through the distances between the letters, causing

movement in the graphic composition.

Figure 5: Idea 2

The proposal brought in the idea 2 (Figure 5) highlights other important aspects of the brand structuring axes. This is essentially a typesetting, that is, the logo has the symbol within the letters. In this case, the letter "o" was stylized, so as to convey the idea of openness, expansion and dynamism, intrinsic aspects to the institutional; furthermore the drawing of a magnifying glass emphasizes values such as research and development. The thick caliber of the letters denotes the idea of security, and the blue color enhances the technological character, but in light tint, referring to the dynamism and modernity.

Thus, the syntactic phase is concluded through the ideas validation using the brand structuring axes as criteria. The alternatives were presented to a group of 22 *stakeholders* of the organization, aiming at to assess qualitatively its suitability.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The axes diagram is a tool that allows the ideas validation. In this sense, each employee assessed the brand using the axes as criteria, scoring between 1 and 5 for each axis. The higher the value, the greater was the comprehensiveness of the idea on the brand axes. Therefore, the following notes were obtained: unsatisfactory (1), weak (2), regular (3), good (4), excellent (5).

Diagram 1: Evaluation of idea 1

Axis	1	2	3	4	5
Flexibility	3	2	6	**7**	4
Technology	**9**	4	5	4	0
Communication	2	1	6	5	**7**
Research	7	1	**8**	3	3
Processes	2	3	**7**	**7**	3
Security	5	3	[illegible]	5	1
Institutional	4	4	**6**	**6**	2

Diagram 1 presents the scores that each respondent attributed to the idea 1. On the item "flexibility", there was a positive perception, in that, most of the respondents (7) indicated as "good". For "technology", the idea 1 appeared as unsatisfactory (9). Conversely, in "communication", the concept was considered excellent by the respondents (7). In "research," the idea 1 appears as regular (8). For "process", there was a balance between "regular" and "good" (7, 7). For "security", most of the respondents (8) considered it regular. Finally, in the item "institutional", the idea 1 appeared divided between regular and good (6, 6).

In Diagram 2, it is observe how the *stakeholders* assessed the idea 2.

Diagram 2: Evaluation of idea 2

Axis	1	2	3	4	5
Flexibility	6	5	**9**	2	0
Technology	6	1	**7**	3	5
Communication	4	5	**7**	5	1
Research	6	**6**	**6**	4	0
Processes	5	5	**10**	2	0
Security	6	1	5	**7**	3
Institutional	5	0	6	**8**	3

It is observed that the idea 2 presents more moderate perceptions, being considered regular in the first three aspects: "flexibility" (9) "technology" (7) and "communication" (7). With regard to the "research" there was coincidence of responses (6) between the first three levels (unsatisfactory, weak and regular). Considering that four respondents scored as "good", the result ended up getting divided between the weak and regular levels (2, 4 - geometric mean). Regarding the "processes", ten people understood that the idea presents a regular concept. However, the "security" and "institutional" items presented more expressive scores (7 and 8, respectively) for the level good. Figure 6 shows the results obtained.

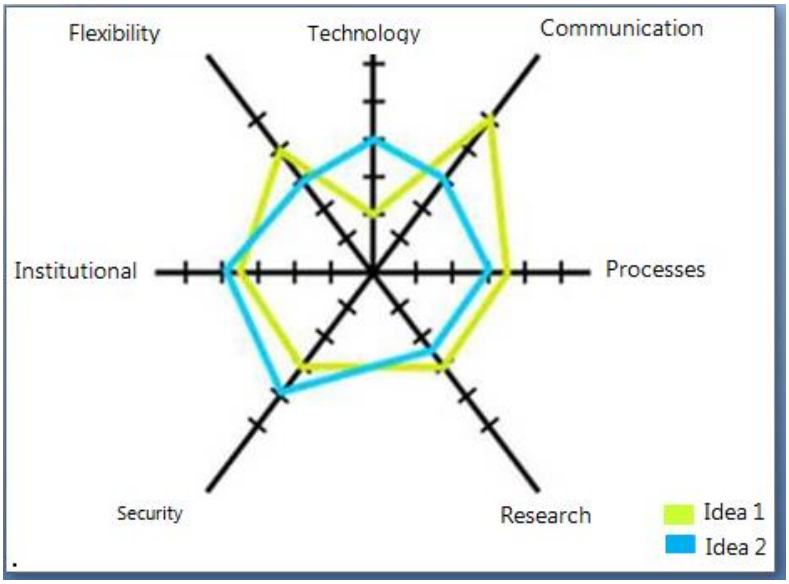

Figure 6: Comprehensiveness of each idea on the brand axes

It can be inferred, according to the diagram, that the idea 1 includes greater comprehensiveness of the brand structuring axes. However the idea 2 appears as more suitable for the axis "security" and mildly more pertinent for the axis "institutional" whereas the idea 1 is less associated with the axis "technology".

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This work presented the *design* and brand management strategic aspects applied in the IT sector. It was investigated the *design*

communicative potentials in order to define the brand competitive concepts in this essentially strategic segment (Laurindo et al., 2001). The method of conceptualization was drafted taking as a basis the *design* semiotic aspects (Gomes Filho, 2006) and made it possible to draw together data of interest to the business and qualitative data regarding the perception of the target audience, providing the visual translation (in other words, the brand) using criteria (structuring axes) established from these data. It was observed that the alignment of these two types of data - pragmatic and semantic - during the process enable greater comprehensiveness and pertinence of ideas, generating alternatives balanced amongst themselves, and capable of being strategically decided by the organization. The concept of structuring axes allowed leading to the validation of the generated ideas. The next steps are the use of axes as guiding indicators of the strategic actions for the *design* management in the organization.

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