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Branding Lazos de Amor: Importance and Challenges of Branding Small Non-Profits, The Journey Towards a Better Brand.

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Branding Lazos de Amor: Importance and challenges of branding small non-profits, the journey towards a better brand.

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of
Global Management at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont,
USA.

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Abstract

Branding is an integral journey that precedes, includes and surpasses any marketing and advertising effort; it entails an internal process of self-discovery, combined with the exportation (marketing) of organizational values through visual and tangible means (advertising). This capstone focused on the following questions: why is branding important for non-profits? What factors contribute to non-profits not focusing on branding? In addition, what strategies can small non-profits use to develop and manage their brand more effectively?

The first question was explored through literature, while the second was explored both theoretically and empirically beginning with an analysis of why branding is a challenging subject for non-profits, in particular to small non-profits. Both questions are addressed in the literature review. It is during the literature review that both Kemp's and Zimmerman's recommendations surface in two distinct articles, both providing very practical advice on how to approach branding. The third question was addressed by combining their recommendation to create the Kemp-Zimmerman model. The application of this model led to the research methodology, which provided a record of data collection and application of the Kemp-Zimmerman model to Lazos de Amor.

Regarding the first question, this capstone concluded that branding is important for non-profits because it is its strongest asset. On the second question, it concluded that monetary constrains, lack of personnel and lack of awareness about the importance of branding are the main obstacles to nonprofit branding. Finally, on the third question it concluded that, despite these obstacles, the Kemp-Zimmerman model could be an effective branding strategy for small nonprofits.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	iv
Abstract	v
Introduction	1
Literature Review	3
<u>What is a brand?</u>	3
<u>Why a good brand matters</u>	3
<u>Why a good brand matters to non-profits</u>	5
<u>Branding</u>	7
<u>Why Non-profits do not Prioritize Branding</u>	11
<u>Conclusion from the Literature</u>	14
Research Methodology	16
<u>General Approach</u>	16
<u>Data Collection Methods</u>	17
<u>Findings:</u>	21
Starting Point.....	21
Earning the Brand: Measuring Lazos de Amor's Reputation	27
Marketing the Brand	33

<u>Results from Research</u>	45
<u>Next Steps</u>	47
<u>Discussion</u>	48
<u>Limitation of Study</u>	52
<u>Conclusion</u>	54
<u>Bibliography</u>	58

Introduction

The word “brand” comes from the Old Norse *brandr* meaning “to burn.” which illustrates how early farmers stamped their cattle to mark ownership of their livestock. The development of trade brought with it the utility of brands as a guide to choice; farmers with a particularly good reputation for the quality of their cattle would find their brand much sought after, while the brands of farmers with lesser reputation were avoided or treated with caution. (Blackett, Brands and Branding, 2003, pp. 13-14) The role of a brand as a synonym of reputation has remained unchanged to the present day. To this definition Kemp adds: “a brand is much more than a name, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these items; it is more than awareness; it is your organization’s personality; what you stand for. A brand also delivers a specific message, confirms credibility, creates loyalty, and bonds with the prospective buyer.” (Kemp, 2011, p. 18)

A company’s brand is so important to a company that it directly affects its worth. Coca-Cola’s brand, for example, has been valued at \$77.8 billion. (Interbrand, 2012) Several factors have contributed to the value of this brand including emotional appeal, social responsibility, and the company’s workplace environment. The right combination of all of these components can take years and plenty of resources to perfect. That is what makes a brand such a key component of a company’s competitive advantage, although the visual attribute of a brand might be easily replicable, the intangible worth of a brand takes years to build and it is difficult to imitate. (Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson, 2003, p. 79).

There are more than 2 million nonprofits in the world today competing for resources. (Daw, 2010, p. 8) This complicated philanthropic marketplace is not very different from the corporate sector. In such environment, one would argue that developing a strong brand should be as important for non-profits as it is for the private sector. What evidence is there to support this argument? In addition, if this argument is supported, then what factors contribute to non-profits not focusing on branding and, what strategies can they use to develop and manage their brand more effectively?

The literature review will focus heavily on the first question, as well as provide insight on why branding can be a challenging subject for non-profits. This capstone also sheds light on the branding practices of a small non-profit, Lazos de Amor, and the strategy and tools that it used to improve its brand. What makes Lazos de Amor's branding process so fascinating is that it is relatable to thousands of other small, homegrown non-profits that are wondering whether their brand is a worthy investment.

Literature Review

What is a brand?

Literature regarding brands in both the public and the private sector describe it as more than a name or logo. According to Zimmerman, your brand is the container that packages the assumptions that people make about your organization. These assumptions could be positive, negative or indifferent and surface whenever people hear your organization's name or see your logo. (Zimmerman, 2008) This reaction is not dependent upon a logo or name, but goes "beyond tangible design elements to something more abstract and far-reaching." (Holland, 2006, p. 5) As an expression of your core values, it creates expectations, makes promises and, when supported by actions, can deliver on those promises. (Holland, 2006) Overall, it is what people collectively say, think and feel about your organization. (Daw, 2010)

Why a good brand matters

A good brand is good for profit. Every year, a number of periodicals like Fortune and The Financial Times, and companies like Corporate Branding LLC, set out to rank the world's most valuable brands. The results are not-surprising to many: Coca-Cola Company has one of the most famous and valuable brands; its reputation is worth more than US \$77.8 billion, Microsoft's is not far behind with a brand worth approximately US \$57.8 billion, while Zara's brand is on the rise with US \$9.4 billion. (Interbrand, 2012) There are different formulas for calculating this worth. The Reputation Institute considers the degree of Admiration, Trust, Good Feeling and Overall Esteem that stakeholders hold about organizations; (The Reputation Institute, 2012) TNS measures their evocative

power, perceived quality, and stated desire to buy the brand again in the future. Others measure empathy.

Perhaps the wording of the factors that are weighted in this formula might change, but ultimately, what determines this worth is not solely based on the quality of a product. The company's future ability to generate a profit surplus entirely based on their name, or image matters—that is, on all the values with which the name is associated in the mind of the public. Trustworthiness of this image has a significant positive impact on customers' loyalty, and spread of positive word of mouth. Building a trustworthy image in the minds of customers is one possible way of improving a firm's performance and gaining competitive advantage. (Kaynak 2010) This trusted image is a result of experiences or interactions with its audience. The accumulation of these experiences builds your reputation with your client.

This reputation is dependent upon intangible factors like the respect, knowledge and feeling of stakeholders towards an organization, all of which are built over time and determine the kind of relationship you have with your stakeholders. These intangible aspects of your brand ultimately determine your brand's worth. The better relationship you have with your stakeholders and the more positively they feel about your company and product, the more they will support you. If you deliver on your promises consistently, then your reputation will precede you and your product will sell itself. If your reputation is questionable, then your product will not sell, profits will decrease and the sustainability of your company will be at stake. The strength of your brand is determined by your reputation and your reputation determines your profits, so the better your brand, the better your profits and the greater the overall worth of your company.

Why a good brand matters to non-profits

A good brand is also good for nonprofits. If Johnny has a dollar in his pocket, and he wants to donate 20% to charity, he has more than 2 million non-profits to choose from; this number is growing at a rate of 35% in the US alone. (Daw, 2010, p. 8) Competition for resources is a key component of this and any industry's environment. All these nonprofits are competing for resources and most for the same resource: money. Johnny does not only represent an individual, but also the powerful companies that would like to embellish their corporate responsibility portfolio by donating to your organization, and governments looking for partners in social change. In this complex philanthropic environment, "branding can't be avoided, and, in fact, should be embraced—by all non-profits." (Holland, 2006, p. 2) "The power of a brand lies in its ability to influence purchasing [or rather Johnny's] behavior." (Ries, 2002, p. xii) Whatever Johnny does with his limited resources will determine the sustainability of your organization.

How can your brand convince Johnny to invest in your nonprofit? It is not the visual attributes of your brand that will get that 20%, or the mention of your well-thought out name. It is the reputation behind them. That is not to say that your name and logo are not important; to the contrary, they need to be intrinsically striking. According to Tom Blackett, "the name is the most important element of a brand as its use in language provides a universal reference point." (Blackett, What is a Brand?, 2009, p. 15) However, a name alone is not sufficient. A good brand also needs a visual reference, a harmonious combination of different visual elements that can give your brand "visual distinctiveness." (Blackett, What is a Brand?, 2009, p. 16) As media theory suggests, an image is nothing else than an accumulation of matter and light, from which information

can be discerned. The same can also be said of words, which Mulder describe as a group of sounds or letters that refer to something other than the sound or letters themselves. (Mulder, 2002) Mulder adds that what is important about these images and sound is the interaction that happens between them and the receiver; this interaction is not necessarily determined by what the sender intends, but by the effect of these images and sound on the recipient. (Mulder, 2002) Therefore, as established before, a brand is more than its tangible representation.

If not the tangible attributes of your brand, then what will ultimately influence Jonny's behavior? Fisher believes that it is the relationship your organization has built over time with "Johnny," and the consistency of this relationship that determines your brand's power over his behavior. (Fisher & Vallaster, 2008) Let us imagine that Johnny wants a refreshing and bubbly drink, so he walks into a store and comes across your product that promises to be the most refreshing and bubbly drink of all. At the sight of your product, he recalls your "refreshing" and attractive marketing campaign reminding him of just how bubbly and refreshing your product is. However, if last month, your company's CEO was accused of insulting Dominicans, he (being a Dominican born American) might opt for Pepsi on the bases of affinity with the company's values. Therefore, neither the product, nor the brand, or the image itself is enough. Instead, it is all of the above plus everything that an organization stands for. Johnny might buy your product once, but if you want to keep Johnny for good, you need to also connect with Johnny in a deeper level. Long lasting relations between a customer and a product emerge when the client finds affinity with the organization and everything it stands for.

In the non-profit sector, developing this relationship essential to a successful

brand is even more complex. For-profits have a clear goal: to make profit. “Nonprofit organizations on the other hand have missions that are complex to achieve, difficult to measure directly and typically require a number of partners.” (Kylander, 2012, p. 2) More individuals, corporations and foundations are basing their funding decision on “values alignment, shared passion and commitment, and the level of trust they have in the NGO’s ability to deliver results.” (Daw, 2010, p. 11) With so many stakeholders involved—all crucial to your success, your brand needs to be clear, consistent and strategic.

Branding

So far, we have covered what a brand is and established its importance, especially for non-profits. Understanding the importance of a brand is an essential first step towards branding. The term “branding” suggests action; these actions are not part of a “project with a beginning and an end;” instead, they are part of a branding “journey”, (Daw, 2010, pp. 16-17)

This journey is not only “nice to do” it is a “must-do.” (Daw, 2010, p. 18) Some organizations were fortunate to build powerful brands almost by accident. (Brand Strategy, 2006) Most non-profits seem to be hopeful of the same luck, relying on passive branding as its preferred brand strategy. (Zimmerman, 2008) The reality is that successful nonprofits practice branding. According to a US study by Interbrand, the housing organization Habitat for Humanity has the same brand value as coffee chain Starbucks. In the UK, the charity Cancer Research UK has a value of £202 million, according to Consultancy Intangible Business. (Brand Strategy, 2006) They have been successful because their brands are dynamic, purposefully built, managed and evolved; all of which, according to Daw, are key to successful branding. (Daw, 2010, p. 16)

What does this journey entail? Both Kemp and Zimmerman recommend specific steps to kick-start this journey. (Kemp, 2011) (Zimmerman, 2008) They both start off with an internal assessment that requires an inward look at the organization's practices. However, Kemp focuses on experiential factors, asking "why should a prospective client do business with you?" (Kemp, 2011, p. 1) And "what does your brand promise to these clients?" (Kemp, 2011, p. 1) While Zimmerman emphasizes on the process of self-evaluation to understand and promote your organization's identity by asking to examine whether the organization deserves its brand and focusing more on brand engineering than on the reactions or experiential factors of the brand. (Zimmerman, 2008)

There are many other suggestions about how to approach branding, but I found Zimmerman's and Kemp's suggestions to be very practical and successfully synthesized the suggestions of the authors explored during the literature review. Each set of questions represents a different step that should be answered in order.

Figure 1-Kemp and Zimmerman's Branding Steps

Kemp (Kemp, 2011, p. 18)	Zimmerman (Zimmerman, 2008, pp. 18-19)
<p>1) Define what service you provide. Is this definition too broad or too narrow?</p> <p>2) How do you differentiate from your competition? Are these attributes easily copied?</p> <p>3) Why should a prospective client do business with you? What does your brand promise to these clients?</p> <p>4) Who is your target market? Are there new target markets you wish to develop? Define each of your target markets (age, gender, income, education). What motivates them? What are their hot buttons?</p> <p>5) Make a list of all your touch points with your customers and prospects. Are you consistently delivering</p>	<p>1) Define your branding concept: what your organization does and how it distinguishes itself from others</p> <p>2) Consider the audience that values your core concepts in order to understand how to reach them.</p> <p>3) Consider the need being fulfilled. The audience will determine the need that you want to attract. If your branding concept is important in attracting those that receive your service or those that can support it through donations and/or volunteering.</p> <p>4 & 5) what your organization does to deserve this brand. Evidence for your response.</p> <p>6 & 7) Consider your organization's secondary messages crafted to convince people that the brand is really you [and focuses on "how", rather than "what".</p> <p>8) Consider the organization's positioning</p>

<p>your brand message and delivering on your brand promise?</p> <p>6) How can you create demand for your services? Your performance, service, follow-through and your communication all add up to a brand experience. Repeat business comes from great experiences.</p>	<p>statement. This statement provides the answer you should give if someone asks, “why should I donate time or money to you instead of to some other organization?” (Zimmerman, 2008, p. 18)</p> <p>9) Collateral materials. All your messages must be delivered in some physical format—brochures, annual reports, web pages, video disks, scrapbooks, billboards, product samples, documentaries, news clips, op-ed articles, white papers, etc. The message in all of these materials should be consistent with each other and support your organization’s branding concepts.</p> <p>10) Media to deliver this message. Your message needs to reach the audience you intended.</p> <p>11) Strategies for strengthening this brand. In other words, how to use all of the information gathered above to engineer the results you want.</p>
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Unlike Kemp's recommendations, Zimmerman emphasizes on the process of self-evaluation to understand and promote your organization's identity, whereas Kemp focuses on the experiential factors such as how the client will react to your brand. However, both would agree that internal evaluation of your organization's core values and external evaluation of the audience you want to reach is necessary.

Evaluating the audience you would like to reach is paramount of an effective non-profit brand. According to Daniels, although not many non-profits engage in marketing practices, those that do, often make the mistake of taking an organization-centered approach. (Daniels 2010) Research shows organizations should consider a customer-centered approach to marketing which is the common approach used in the for-profit sector; this shifting represents a key opportunity for non-profit organizations to increase their competitive advantage and improve their outcomes in terms of the organizational mission. (Daniels 2010)

Why Non-profits do not Prioritize Branding

By now we have established that branding is essential, it is good for non-profits and there are both long and short models that can help you in this journey. So, why is it hardly a priority for most nonprofits? Daw believes that the two most prevalent reasons are the lack of internal executive leadership support and the lack of both financial and human resources available for the task (Daw, 2010, p. 17)

Let us begin by addressing the first challenge, leadership. Even the leadership at high-performance non-profits like UNICEF has at some point in time, struggled with branding. (Daw, 2010) A successful branding journey starts with its leadership. (Holland,

2006) “With the backing of the CEO and senior leadership, brand building can become the catalyst for continual self-assessment and innovation.” (Daw, 2010, p. 22) However, many a times, leaders are skeptic about the benefits of a branding strategy. Instead, they are too preoccupied with focusing on service delivery or fundraising to consider the core work of branding. (Holland, 2006, p. 7) As a result, they make two common mistakes. One is that they engage in passive branding, relying solely on their good work to engage their audiences; aided by consumers' emotional attachment to their causes. (Daw, 2010) Secondly, they take branding shortcuts.

In passive branding, people learn about your organization through TV and newspaper stories containing either disparaging or favorable information that journalist deemed interesting to the public. (Zimmerman, 2008) This strategy is risky and not recommended. As media theory points out, a careful combination of several tangible and intangible elements are responsible of engineering the reaction of people to your product. Although it is true that some organizations were fortunate to build powerful brands almost by accident; without clear guidance, your organization will have no control over the combination of elements the audience will come to associate with your organization. Instead of relying in luck, non-profits should actively engineer they brand to manipulate results.

Some nonprofits feel that they are already engineering their brand, but instead they are merely marketing. Traditional nonprofit leadership often defines branding as logos, names, and trademarks produced to aid in awareness of fundraising; this definition leaves a significant unrealized value on the table. (Daw, 2010, p. 4) According to Al and Laura Ries, 2002, although this is a common practice, they are not the same. Marketing

sells, branding pre-sells and the product alone compels you to buy it because of everything it and the company it represent might stand for. Marketing is critical in presenting the brand, but the brand is the force behind everything an organization does. (Daw, 2010) Branding is a more comprehensive process that necessitates a more “engaging communications paradigm where the brand is delivered through every point of interaction between brand and stakeholder, shifting the branding product from the product to the company behind the product.” (Fisher & Vallaster, 2008, p. xix)

The lack of financial resources also causes nonprofits to neglect branding. Critics are suspicious about its value. They are worried of the cost tied to brand development and see it as a façade used to manipulate donors, or a passing trend. (Daw, 2010) They wonder whether or not to spend their surplus money, if any, on programming or issues related to brand development. (Holland, 2006) Many go as far as to view it as exclusive to big organizations wealthy in resources. (Daw, 2010) Although it is true that branding requires a financial investment in its development and implementation, branding does not have to be extremely expensive. Instead, it should be smart, focusing on strategy, rather than costly marketing. (Daw, 2010)

Finally, lacks of human resources or passion in the human resources available are also enemies of branding for many nonprofits. Embarking on a branding journey using only internal resources can be very challenging because few non-profits have the expertise to handle branding on without outside counsel. (Daw, 2010) There are trained professionals in this field that can help your organization along this journey. That is not to say that it is not possible to do it on your own. For this, your organization needs all hands on deck to achieve the consistency at every point of contact inherent in a strong

brand. As both Zimmerman and Daw emphasize throughout their writing, a brand is defined by everything your organization and its members do. (Daw, 2010) (Zimmerman, 2008) So, instead of relying solely on the marketing team to care, protect and develop the brand, branding needs to become everyone's responsibility; the messages of a company's marketing initiatives must match the actions of the company. Every member needs to walk the talk in his or her day-to-day business because the actions of one member can affect the impression of the organization and all of its members and thus the brand.

Conclusion from the Literature

Brands are as old as trade, but their importance to non-profits is practically a new phenomenon. As competition for resources in the non-profit sector becomes fierce, non-profits are awakening to the importance of investing on, and implementing, effective branding practices. Although the awakening is yet to reach many nonprofit leaders, the ones that have realized and exploited their brand potential are now leaders in the field. As new non-profits emerge, they enter the competition for resources somewhat unaware of their brand's value and quickly become preoccupied with the challenges of the service sector like fundraising, managing the scarcity of resources available to their organization, and doing what they do best: serving. What they tend to ignore is that the more they ignore branding, the more they fall behind in the competition for resources, and without these resources they will not be able to do the very thing they do best: serve.

However crucial it might be, branding can be intimidating. The economic investment and human capital required for the task can deter many non-profits from implementing successful branding strategies. Nevertheless, as Zimmerman and Kemp explain, branding does not have to be a daunting task. Still, non-profits hesitate,

especially the ones with the least resources and many do not know where to begin.

There are case studies available of how successful non-profits have mastered branding, but little has been said of the struggling, little known non-profits that function from people's homes and are fueled only by the commitment of well-intended volunteers. Lazos de Amor is one of them. Many of these non-profits disappear before they even get a taste of what branding can do for them. The following sections focus on Lazos de Amor's branding journey and what it did for the organization. What the reader should get out of it is that branding is a worthy investment, no matter how small or economically restricted your organization might be.

Research Methodology

General Approach

This section centers on the following hypothesis: can the Kemp-Zimmerman 5-step model help non-profits with very limited resources implement successful branding techniques? This part provides a record of the activities employed by Lazos de Amor between July 2010 and July 2012 to improve its brand and the results of these activities.

The process of collecting this information followed a specific guideline. As mentioned in the literature review, Zimmerman and Kemp's suggestions on how to improve your organization's brands are both practical and universal. To take advantage of both models, they were synthesized into one. This synthesized model became the framework used to organized data collection. The model is composed of five items that, demand a chronological approach; in theory, the data collected on the recommendation #1 directly influences the data collected in recommendation #2 and so on. Organizing data collection, this way helped translate the model's theory into practice and makes it more accessible to those wanting to replicate it. The steps are displayed as its separate subheading, followed by the data collected to address them.

It is worth noting that Zimmerman's recommendation #11, "Strategize based on all of the above and engineer the results you want" (Zimmerman, 2008, p. 19) was omitted from the data collection framework. The reason behind is that following Zimmerman and Kemp's recommendations were approached as the strategy. As the data analysis will reveal, recommendation #1 led to recommendation #2, etc. Following this pattern led to an organic flow of event that led to results. The section will conclude with the discussion about the lessons learned from this experience.

Data Collection Methods

- 1) Define your branding concept, what services you provide and what sets you apart. Review these concepts to determine if they are easily copied.¹
 - a. Survey –Marketing Strategy Questionnaire: I used this template to gain a thorough understanding of Lazos de Amor and to capture the key information needed to develop what at the moment I believed was a marketing strategy, but now understand it as part of the branding process. I used the information collected to help build Lazos de Amor’s collateral materials.
 - b. Survey of nearby organizations: I collected information about all of the non-profits in El Cercado. I did not collect this information regarding the communities the organization serves in Haiti because they vary year to year, whereas the organization has been contributing to El Cercado for 8 years and it is its main beneficiary. I used this information to determine what was Lazos de Amor’s competitive advantage in that community. In other words, to see if the organization’s work was redundant and, if not, to exploit the uniqueness of the organization in the collateral materials.
- 2) Consider the audience that values your core concept, their needs, gender, income, age, what motivates them and what your brand can promise them to meet their

¹ Combines Kemp’s #1 and Zimmerman’s #1 and 2

² Zimmerman’s #2, #3 and #8 plus Kemp’s #3 and #4

³ <http://www.facebook.com/help/search/?q=insights>

⁴ Zimmerman’s #4 -#7 plus Kemp’s #5

⁵ Kemp’s #6 plus Zimmerman’s #9 and #10:

needs. Create a positioning statement based on this information.²

- a. Facebook Insight: In order to create audience-oriented materials, it is important to understand Lazos de Amor's audience. Since most of Lazos de Amor's supporters are Facebook fans, an excellent way of gaining this information was through Facebook Insight. Facebook Insight provided me with metrics on the performance of Lazos de Amor's Page.³ The detailed quantitative information available about the organization's Facebook constituency was used to learn what kind of interaction Lazos de Amor's audience is most interested in, average age of the visitor, their gender and location. Data for this section was collected multiple times and consulted before creating collateral material for the organization.
 - b. Qualitative research gathered from marketing journals, such as the Journal for Global Marketing, shed light on the important elements that must be present in successful brands. This information helped guide the brand enhancement journey providing best practices from successful brands.
- 3) Consider what your organization does to deserve this brand. Are you constantly delivering your brand message and promise? How?⁴
- a. Action Research: Action research was an essential part of this capstone. According to Odelice Ramirez, Lazos de Amor's president, the organization's

² Zimmerman's #2, #3 and #8 plus Kemp's #3 and #4

³ <http://www.facebook.com/help/search/?q=insights>

⁴ Zimmerman's #4 -#7 plus Kemp's #5

main attraction is how it interacts with the community. In order to convey this experience to the audience it is important to capture it. To assist me in this task, Lazos de Amor created a Public Relations team consisting of a video producer, a photographer, a communication specialist and a community liaison. My role as the community liaison and leader of the public relations team allowed me to experience first hand how the community and the audience felt about the organization's performance. Engaging in this form of action research enabled me to present an accurate picture of the organization.

- 4) Create a demand for your services through your performance, collateral materials like brochures, web pages, videos, and media coverage like newspapers, TV and radio shows.⁵

- a. Action Research: to help create a demand for the organization's services it was important to understand those receiving those services and the audience without whose support the organization would not be able to provide those services. Action research helped us analyze both. The data gathered in this section is the same as the data gathered in the previous section, what differs is the use. In the previous section, I used the data to experience first hand what the organization was really about. In this section, that same data helped me produced collateral materials based on what I learned about the organization.

⁵ Kemp's #6 plus Zimmerman's #9 and #10:

- b. Facebook Insight and Ad Reports: in branding it is important to not only know the organization, but also know how to present it in a way that resonates with the audience. This data is the same as the one gathered on section #2; the difference is that on section #2 the data is used to understand the audience, whereas in this section the data is used to actively manipulate demand for the organization's services.
- c. Qualitative data collected from books like "The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding," and best practices from other organizations' web pages (Habitat for Humanity), videos, consent forms, etc. were also used to guide the creation of collateral material.

As the literature review discussed, a brand is everything that your organization does. Instead of engaging in passive branding, allowing external factors to determine your brand, it needs to be purposefully built. To display how it can be purposefully built, we applied the Zimmerman-Kemp's approach to Lazos de Amor. We have yet to discuss what we learned from applying this model. The following chapter will focus on this.

Findings:

A purposefully built brand needs a goal. Clarity on what this goal should be is the first step. This goal is your destination. For Lazos de Amor' leadership, this goal is to be known as an "international symbol of hope for poverty stricken communities; an international non-profit focused on helping, healing, educating, and transforming communities."⁶To get to that destination, one needs a sense of location. Understanding this location is the essence of the Kemp-Zimmerman's model questions #1 and #2.

Starting Point

In 2011, Lazos de Amor's mission statement described the organization as "A ministry integrated by people of different nationalities that have come together with the unique mission of traveling and proclaiming throughout the world the good news of salvation to every creature, and fulfill our Lord Jesus mandate given to the Apostles in Matthew 16:15..." This mission statement was used as the definition of the organization and shared with its members, all of which shared the same faith, as it was a membership requirement to have confessed publicly Jesus Christ as Lord and personal Savior. The first challenge in this journey comes from reconciling the distance that separates this mission statement from Lazos de Amor's branding concept.

⁶ This concept was summarized after a number of meetings with Lazos de Amor in 2011. Although it is mostly attributed to and approved by Odelice Ramirez, the president of Lazos de Amor, the phrasing of this concept includes contributions from volunteers like Ana Gutierrez and myself.

This distance was in branding, not in practice. Since its creation, Lazos de Amor has performed five different activities that can be synthesized in its newly chosen slogan. These activities are bible school, barbershop, workshops, outreach/evangelism, and medical brigades. However, its brand slogan did not reflect these components. Instead, it limited the organization's description to a faith-based non-profit.

It is this approach to service that gives Lazos de Amor its strategic advantage. Although, there are 85 non-profit organizations serving the San Juan municipality, where El Cercado is located, only 6 are serving El Cercado directly (please refer to *Figure 2-Registered Nonprofits Serving El Cercado*, on page 30), Lazos de Amor is one of them.⁷ These organizations focus mostly on Education and Agriculture. One of them, Fundación de Desarrollo de El Cercado, seemed to be the most complete of all, providing a variety of services like helping the community with health related workshops, education and agriculture. However, although registered no information is available about its work since 2007.

⁷ Lazos de Amor was added to the list in 2012, the updated list of organizations that includes Lazos de Amor has not been released. Jocelyn Ramirez, who represents the organization in Santo Domingo, approached the National Non-profit Association to formally add Lazos de Amor to this list.

Figure 2-Registered Nonprofits Serving El Cercado (Ministerio de Economía, Planificación y Desarrollo , 2011)

Name	Focus	Status
Centro Interprovincial para la Educacion y el Desarrollo, Inc.	Education	Registered. No further information available. (Ministerio de Economía, Planificación y Desarrollo , 2011)
Consorcio Post Cosecha, Inc.	Agriculture	Registered. No further information available (Centro Nacional de Fomento y Promocion de las Asociaciones sin Fines de Lucro, 2010)
Fundacion del Desarrollo del Cercado, Inc.	Education, Agriculture, Health related workshops (HIV)	Registered. No Information available after 2007 (Valenzuela, 2007) (Fundación para el Desarrollo de El Cercado, 2000)
Fundacion de mi Casa a tu Casa, Inc., Funcasa del Valle	Construction	Active as of 2010 (Ministerio de Economía, 2010)
Grupo de Promocion de la Agricultura Ecologica-Manejo de Cuencas, Inc.	Agriculture, Entrepreneurship	Active. Current information available (Junta Agroempresarial Dominicana, 2012)

After examining the organization's branding concept, services and what sets it apart, the Kemp-Zimmerman model considers Lazos de Amor's audience and what the organization's brand can promise them to meet their needs. The findings from this section were amongst the most important in this journey. The demographics of online supporters, volunteers and donors gave the impression that membership was based on personal relations and religious preferences rather than on the work of the organization. Online supporters were mostly based on personal relations with the organization's president, Odelice Ramirez. In 2011, Lazos de Amor's Facebook page, which has been its most popular online platform, had only 12 supporters. All of which were either family or friends with Odelice. This explains why most were females, from either the Dominican Republic or the US as Odelice is Dominican and she lives in the US. The same characteristics can be used to describe Lazos de Amor's volunteers and donors. Most of these supporters had attended the same church that Odelice had attended in either the US or the Dominican Republic. Even the organization's community partners were pastors and Christian leaders, similar to the characteristics of the stakeholders described above. The only stakeholders that did not necessarily share this characteristic were those served. In a way, this distracted from its work and intimidated potential stakeholders that did not share this personal or religious affiliation. With the information above, we can describe Lazos de Amor as a Christian organization with a unique service approach. However, its unique service approach was over shadowed by its faith-based focus.

Realizing this led to a re-definition of what Lazos de Amor's audience should be. Lazos de Amor felt that the audience described above was too narrow. It wanted to increase the diversity and number of its volunteers, supporters and partners. It wanted all

of its actions to represent an organization focused on helping, healing, education and transforming. It is not that it wanted to hide its faith, or that it did not appreciate its audience at that time, to the contrary, the current membership were loyal and supportive. They also, inspired by the leadership, felt it was time to expand—which confirms Holland’s view that a successful branding journey starts with its leadership. (Holland, 2006) Instead, it did not want its definition as solely a faith-based organization to deter others from contributing to and participating with the organization.

This discovery emphasized the importance of this branding journey. It was necessary for the organization to analyze its audience to understand that it was not its ideal audience and develop a customer-centered approach as recommended in the second step of the Kemp-Zimmerman’s model. This step asks the organization to consider its audience needs and wants.

Who is this ideal audience? Its ideal audience revolved around the organization’s vision: to become an international symbol of hope for poverty-stricken communities. As an international symbol, it felt it needed to have a more international and gender balanced audience that was not dependent on personal relations with the organization’s leader or faith. In addition, although currently the organization does not receive donations online, it wanted to create an audience that could potentially contribute monetarily to its cause. Ultimately the organization wanted to reach out to a broader and more diverse audience that also has the potential of contributing monetarily in the future.

How can the organization reach out to this audience? How can it reach out to a more diverse, international audience that is socially conscious and can potentially

contribute to the organization monetarily? As discussed in the literature review, trustworthiness is important. It can be argued that all Lazos de Amor's supporters trusted Odelice. In a sense, she was the brand and by supporting the organization, they were supporting her; but attracting a new audience, one that does not know Odelice, was the challenge. More individuals, corporations and foundations are basing their funding decision on "values alignment, shared passion and commitment, and the level of trust they have in the NGO's ability to deliver results." (Daw, 2010, p. 11) Reaching out to this audience required a "customer-centered" approach that, as the Kemp-Zimmerman model suggests, considers the audience's gender, income, age, and needs.

Since Lazos de Amor had no previous experience with its ideal audience, it was necessary to re-visit the literature to understand what the ideal audience would look like. According to data from Blackbaud, Inc., a Nonprofit Software & Accounting Management company that produces valuable reports with information about online donors, more than 70% of online donors are English speakers and live in communities that are predominantly English speaking. Other significant findings about online donors regard their age and economic status. Sixty percent are verified homeowners. In addition, the more a prospect has lived in the same residence, and the higher the value of that residence, the more likely he/she is to donate online. In other words, economic viability is the common denominator amongst online donors. Age is also a factor. Research shows that individuals between the ages of 41-45 are almost ten times more likely to donate online than those between the ages of 26- 30 and 3 times more likely than those between the ages of 31-35. (Rubanenko, 2006) The fact that most donors come from a certain economic status and age group might indicate that the content of the communications

should be tailored to resonate with that audience. In addition, this audience needed to be international, per the organization's desire to become an international symbol. The best way to interact with an international audience is through the Internet. Research shows this interaction needed to be accessible, accountable, educational and interactive. (Sargeant, West, & Jay, 2007)

It is worth noting that step #2 was revisited throughout step #4. Step #2 evaluates the audience while #4 focuses on interacting with the audience through marketing. Facebook insight provided metrics on the performance of the Lazos de Amor's page and audience's demographics. Revisiting step #2 during step #4 helped measure if the organization was creating a demand from its intended audience.

The Kemp-Zimmerman model has guided the first part of the journey. So far, Lazos de Amor has identified who it is and what it wants to become which in turn is leading towards a re-definition of its audience. Because trustworthiness is an essential part of this communication, the interaction between this ideal audience and Lazos de Amor needs to be preceded by an assessment of the organization's trustworthiness. This will also determine the trustworthiness of its brand. As mentioned in the literature review, trustworthiness is earned by consistently delivering on your promise. Does Lazos de Amor deliver its promise?

Earning the Brand: Measuring Lazos de Amor's Reputation

This section focuses on the third item in the Kemp-Zimmerman model. We have discussed Lazos de Amor's branding concept, and how to reach its desired audience. However, before connecting the brand with the audience it is important to test the brand.

Not doing so can be detrimental to the organization, enabling people to distrust the brand and causing irreparable damage. Therefore, it is important to ask, does the organization's actions match its desired reputation? Is it a trustworthy brand?

As mentioned in the literature review, there are different formulas for calculating this worth. The Reputation Institute considers the degree of Admiration, Trust, Good Feeling and Overall Esteem that stakeholders hold about organizations; (The Reputation Institute, 2012) TNS measures their evocative power, perceived quality, and stated desire to buy the brand again in the future. Ultimately a company's reputation is based on whether or not it upholds its promises. Below we will first outline the promises that the organization makes through its branding concept. Then, we will evaluate what the organization does to deliver its promise of being an international symbol of hope for poverty stricken communities; an international non-profit focused on helping, healing, educating, and transforming communities.

If we break down Lazos de Amor's branding concept, we will notice that it promises a number of deliverables: helping, healing, educating, transforming and being an international symbol of hope. Delivering on all of these promises is a complex task. However, the organization felt that it deserved this concept because of the service that it already offers communities in need. Let us analyze these claims:

Lazos de Amor's claims to help by supplying basic needs to those in need. To this end, the outreach/evangelism team has the responsibility to visit those with delicate health either at their home or at the hospital and try to identify and meet the needs of the person or the person's home. These needs can range from food to a bed that the

organization would purchase from a local business or would receive as a donation. According to Odelice, the team's job is to let the inhabitants of that house know that God loves them. The way they show this love is by supplying that home's need and helping in any way they can. The Barbershop team also is ads to this promise. Their job is to help the community by improving the community's self esteem with providing free haircuts. Often overlooked, this also claims to be a significant economic help to the community's poor because of how costly it can be.

Lazos de Amor claims to heal by its implementation of medical brigades in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. During these brigades the medical team's job is to provide medical assistance to patients, treating all kinds of health problems including but not limited to dermatological, abdominal, respiratory and hypertensive illnesses. The Barbershop Team also falls into the healing category as it helps heal men of all ages (many of whom are orphans or homeless children) from bacterial fungus transmitted through infected razors shared between them at home or at inexpensive Barbershops.

Lazos de Amor claims to educate through its bible schools, inspiring good citizenry, improving children's self esteem, and fomenting laughter. Its volunteers also help the children explore their talents and skills by creating handicrafts and participating in group activities. Workshops are also part of its promise to educate and can include environmental, entrepreneurial and social justice topics amongst others.

Lazos de Amor claims that by doing all of the above, they aid in the transformation of communities. The transformative nature of the organization allows its

association with hope, thus becoming a symbol of hope for poverty stricken communities. Now, let us analyze how the organization is delivering these promises.

Lazos de Amor is helping by supplying basic needs of many individuals in the communities that they served. The outreach team washed dishes and clothes, cooked, helped facilitate medicines, helped furnish homes, transform dirt floors into cement floors, etc. For example, they would walk into a house (sometimes on their own account and sometimes recommended by community leaders) and would speak with the inhabitants. The person or persons' needs would be either visible or come out during conversations. The results are very touching and the community is very grateful for this service. Lazos de Amor keeps in contact with local leaders so that they can follow up and continue to look after the people helped.

Originally it may seem odd for a non-profit to have a barbershop team; however, there is great demand and perceived as a wonderful gift that improves men's self-esteem and health. One haircut could cost around 100 pesos (about US \$3); this is more than many of the inhabitants of El Cercado can afford which is why this team is so popular.

Lazos de Amor's haircuts are not just about looking better, they are also about improving the client's health; 90% of clients suffer from bacterial fungus transmitted through infected equipment most likely at inexpensive barbershops or unclean razors. The barbershop team is not the only team that delivers on this "healing" promise. The need of free medical attention is painfully visible. Hundreds of people come from far to be seen by Lazos de Amor's doctors. Some arrive in very delicate condition. At the same time, Lazos de Amor's dentists help hundreds more improve their smile. (Lazos de

Amor's Medical Team, 2011) In addition, in 2012 Lazos de Amor added a surgical team. All prescribed medications are free of cost and provided by the organization. Patients await Lazos de Amor's annual medical brigades and associate Lazos de Amor's volunteers with it. In fact, they often stop volunteers in the streets to confirm times and location days prior to the brigades to ask them "you're guys are having the doctors this year too, right?" This confirms that the community looks forward to the medical fairs and considers them beneficial.

Lazos de Amor is educating people of all ages, starting with the children. Many of the children the organization works with are orphan or abandoned. The stories chosen from the bible aim to address the challenges these children face at their young age and inspire love, solidarity and humbleness, as well as the strength and faith necessary to overcome adversity. The community's children are very receptive to the Bible school. They come from all over El Cercado crowding the venue. You may easily count 300 children in each activity. The children always seem to have a great time.

As for adults, Lazos de Amor works closely with Jocelyn Rivera, Director of the Pino and Palmera World Vision Project in Santo Domingo and other local leaders to facilitate workshops for the community; they are designed with the community's needs in mind based on year-round communication with its leaders. Community leaders such as pastors and local entrepreneurs mostly attend the workshops, although they are open to everyone. Even the elderly benefit from Lazos de Amor's workshops. Lazos de Amor helps them by providing them information regarding nutrition, health, how to maintain friendly relations between them, and how to understand their value to their community. Locals refer to these workshops as eye opening and helpful.

Lazos de Amor has worked tirelessly to establish itself as a positive and transforming entity in El Cercado by performing all of these services successfully. The organization invests in personal relationships with the community. To begin, the volunteers all stay at local houses and need to walk through the community on a daily basis greeting the locals and interacting with the community. The volunteers also bring with them an economic boost to the town. In addition, the members can easily spend over a million pesos (US \$30,000) on the community over the course of a week. The money is spent on food and on the services that the organization provides. Overall, if you are wearing a Lazos de Amor's t-shirt and walking around El Cercado at the beginning of July, you should not be surprised if children come up to you and hug you, or if adults ask you when the next medical brigade will be while telling you about their health problems, or if you are greeted with big smiles for what seems like no reason. Based on this experience it is clear to me that Lazos de Amor is a symbol of hope for El Cercado and delivers on its promise to help, heal, educate and transform communities in need; therefore, it is accurate to describe the brand as such.

This was particularly evident in 2012. During Lazos de Amor's annual trip, after a bible school session had taken place, a child went on a short trip to the river with his family. During this trip, the child had an accident and, unfortunately, passed away. The whole community attended the funeral, including Lazos de Amor's volunteers. One of the stories repeated throughout the funeral was about him singing the new songs learned at the organization's bible school the morning of his death. This image of a joyful child was the last impression left on his family. This unfortunate event brought the community together and strengthened its ties with the organization. The experience emphasized on

the degree of Admiration, Trust, Good Feeling and Overall Esteem that stakeholders hold about the organization even during difficult times.

Marketing the Brand

As the literature review mentions, marketing is critical in presenting the brand and must match the actions of the company. Now that the brand has passed the reputation test, it is ready for marketing. This section focuses on the collateral materials created to support promote the brand. In other words, it focuses on implementing the knowledge gained about the audience and the organization to connect them.

Lazos de Amor wanted to connect with a more diverse audience. To this end, the organization launched an international marketing campaign. Non-profits should not be intimidated by this term. An international marketing is the performance of business activities designed to plan, price, promote, and direct the flow of a company's goods and services to consumers in more than one nation for a profit. (Cateora, Gilly, & Graham, 2009) Although it is most often practiced by for profit businesses, international marketing can be an effective solution for today's small non-profits like Lazos de Amor. All it requires is that you conduct your marketing efforts in more than one country. The Internet makes this task very achievable. However, it worth noting that an international campaign inherently exposes your organization to international scrutiny; therefore, it is imperative that your organization consistently lives up to its brand. (Kamanetz, 2010)

The next step was to connect Lazos de Amor's concept with its desired audience, a more diverse one, is to create demand for the organization by positioning the brand in the targeted audience's minds and by "communicating its uniqueness in a way that

resonates with the audience.” (Dolnicar & Lazarevski, 2009, p. 5) The following collateral materials were created—or enhanced, to market and enhance the brand.

Logo

The consumer tends to remember just one thing from the ad—one strong claim or concept. The claim or proposition should therefore be so strong that it can move the mass of millions... (Chunawalla, S.A., 2009, p. 106)

Initially, the logo was a bible surrounded by laurel braches. This visual clue limited the organization to a Christian audience. In order to broaden support, the logo needed to be changed. The new logo had the world, instead of a bible, surrounded by heart-shaped laurel branches. Because of this change, the color blue was incorporated into the logo. Blue denotes loyalty and trustworthiness, which are important in a brand. (Knutson, 2012)

Figure 5- Lazos de Amor’s Logos



Logo 2010



Logo 2012

Website

Although Lazos de Amor already had a website in Spanish, to build the audience defined by step #2 in the Kemp-Zimmerman model, it was important to also have online information in English. The website was hosted by WordPress. It was updated and populated with content that was most likely to attract potential. Therefore, the content focused on increasing awareness, motivating interactivity, and inspiring people to volunteer with the organization. The website included a welcome message, “about us”, information about the communities Lazos de Amor serves, a place to put videos, survey questions to improve interactivity, a subscription form for the organization’s mailing list linked to MailChimp, a marketing and email list manager, and a Christian section describing the organization’s faith-based foundation. Lazos de Amor felt that having this last page to nurture Lazos de Amor’s original audience.

Figure 6-Lazos de Amor’s Website

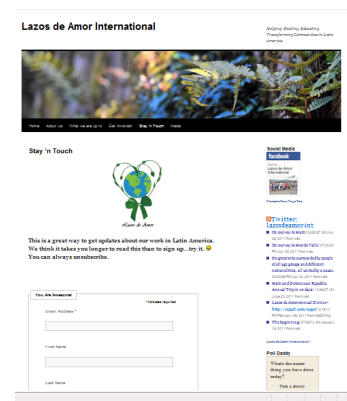
Welcome message



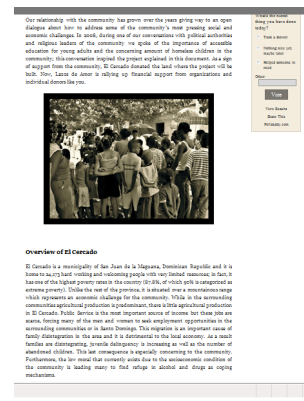
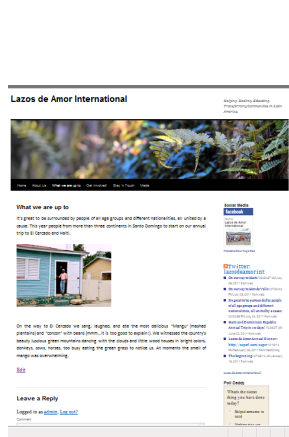
About us



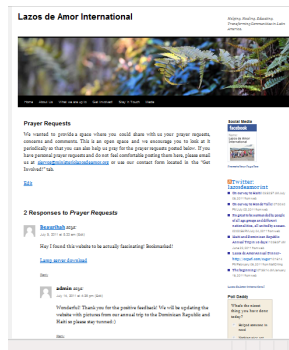
Mailing Form



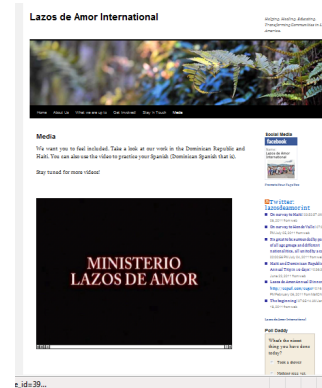
Information about the communities the organization serves



Section devoted to our Christian community



Videos



These components helped legitimize the organization by satisfying the audience's need for accountability and interactivity.

Facebook Page

Initially, only 12 people formed part of Lazos de Amor's fan base. We have already discussed the importance of trust and accountability. To attract support, Lazos de Amor started "Word of Mouth" campaign featuring the organization's current actions,

inviting friends and family members to see what Lazos de Amor was doing “right now.” This campaign more than quadrupled the number of fans in two weeks.

Attracting more support is not the sole purpose of this exercise. To measure whether the organization was attracting its intended audience, it collected information about its new fans through Facebook Insight and by going to their profile’s page (thus revisiting step #2 on the Kemp-Zimmerman’s model). The findings showed that the new fans were familiar faces to the organization. One of the reasons behind this was that it was launched during the annual trip when our volunteers’ friends and family members at home wanted to know what the organization was doing, because it was their only chance of seeing the volunteers. Furthermore, the organization fan base stopped growing after the trip and remained stagnant for a month and a half. Based on this information, the organization concluded that to achieve its desired audience it needed more than “word of mouth”. As discussed in the literature review, branding requires a financial investment in its development and implementation. It was time for the organization to invest on advertising to bring its message to a larger and more diverse audience. Already, the organization had invested on webpages that were hosted by free software and only required a yearly fee. An ad campaign would require more than a yearly investment.

Advertising

Figure 7- Ad Campaigns Summary

Lifetime stats ▾		All Except Deleted ▾		Select rows to edit	Full Report	6 results	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign ?	Status ?	Start Date ?	End Date ?	Budget ?	Remaining ?	Spent ?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lazos de Amor Annual Trip 2012	▯▯ ▾	07/01/2012 7:21pm	Ongoing	\$5.00 Daily	\$5.00 Today	\$105.46
<input type="checkbox"/>	My Ads	▯▯ ▾	09/08/2011 1:29am	Ongoing	\$15.00 Daily	\$15.00 Today	\$262.11
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lazos de Amor	✔ ▾	08/25/2011 9:00am	08/26/2011 9:00am	\$50.00 Daily	\$50.00 Today	\$100.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lazos de Amor2	✔ ▾	08/31/2011 9:00am	09/01/2011 11:00pm	\$5.00 Daily	\$5.00 Today	\$10.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	My Ads	✔ ▾	09/07/2011 1:00am	09/07/2011 11:45pm	\$10.00 Daily	\$10.00 Today	\$0.34
<input type="checkbox"/>	Promoting /lazosdeamorinternational/posts/384585308268540	✔ ▾	07/05/2012 4:14pm	07/08/2012 4:14pm	\$5.00 Lifetime	\$0.00 Lifetime	\$5.00

6 results


The first ad campaign started on August 25, 2011 costing \$100 but only obtaining 19 likes. One of the limitations of this campaign was that its target was too narrow. First, it only targeted females living in Massachusetts and then it used words like “founded in Boston” which narrowed the female audience by targeting those living in Boston. This campaign was costly and unproductive.

Figure 8-Ad Preview “Lazos de Amor” Campaign 2011

Ad Preview ✎ Edit	Targeting ✎ Edit
<p>Lazos de Amor International</p>  <p>Founded in Boston, MA. Our focus is on helping, healing, educating and transforming communities in the Dominican Republic and Haiti.</p> <p>You like this.</p>	<p>This ad targets 1,393,900 users:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ who live in the United States ▪ who live in Massachusetts ▪ between the ages of 22 and 55 inclusive ▪ who are female ▪ who are not already connected to Lazos de Amor International <p>Suggested Bid: \$2.21 – 4.75 USD</p>

The next ad included countries beyond the ones that Lazos de Amor serves. It was seen 5,738,386 times, produced 3,604 clicks, 973 of which were “likes”. This campaign was successful in increasing our Facebook fan base to 1,000 in 17 days.

Figure 9-Ad Preview “My Ad” Campaign 2011

Ad Preview ✎ Edit	Targeting ✎ Edit
<p>Lazos de Amor International</p>  <p>Our focus is on helping, healing, educating and transforming communities in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Join us.</p> <p>You like this.</p> <p>View on Site · Create a Similar Ad</p>	<p>This ad targets 212,382,620 users:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ who live in one of the countries: United States, Haiti, Canada, Spain, United Kingdom, Dominican Republic or Australia ▪ age 18 and older <p>Suggested Bid: \$0.58 – 1.41 USD</p>

Despite difficulties, advertising proved to be a successful tool in increasing Facebook support. However effective, it was still costly. Small non-profits like Lazos de Amor cannot afford to spend \$262 each month for advertising. Thankfully, Daw mentions that successful branding does not need to be expensive, but strategic. Lazos de Amor explored strategies to increase the fan-base without “breaking the bank.”

Videos and Photos

People say that: “seeing is believing.” When people go to your website/Facebook page, what do they see? *Telling* your audience what you do is good, but *showing* them is better! To show and tell, Lazos de Amor collected more than 4,000 pictures and over 15 hours of video footage to be used for branding purposes. This footage revolved around how Lazos de Amor delivers on its promise to help, heal, educate and transform communities. The footage and pictures were used to create “Bocadillos,” are short videos about the organization and one “Bocado,” a longer video to be used in Lazos de Amor’s fundraising events. “Bocadillo,” which is the Spanish word for “snack” and refers to short videos that last less than two and a half minutes and show an aspect of Lazos de Amor ranging from “healing” to “El Cercado.” A “Bocado” is a heavier version of the “Bocadillo” and lasts approximately 15 minutes. There are about five finished videos and three in being edited. The videos are mostly bilingual. One of them is in eight different languages, featuring the volunteers and all the languages spoken in Lazos de Amor. These pictures and videos were effective on their own. However, their effectiveness multiplied when combined with advertising. The best pictures and finished videos were posted in Facebook ads. The most popular posts were:

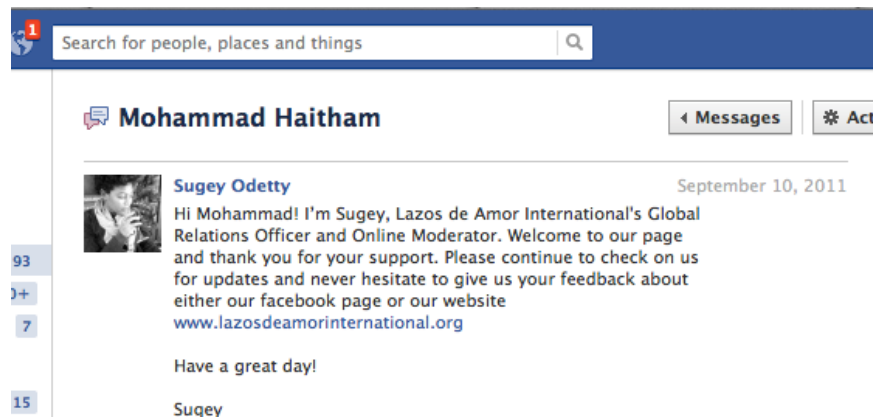
Figure 10-Lazos de Amor's Highest Ranking Posts

Post Content	Type	Likes
Hi all! You've already seen the pictures from our medical aid campaign in Haiti, but you haven't seen the ones from the Dominican Republic so here they are! It was an intense day! Our doctors, nurses, surgeon, desist, and volunteers worked above their limit to help hundreds of people many of whom had travelled long distances. It is clear that there is a great need for events like this one. We hope that next year and with your help, we can help thousands!	Albums with photos of the Medical Fair	114
Amamos a los niños! Y trabajamos arduamente por su educación y superación. We love children! And we work really hard for their education and betterment. Lazos de Amor, aims les infant	Album with photos of the children's activities	88
Caras, Faces, Les Visages	Album with photos of our volunteers	77

Written Communications

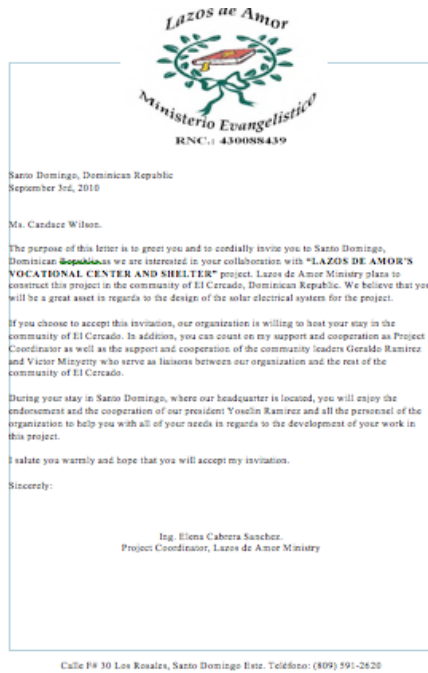
Caring for a brand is more than marketing and advertising. To ensure that Lazos de Amor’s brand left a good impression with its partners and current supporters, it was important to nurture that relationship. To that end, thank you notes were sent to supporters and to the leadership in the communities served. This communication needed to be consistent with the organization’s brand. This led to the creation of standard “thank you” emails for supporters and a head letter design and thank you letters for the organization’s partners.

Figure 11-Lazos de Amor Thank You Note



Although Lazos de Amor already had a letterhead, it had the old logo and did not communicate Lazos de Amor’s new concept. The new logo’s color palette was blue and green. Blue is associated with trust whereas green represents nature, it is also “easy on the eye” and refreshing. (Knutson, 2012, p. 1) The new letterhead used both colors on an additional original design created to compliment the logo. This design included a yellow component, which enhances optimism. (Knutson, 2012, p. 1)

Figure 12-Lazos de Amor's Head letters



Head letter 2010

Head letter 2012

Volunteers are the most important assets an organization has. Without them, Lazos de Amor would not be able to provide any of its services. As mentioned in the literature review, in order to succeed in developing a strong and successful brand, every Lazos de Amor's member must walk the talk in his or her day-to-day business because the actions of one member can affect the impression of the organization and all its members. In other words, as Dawn and Zimmerman emphasized throughout their writing, a brand is a sum of everything [Lazos de Amor] and all of its members do. (Zimmerman, 2008) (Daw, 2010)

Organizations tend to assume that staff members know the organization's brand because they know what the organization does. An important branding requirement is to ensure that those working with the organization understand the brand; doing so protects your brand from dilution, misinterpretation, or confusion. (Daw, 2010, p. 16) Educating Lazos de Amor's volunteers about its branding concept would help protect and promote the brand. Lazos de Amor educated its volunteers about its organizational values and expectation to ensure that their behavior was in accordance with the organization's brand. The volunteers were educated through brochures, information packages and staff workshops. The brochure and marketing package covered information about Lazos de Amor's history, the communities it serves the teams, codes of conduct, etc. For the first time, volunteers had to review the information package, complete an application, provide a passport photo, and commit to abiding by the organization's rules by signing the application.

These packages were done in both English and Spanish. The brochures were emailed rather than printed to save cost. Snapshots of the rest of the document are available in the appendix section.

Figure 13-Lazos de Amor's Information Package Cover, English and Spanish



Helping.
Healing.
Transforming.

Ayudando.
Sanando.
Transformando.

Preparing these volunteers for Lazos de Amor's annual trip is important because it is the organization's most important event. Lazos de Amor addresses these important behavioral expectations in written form, during pre-travel meetings and now also through during team-building workshops at the beginning of the trip. An example of these behavioral expectations is that volunteers are not allowed to give cash to any member of the community. If a member of the community approaches a volunteer for money, and the volunteer feels the person is in great need, he/she needs to report this community member's need Lazos de Amor's leadership who will determine how to move forward. This rule is strictly encouraged to avoid false expectations. If one volunteer breaks this rule, it might affect the dynamics between the organization and the community. Everyone's behavior matters so behavioral expectations need to be clarified and consistent with the organization's brand.

Results from Research

This section centers on the following hypothesis: can the Kemp-Zimmerman 5-step model help non-profits with very limited resources implement successful branding techniques? The answer is yes but it is not as easy as following a synthesized 5-step model.

Implementing the Kemp-Zimmermann model pays off. The initial self-discovery process that the organization went through allowed it to identify key weakness in the branding concept and audience demographics. This inward analysis set the tone for a rewarding branding journey.

Because the branding concept passed the reputation test before marketing, it was reliable; this created brand evangelist and caused a snowball effect. *Evidencias*, a respected Dominican Christian Journal, featured an article about the organization. Its founder, Samuel Guzman, visited El Cercado to interview Odalice Ramirez. In addition, a couple of radio journalist working at the second ranked radio station in the Dominican Republic spoke highly of Lazos de Amor during their radio shows. In addition, the organization is receiving requests to expand their work to different parts of the Dominican Republic

The branding process also brought the organization closer to its desired audience. Today's volunteers come from near and far. Since the beginning of this branding journey, three volunteers have travelled directly from the Middle East, one from France, one from

The Netherlands, six from St. Martin, two from Chicago, in addition to more international volunteers residing in Boston, MA or the Dominican Republic.

Figure 14-Lifetime Likes by Country 2012

(Facebook Insights, 2012)

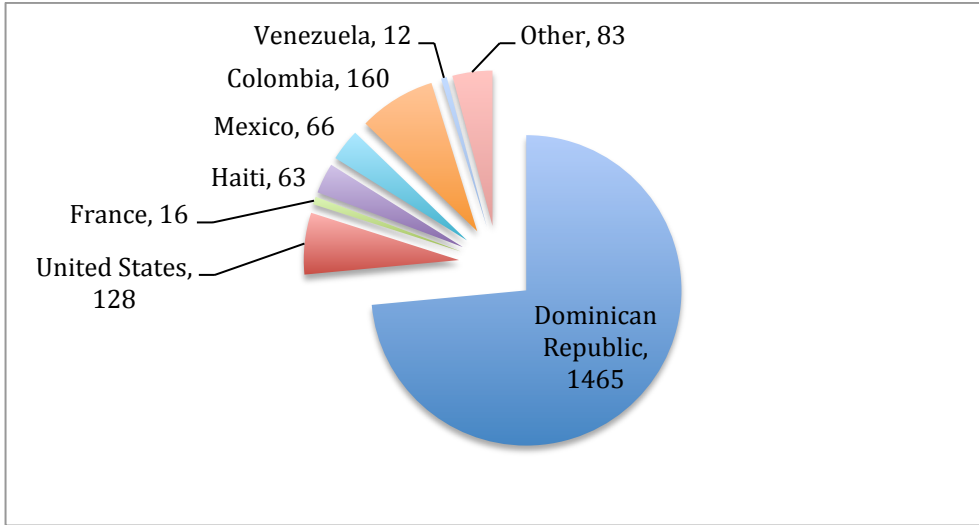
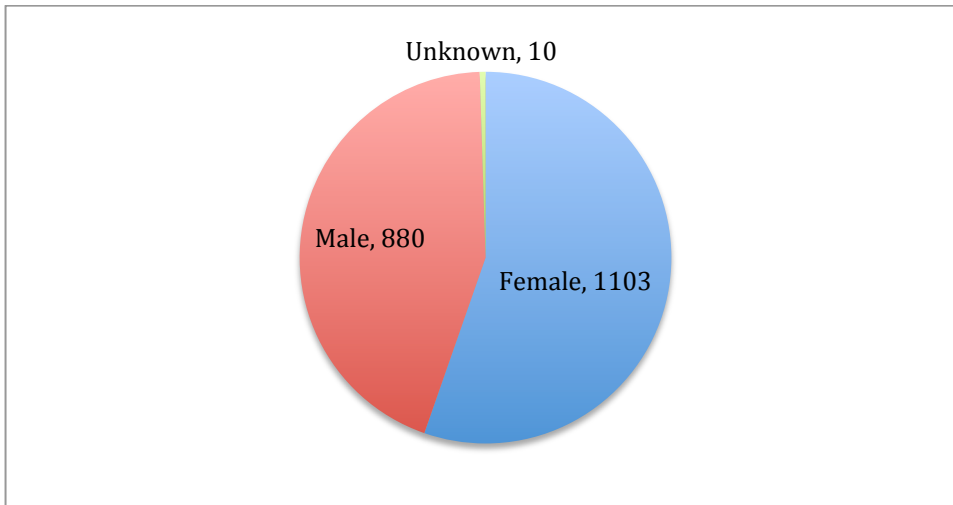


Figure 16-Lifetime Likes by Gender (ibid)



Finally, it helped re-defined the organization at its core. Volunteers from previous years, started describing the organization as beyond faith-based. Instead, their definition shifted towards the organization's actions. "Is a ministry that works with the poor, children and adults, to be a blessing to all in unity", (Luz, 2012) Lazos de Amor means "Transformation" (Reyes, 2012). Other answers included "Love for all", "Education and Help." Overall, the branding model yielded positive results.

Next Steps

The next step for Lazos de Amor is to fundraise using online applications. Research shows that non-profits have become increasingly confronted with market pressures typical of for-profit organizations, like competition for funding and the need to earn money to fulfill their mission. (Dolnicar & Lazarevski, 2009) For the past few years, nonprofits have used social media to build engagement around their causes; but, more recently, they have started using social and digital media to directly drive fundraising communications. (Daniels 2010) Now, the organization organizes fundraising events year-round. My hope is that the organization will be able to literally cash in on their online support.

Discussion

At the beginning of this capstone we discussed why branding is important for non-profits and what factors contribute to non-profits not focusing on branding. The findings in the research section confirm the importance of the branding journey for non-profits. Lazos de Amor has served for eight years, but it was during this branding journey that it experienced its most remarkable growth. The literature review points out that the main obstacles to branding are lack of support from executive leadership and lack of financial and human resources. However, although Lazos de Amor faces the last two challenges, its leadership is very supportive of the branding journey; this support made the other challenges easier to overcome. For example, although the organization does not have much financial resources, the leadership's support of the branding journey made it possible for the organization to prioritize its brand by putting aside whatever it could to support the journey. At times, the investment was as low as \$5 per day. Volunteers also donated time and money to ad campaigns. So, in a way, the leadership's support also made it easier to address the lack of human resources. As mentioned in the research section, Lazos de Amor assigned a group of volunteers to the task of helping with the branding process through joining the Public Relations team. That is not to say that the organization did not need these volunteers to perform other tasks (and in many occasions they did), but that they were to prioritize their branding related responsibility. In order to do this, the leadership needed to make sure that branding efforts undertaken by these volunteers were seen as what they are, essential components of a successful non-profit. This way, Public Relations volunteers logged on to Facebook to monitor ad reports or post new information would not be seen as wasting their time, but as performing an

important task to can help the overall success of the organization. Doing so also led to many volunteers pitching in with pictures, collaborating with ideas, and requesting to join the Public Relations team in the upcoming trips. Overall, one of the most important learning deducted from the research section in relations to the first two questions addressed in this capstone is the importance of leadership support and how this support can help the organization overcome any other obstacles related to branding.

The lessons learned during this process were not limited to the ones above. This section also focuses on personal lessons gathered during this experience. Some of these lessons are from marketing the brand. Considering these lessons might help prepare non-profits for the branding journey ahead. The first personal lesson is that sometimes advertising in Facebook feels much like gambling; the key is to monitor your ad. Paying more does not equal better results; cost per thousand impressions (CP) seems cheaper, but Facebook can show your ad thousands of time without materializing a “like”. Furthermore, they will continue to charge you just for showing your add, independently from how effectively that ad can improve traffic to your page. Opting for pay per “Click” rather than “thousand impressions” is not necessarily better. The cost of bringing someone to your website can be higher than per impression, but even traffic wont guarantee support or affinity. Monitoring your ad’s performance (changing an image if it is not working, or the content) increases the effectiveness of your ads. If your organization is small, and your budget is limited, you will get more for your money by following this advice.

Another personal lesson is that timing is important. At no other time does the organization have more helping hands than during the annual trip. The amount of people

involved allows the team to monitor ad performance, get a sense of the audience's wants, produce materials (like videos or pictures) to satisfy these wants, recognize when an ad needs to be refreshed and ensure that the audience is growing fast. In addition, at no other time does it have more eyes on it than during the annual trip, so it is a great timing to launch a marketing campaign. Along the same lines, your organization might have important annual events. These annual events provide a great opportunity to recruit help for your brand. They also provide good opportunities to display your new marketing materials logo and show that your brand is reputable and create brand evangelists.

Branding requires a comprehensible database of pictures and “go to documents.” This will make communication between your organization and stakeholders smoother and more consistent. Having consistency in your communication is good for your reputation. It is time consuming to have to consult your organization's mission statement, constitution, written materials or leaders to answer frequently asked questions. Instead, all relevant information about the organization should be condensed into a complete and good-looking information package.

Your “go to” database should also include your letterhead, ready to use whenever you need it, and any letter that you might need to reuse like “thank you”, or letters to embassies if your organization deals with international travels, etc. Your organization's database should also contain pictures and videos. Make sure to label the pictures as they go into your database to save time later when you need to find them. File DNCS08394 is harder to find than “Fundraising Event Preparations 01.”

Finally, although investing in your brand is essential, be mindful of the human and financial resources needed to implement your branding strategy. The literature review addresses this issue by warning us that branding is an investment. Nevertheless, one better understands hits investment in the process. The financial costs are more predictable. If you hire help, they might be related to payroll. They also go beyond payroll and include implementation costs such as paying website memberships, paying for photo and video editing software, etc. These expenses are greatly reduced if the volunteers already have access to these resources and donate them for the organization's use.

If the staff volunteers it might lessen the financial cost, but would not lessen the overall human effort and time that needs to be devoted to this journey. First, managing an interactive website takes time. Not only does it take time to create, but also to manage and especially to format. Often, websites take more time to format than to populate with content. Managing a website also takes money and it is also more costly than having a Facebook page. Non-profits with more human and financial resources can afford to have dedicated staff to manage all of its online platforms. However, organizations like Lazos de Amor do not have that luxury. Of all of the online platforms that the organization has, Facebook was the most successful because it had the most reach and required less maintenance. Although the website was helpful and increased online visibility, it reached an average of 800 people in a given month, whereas the organization can reach out to millions in one day through Facebook. Lazos de Amor had to let go of its website and, instead, focus on social media to reach out to its audience.

Limitation of Study

From a research standpoint, I feel one of my greatest limitations was the lack of information available about non-profit branding “best practices” that reflected the budget and human resources of a small non-profit like Lazos de Amor. I did find, however, plenty of information about branding practices for the profit-sector. At the end, I relied on both the limited information available about non-profit branding and the practices of the for-profit sector to improve Lazos de Amor’s brand.

Regarding Data Analysis, one of the challenges I faced is that although Facebook Insights and Ad Manager report on online traffic and reaction to postings, they do not take into account people’s reasons for being more responsive making it difficult to pinpoint what actually worked.

From a personal standpoint, the biggest limitation of my study was distance and time. Currently I live in the Sultanate of Oman and it is extremely difficult to communicate with Lazos de Amor in Boston on a budget, especially since it is illegal to use voice over protocol software such as Skype and phone calls are expensive. In addition, time difference was a challenge since most meetings take place after or around midnight, Muscat Time. In addition, days of the week are different as in Oman the weekend falls on Thursdays and Wednesdays.

Regarding time, I faced the same challenges that all of Lazos de Amor’s volunteers face: my job. I currently work as a Middle East History, Current Events and Maximizing Study Abroad teacher for the American High School students awarded the

Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange & Study scholarship from the American Embassy. I also created the curriculum and facilitated the Global Leaders Scholarship Program for Omani girls, funded by the Dutch embassy and first of its kind in the country; all this as part of my work as a consultant with AMIDEAST (American Mideast Educational and Training Services) and all of it while trying to work on my capstone. In addition, I taught English and acted as Head of International Relations with Lazos de Amor. Fortunately, this also helped me choose branding strategies that were manageable given my work schedule and that could be practiced by other busy volunteers.

Conclusion

This capstone tried to find answers to the following questions: why is branding important for non-profits? What factors contribute to non-profits not focusing on branding? And, what strategies can small non-profits use to develop and manage their brand more effectively? To conclude, it is important to determine the extent to which these questions were answered and what personal knowledge was gained from this capstone process. Let us first address each question independently.

Why is branding important for non-profits? The literature review demonstrated that branding is important for nonprofits because it is its strongest asset and is directly related to your organization's worth. Furthermore, it explained the complexity of the non-profit marketplace and how a good brand represents competitive advantage. However, more needs to be said from non-profit professionals about this topic. Lack of literature related specifically to small non-profits and branding was one of the limitations of this capstone. This might be because, as Nathalie Kylander explains, actively engaging in the branding journey is a recent phenomenon amongst non-profits that has mostly emerged during the last decade (Kylander, 2012).

What factors contribute to non-profits not focusing on branding? The literature review explains that lack of executive support and both financial and human resources pose great challenges to non-profit branding. Maybe novelty is behind non-profit leadership's hesitation towards branding as many have yet to understand the importance of their organization's brand and how to go about it. Those that would like to engage in actively branding their organization find that the lack of financial and human resources

makes it difficult to invest time and money towards their brand. Instead, organizations choose to use these resources to focus on service and neglect their branding efforts. In this complex philanthropic marketplace, organizations need to consider that a good brand can directly affect how much they are able to fundraise and how sustainable they become; this sustainability and availability of funds is essential so that they can continue to work on their cause. Although the literature review focused on three major obstacles, there are many more. For example, the political and social environment that surrounds an organization might pose a serious challenge to its branding journey; also, the complexity of your constituency and partners might also challenge this journey. Hopefully, as the importance of non-profit branding becomes more widely accepted and academically discussed, more light will be shed on these and other obstacles.

What strategies can small non-profits use to develop and manage their brand more effectively? This question was explored in the research methodology, using the Kemp-Zimmerman model, which proved to be a practical and fruitful approach. Unlike most literature available, which reflects upon practices done by successful non-profits, using Lazos de Amor as an example provided a guideline for small, homegrown, non-profits about which not much has been written. It also explored how combining different recommendations can be a good approach. By combining both Kemp and Zimmerman recommendations, it tried to create a model that embraced the overall recommendations given by the authors reviewed during this capstone. However, there are more recommendations that need to be explored and can be even more specific such as, branding strategies for faith-based organizations.

Although this capstone addressed all the questions intended, it could be further strengthened if more information was available about the subject and if the length and timeframe to deliver this capstone were not an issue. More in-depth discussion about topics like non-profit leadership and branding could be an insightful addition as well as a section devoted to the ethical challenges of branding in the nonprofit sector. This last topic is one that needs serious consideration and could greatly complement this capstone. For example, the reader might notice that Lazos de Amor's new branding concept is more secular than its previous one. Also, its logo was changed from a bible to a globe. An additional section could explore the principle of deception and whether a globe is the most accurate logo item for a faith-based organization. Overall, although the findings and conclusions effectively address the questions asked at the beginning of this capstone, there is more work to be done.

Regarding my personal gains from this process, it is important to mention that my experience travelling with Lazos de Amor marked me. Although the organization was practically born in my family's living room in Boston, in the six years that it had been active before the beginning of this project, I had never travelled with the volunteers. Instead, I provided administrative support from Boston when necessary.

At the beginning of this project, Lazos de Amor's president, Odelice Ramirez, shared the organization's branding concept: to be known as a symbol of hope for poverty stricken communities. An international non-profit focused on helping, healing, educating, and transforming communities. Although this branding concept was new, Lazos de Amor was already a symbol of hope; an organization that helps, heals, educates, and transforms. It is just that less people knew about it.

It was not until I travel with the organization that I understood its value. It took witnessing hundreds of people lining up for free medical care, heads covered with fungus being cleansed by the volunteers, hundreds of children laughing simultaneously during the bible schools, many of them remembering the volunteers by name, running to their encounter. It also took witnessing the bonds between the volunteers and the community through the unfortunate death of a child to understand just how important this small non-profit had become to this community.

Like Lazos de Amor, there are many non-profits doing good work and poor branding. They are so focus in helping that they have neglected to tell others about what they do. In addition, they have neglected to look inward to understand their worth. Nowadays, competition is an important factor in the non-profit world. Non-profits need to understand that in a way, neglecting their brand is neglecting those they want to help. Because falling behind in this competitive non-profit world means not having the resources to continue support your cause. My hope is that this capstone helps them open their eyes to this reality and encourage them to kick-start their branding journey.

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