A Trip Into the Non-Conscious – A brand relaunch based on Neuroscience. A Case Study

Gesa Lischka

Co-Founder and CEO, Kochstrasse – Agentur für Marken GmbH

✉ lischka@kochstrasse.de

Leyla Kazimova, MA

Neuromarketing Consultant, Kochstrasse – Agentur für Marken GmbH

✉ kazimova@kochstrasse.de

How to create a brand which appeals on a non-conscious level? Neuromarketing theory has been around for more than 20 years, but its practical application in marketing strategies is not widespread, particularly in Germany. At Kochstrasse we take insights from the neurological and behavioral sciences, combining them with the branding process to help companies reach their target audiences more effectively.

The aim of this case study is to provide a concise overview of how neuroscientific insights can be translated into a specific design. This case study presents one of our typical cases – a brand relaunch process based on neuromarketing insights, and incorporating an IAT (Implicit Association Testing) conducted especially for this purpose.

Keywords: ❯ Neuromarketing ❯ brand relaunch ❯ IAT ❯ design ❯ TUI ❯ case study

1 Introduction

TUI Group is the world's largest multinational travel and tourism company, based in Hanover, Germany. With 77,000 employees worldwide, the company generated turnover of € 17.2 billion in 2016 (Joussen, 2016). TUI owns numerous sub-brands, among them FIRST REISEBÜRO; this brand had been hard at work for more than 40 years, and was due a relaunch. Neuromarketing brand agency Kochstrasse was engaged to implement this, including all accompanying internal and external communications activites, along with an IAT (Implicit Association Testing) to obtain detailed insight into customer perception of the brand.

The agency's approach is largely built upon Kahneman's theories of communication (e.g. the principle of two systems) and also on Zaltman's theory that 95 percent of all decisions are made non-consciously (Kahneman 2011; Zaltman 2003, 50). In "Thinking Fast and Slow" Kahneman divides our perception and thinking processes into two categories: fast one – which he signifies as the "System one" and the slow one – "System two". Due to the natural "laziness" of our brain, we tend to process most of the information through the System one, which is intuitive. System two is rational and comes into play when a complex decisions have to be made. Coupled with Zaltman's theory about 95 percent, the agency operates on the principle that communication from brand to customer does not take place on a rational level – from neocortex to neocortex – but rather on a

non-conscious level. Communication has shifted from the long-held rational consumer model to a new and more intuitive consumer model. So neuroscientific insights, paired

Abstract

Wie schaffe ich eine Marke, die das Unterbewusste anspricht? Neuromarketing-Theorie gibt es seit mehr als 20 Jahren, aber ihre praktische Anwendung in Marketingstrategie ist besonders in Deutschland nicht weit verbreitet. Bei der Kochstraße nehmen wir Einblicke aus den Neuro- und Verhaltenswissenschaften und kombinieren diese mit dem Branding-Prozess, um Unternehmen dabei zu unterstützen, ihre Zielgruppen effektiver zu erreichen.

Ziel dieser Fallstudie ist es, einen prägnanten Überblick darüber zu geben, wie neurowissenschaftliche Erkenntnisse in ein bestimmtes Design übersetzt werden können. Diese Fallstudie stellt einen unserer typischen Fälle vor - ein Marken-Relaunch-Verfahren basierend auf Neuromarketing-Erkenntnissen und beinhaltet speziell für diesen Zweck durchgeführte IAT (Implicit Association Testing).

***Schlagworte**: Neuromarketing > Markenrelaunch > IAT > Design > TUI > Fallstudie*

with behavioral economics and cognitive science, create a solid foundation for a targeted brand management process.

In the TUI case, for instance, interpretation of the IAT findings indicated what FIRST REISEBÜRO customers most expected from the brand: A hassle-free, uncomplicated, smooth booking experience. Customers also expressed interest in a more exclusive image for the brand. These results were rather surprising to TUI Management, but had an instructive effect, leading to a truly customer-centered redesign process.

2   Project Background and Challenges

How to revive a brand with more than 40 years of history, without overthrowing the brand's core assets? FIRST REISEBÜRO is well established as a franchise umbrella for more than 150 agencies. Most of these are local travel agents who have earned a reputation as "my trusted travel agent just around the corner". The first challenge would be gaining the consent of these key players – obviously crucial for a successful brand relaunch.

When working with a large corporate group such as TUI, feeding the right information into the appropriate decision-making slots at the right time constitutes another challenge: Because every decision is filtered through several departments, a constant flow of information is essential – especially for a new and innovative paradigm like neuromarketing. In fact, this new paradigm itself played a key role in relaunch communication and in justifying the agency's choices – though it was principally a crucial tool providing a persuasive framework during the design phase of the project, when drafts had to be approved by all stakeholders.

3   Approach and Methods

To tackle these challenges, we started with a roadmap for the brand relaunch process. The roadmap began with scientific research that would take a comprehensive look at the status quo. The next step included the designing of new brand

assets based on the data gathered, and the defining of the brand story. Another important strategic aspect was communication of the relaunch, internally as well as externally, through all relevant customer and employee touchpoints.

So our roadmap looked like this:

- Start with a survey: IAT – Implicit Association Testing to know where we stand and what people truly expect.
- Develop a theory: We collaborated with Steffen Schmidt from the Marketing Institute of Leibniz University of Hanover, to set up the test, evaluate and interpret the results of the IAT.
- Work with the client: A workshop with the client helped define the archetypes of the brand.
- Tell the story: Based on the steps so far, a common brand storyline had to be defined across all touchpoints.
- Show new style: The real brand asset design process based on the dataset and interpretations.
- Get out there: Roll-out with newly designed communication tools.

3.1   The survey

The first thing we needed was solid background information on the customer, and their opinions and feelings about the brand. In order to create a brand experience that truly resonates on an implicit level, we also needed to know what motives trigger the decision-making process. Therefore, an IAT (Implicit Association Test) was applied (❯ Table 1).

The target group was split into three main categories: customers, non-customers, and employees. In collaboration with our academic partners at the Institute of Marketing and Management at Leibniz University of Hanover – Steffen Schmidt and his team – we designed and conducted a survey exploring explicit and implicit motifs.

We used the client's email database to access customers and people who showed interest in the brand. We used a panel

Tab. 1:   An example of the dimensions we have used for the IAT

Brand motivation	Stimulation	Dominance	Balance
Brand value	Attitude	Value	Love brand
Consulting expertise of the brand	Exclusivity	Individuality (what kind of vacation can I book with the agency?)	Independence (How close is the connection to the big group of companies?)
Knowledge of the product	Sense of security	Relax	Enjoyment
Brand perception	Image	Satisfaction	Independence
Brand behavior	Loyalty	Price premium	Purchase intent

Source: own illustration.

Fig. 1: Interdependence of hormone level and age
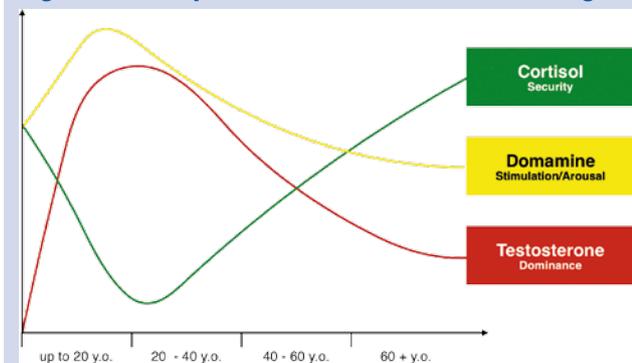
Source: Häusel 2010, 43.

to recruit test persons who were not previously acquainted with the brand. Franchisees and employees were also invited to participate in the survey via email. The survey itself was conducted online. The average age of respondents was 40 years old.

Our data analysis and its interpretation showed the underlying reasons for booking holidays via a travel agent (as opposed to e. g. online booking), and went against the expectations of TUI's marketing managers: When it comes to travel planning and booking, our target group preferred "emotional security" over "relaxation" or "excitement". The customer wish was unambiguous: Make sure their "best time of the year" would indeed be the "best time of the year". No inconveniences, no flight delays, no overbooked hotels. The foremost brand value was security.

One explanation for the need for security may be in the average age of the target group: 40 years (❯ Figure 1).

With age, cortisol levels increase while testosterone and dopamine levels decrease; this leads to a change in motivation, from arousal/stimulation to security and balance (Häusel 2010, 43).

However, an increased need for security was not the only important insight we gained from the data set. Interestingly, we found that if the brand were to be overtly dominant ("we are the best, book with us!") this would actually resonate negatively with the customer, whereas implicit dominance ("we offer you security, because we are a strong brand") would resonate positively with them. So the second brand value was identified: Exclusivity.

The challenge: Kochstrasse had to build a brand with a strong image. However, this new image needed to avoid an overly loud or self-confident stance, instead simply offering its customers the solid expertise and security of a well-established brand.

3.2 The archetypes workshop

After gathering these insights into customer expectations, Kochstrasse conducted a workshop with TUI to identify the "brand archetypes". We work with the archetypes model because we strongly believe that archetypes help to build coherent storytelling, and make further brand communication easy and accessible.

Following the archetypes workshop, TUI Management decided that FIRST REISEBÜRO needed a brand story with two aspects bound together: In one respect, FIRST REISEBÜRO is best represented by the "Guardian" archetype (i.e. "always there for you", like a companion you trust for years). This archetype brings the first brand value – security – to life. On the other hand FIRST REISEBÜRO is a "Ruler", a dominant character with a leading stance: A brand speaking from the position of experience and power, taking the lead, showing the way. The new FIRST REISEBÜRO brand might be best described with the image of a cruise liner captain: leading, commanding his crew, but at the same time protecting the crew and passengers.

Working closely with all stakeholders and building on the concept of archetypes, we developed a storyline that employees could easily identify with on a practical and intuitive level. In the next step the storyline itself was translated into a design that would help employees breathe life into the renewed brand.

The process took about 18 months to reach this point. The roll-out of the new brand in Germany is imminent, and we already had extensive feedback from employees and management. This kind of positive resonance is essential when working with a large group of stakeholders.

In the next step, in order to tell the brand story right, appropriate design elements had to be created.

The task was to define a renewed logotype including colors, typography, and an upgraded visual language, with several other elements that would support the desired implicit, non-conscious appeal. Taken together, the new brand elements should create a consistent brand that effectively addresses the hearts and minds of customers and employees.

4 Design Process

In order to create a whole new FIRST REISEBÜRO brand universe we started with two main parts: Designing a logotype, and designating new forms and colors for the brand, which would convey the message of security on an implicit level. The whole design relaunch process not only had to cover the relevant aesthetic aspects, but also include

Fig. 2: The old FIRST REISEBÜRO logotype

subconscious triggers that motivate customers to act. However, because a brand is much more than just a logo, the next question would concern how to ensure all employees (who are not necessarily interested in marketing theory) live up to their new role and become true brand ambassadors.

4.1 Colors and logotype

This is what the old FIRST REISEBÜRO logotype looked like (❯ Figure 2).

Various internal requirements set strict limitations on the design process. For example, the existing trademark regulations required keeping the letter "F" with the triangle intact. As a result we chose an evolutionary rather than revolutionary approach for the development of a new form and color scheme.

In any design process it's a good idea to keep in mind the brain's abstractive abilities – image, language or sound; everything our senses can perceive can only be grasped intuitively. This was demonstrated by Köhler in his famous 1929 experiment, in which test subjects were tasked with assigning the names "takete" and "maluma" to objects. With 90 percent consistency, "takete" was assigned to objects with jagged shapes, while "maluma" was used for rounded items (Köhler 1929). This shows that the majority of human perceptions are processed intuitively, and are context-dependent according to one's personal experiences. Communication is always more effective when it is processed via multiple sensory impressions – as long as these impressions can be allocated by the recipient in a way that "feels like it makes sense".

When working on the logotype, it was clear that the typography and color set had to signal "security", while at the same time evoking a sense of exclusivity.

Fig. 3: The original FIRST REISEBÜRO color scheme

Source: own illustration.

Fig. 4: The new FIRST REISEBÜRO color scheme
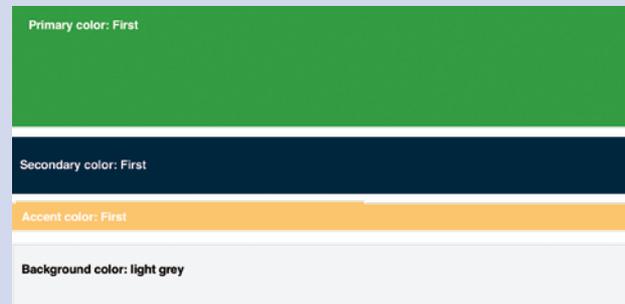
Source: own illustration.

First we focused on the color and form of the logotype. The existing colors evoked associations like "fresh", "fun", and "holiday" in a western cultural context. However, these associations did not correspond with what the customer was looking for in the brand (❯ Figure 3) .

A new color scheme would guide the way. The process of defining these new colors included intensive research and coordination with the client. It resulted in the following primary, secondary and accent colors (❯ Figure 4).

These colors have been chosen because, in their given cultural context, they non-consciously convey security and exclusivity – the core qualities customers expect from the brand. The green color was given a muted tone, which strongly communicates security, balance, and protection. The secondary color, a deep blue, radiates authority and power, with a pinch of protection – insurance companies and banks use blue shades to indicate an image of stability (see e.g. Deloitte, MetLife, Allianz, Deutsche Bank). Meanwhile, the grey background color conveys exclusivity (in use at e.g. Apple, Lexus). The accent color ultimately had to coordinate with the chosen palette, but in a slightly more moderate way. In general, we prefer to remain in the green color palette of the primary color to maintain recognition.

4.2 Forms

4.2.1 Logotype

To define the new visual shape of the brand, we started with typography. Identifying a font that would appeal non-consciously, suggesting security and exclusivity, proved to be no easy task. We chose the Suisse Int'l font family – a relatively young font developed in 2011. Suisse Int'l provides clear forms and solid stability. The font was modified for the logotype to add more "roundness", and to imply security on a non-conscious level.

We started with the most important part of the logotype – the first letter "F" (❯ Figure 5). Trademark registration me-

Fig. 5:   New FIRST REISEBÜRO logotypee

Fig. 6:   A part of the old FIRST REISEBÜRO
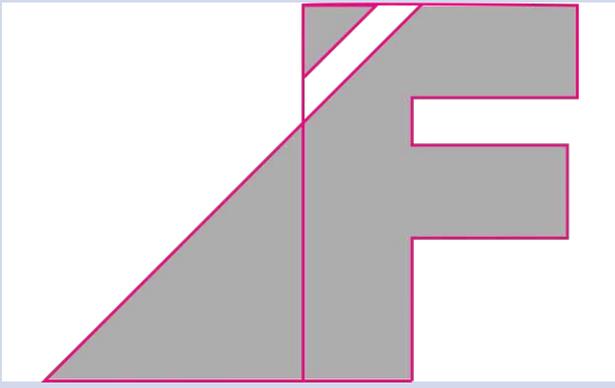
Fig. 7:   The evolution of the "F"
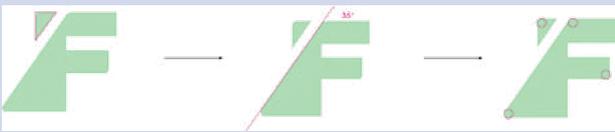
Fig. 8:   Adjusting the first part of the logotype

Fig. 9:   Adjusting the second part of the logotype

ant we could not deviate from the original shape of the letter (❯ Figure 6).

The process included three steps (❯ Figure 7):

1.   Working on the triangles and making them less prominent.
2.   Working on the angles and adjusting them to suit the rest of the logotype; making them less steep and thus softer.
3.   Working with the corners of the letters, adding more roundness.

Based on these aims, the first part of the logotype was adjusted in the following manner (❯ Figure 8):

Grey outlines represent the status quo, magenta outlines represent the rework. The process was similarly applied to the second part of the logo (❯ Figure 9):

4.2.2   Brand elements

Next, we had to design the brand space. The shape of the brand space was inspired by the form of a rooftop, because a roof protects against bad weather and provides security. The roof metaphor is a code which is learned early and carried throughout our lives (❯ Figure 10).

Another important behavioral insight also contributed to the design of this brand element: The line of sight. Imagine seeing two people in the street, both looking in the same direction – automatically, you will at least glance in the direction they're looking. Arrows and arrow-formed design elements, for instance, cause the same effect: They direct the line of sight of the viewer, be it on a billboard or on a website.

We applied these two insights to build the brand space, where the roof has two functions: It protects and it directs the eye (❯ Figure 11):

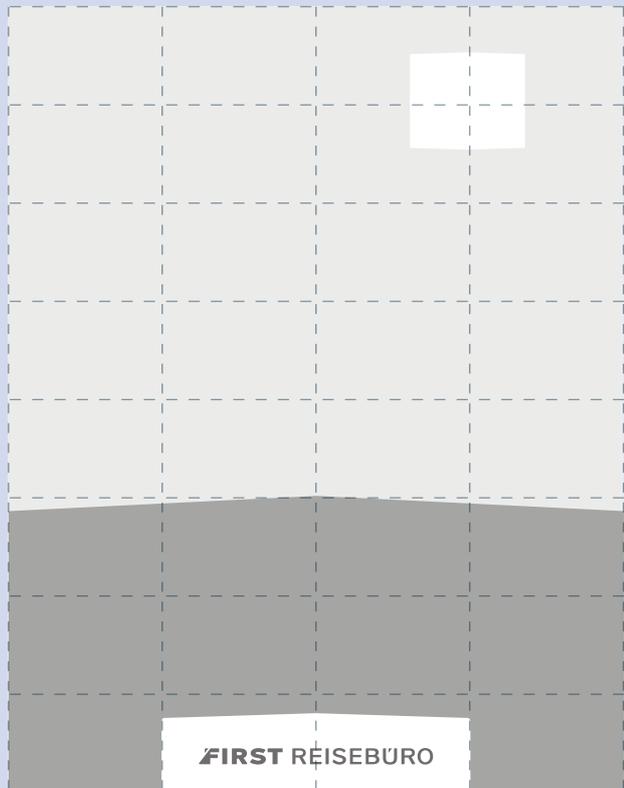So this is how a poster for a brand campaign could look (❯ Figure 12):

The design of a roof-shaped brand space around the logotype is clear; this serves as an arrow at the same time, directing the gaze onto the potential image and message of the campaign.

Fig. 10: A roof signifies protection

Source: Sailer Verlag.

Fig. 11: The brand space

Fig. 12: A brand campaign poster

Source: own illustration.

5 Brand Communication

In the next step, the image language for the brand and an exhaustive brand manual were put together. Based on these, Kochstrasse created a full set of brand communication tools for the entire franchisee network, consisting of posters, flyers, certificates, displays, advertisements and numerous other elements that would give a full impression of the new brand right from roll-out.

Generally, the brand communication process has been split into two phases: Employee/franchisee communication (internal) and customer communication (external).

Our approach here is to identify the most important touchpoints both for employees and for customers. We have mapped the customer journey for this second phase, because the new brand identity would need to be rolled out at all key touchpoints (such as telephone calls, in-person consulting and ongoing customer care).

We are currently in the first phase, and our top priority is successfully familiarizing all 154 franchisees with the new brand. As pointed out before, people do not just know a brand; they feel it. It is important at this stage to give employees and franchisees an opportunity to truly "feel" the brand. That is why a holistic approach to brand communications – from major events to the smallest flyer – is crucial for bringing the new brand to customers.

Several meetings have been set up to collect feedback from representatives of the franchisee network. This feedback will be implemented during the ongoing design process. For example, it is important to offer a complete set of tools that lets each travel agency follow their own priorities, budgets and needs. At this stage we are developing several brand communication tactics for different channels.

6 Conclusion

In the process of re-branding FIRST REISEBÜRO we have received a massive body of feedback, not only from the company's management but also from several franchisees. This feedback has signaled to us that the entire process has been structured well, communicated well, and most of all that the scientific methods and insights behind it were powerful, persuasive tools for justification of the newly designed brand.

The bottom line from a marketer's perspective is that a strategic approach based on neuroscientific and cognitive science methodology, on behavioral economics, on the archetypes model and on a scientific design process is strongly recommended. The whole process is more easily manageable, delivers stringent results and provides a solid line of argument for persuasion. Moreover and much more importantly: the positive internal feedback we have collected so far proves that the new FIRST REISEBÜRO brand does indeed appeal to the hearts and minds of people in a convincing way. What more could a brand ask for?

References

Kahneman, D (2011). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Häusel, H.-G. (2010). *Emotional Boosting. Die hohe Kunst der Kaufverführung*, München: Haufe.

Joussen, F. (2016). "TUI GROUP Annual General Meeting 2016". https://www.tuigroup.com/damfiles/default/tuigroup-15/material/hv-2016/Presentation_joussen.pdf-31fcdf8b19500cf66fba5c7a6d8626e1.pdf [2017-10-11].

Köhler, W. (1929). *Gestalt psychology*, New York: Liveright.

Sailer Verlag (ed.) (o. J.). Schule und Familie. *A roof signifies protection*. http://www.schule-und-familie.de/ausmalbild-drucken/krippe.html [2017-10-11].

TUI (ed.) (2014). *TUI Annual Report (2013/14)*. http://annualreport2013-14.tui-group.com/ [2017-10-05].

Zaltman, G. (2003). *How customers think: Essential insights into the mind of the market*. Massachussetts: Harvard Business School Press.