



M0056396WC

CORPORATE IDENTITY: SWITZERS AND BROWN THOMAS

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1991.

## INTRODUCTION

My aim in this thesis is to deal with the concept of Corporate Identity in relation to the two most prominent Department Stores in Dublin's Grafton Street - Brown Thomas and Switzers.

Through the visual analysis of these stores I shall disclose more about Corporate Identity in general and the elements that go into making a corporation successful. To do this I have divided the thesis into three main parts. Part I explains the meaning of Corporate Identity, what it embodies and why it is so important today. This leads on to a brief history of Grafton Street and the evolution of Switzers and Brown Thomas. In Part II shall analyse both stores, and Part III deals with the future of Brown Thomas and Switzers as Department Stores. A unification of these parts will form my conclusion.

There is a number of books on the subject of Corporate Identity from which I have obtained my information for Part I. However, as there is no published material on either Switzers or Brown Thomas, my information is based on interviews with staff members from each store and their designers, and articles written in the newspaper. The National Architectural Archives kindly provided me with the relevant photographs.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my tutor Dr. Frances Ruane; The National Architectural Archives; Toni Clarke, Marketing Manager in Brown Thomas; Johnathon Redmond, Display Manager in Brown Thomas; The staff of Switzers for their generous help and co-operation, in particular Raymond Jenkinson, Display Manager; a special thanks to Jimmy Wynne, Marketing Manager in Switzers.

## PART I

### 1. WHAT IS CORPORATE IDENTITY?

Corporation is a relatively modern term which is applied to twentieth century business so therefore Corporate Identity is a modern concept which has really only been developed with regard to business this century. By definition, Corporate Identity literally means the "Individual existence" of a "body of persons". This "Individual existence" is identified by a trademark or logo which is unique to that company. This trademark or logo is a visual representation which reflects their basic aims. So essentially Corporate Identity can be broken down into two major components:

1. How the Corporation looks - through building design, furnishing, communicative material and advertising.
2. How the Corporation behaves - towards its own staff and to everybody with whom it comes into contact.

As I am more concerned with the visual aspects of Corporate Identity, I shall not be discussing Corporate behaviour.

The larger the group, the more need for co-ordination and this is no easy task, as large groups of people are very often from different backgrounds, each with different opinions. It is therefore necessary to form one unified opinion and project this to the general public so they can understand clearly what the corporation hopes to achieve. Department Stores are large corporations which fall into this category. Their identity, if successful, should immediately tell the customer what kind of reception they will receive, type of merchandise available and general price range. It can take years for a Corporate Identity to become well known.



The Department Store evolved and grew as a result of the Industrial Revolution which took place in the mid-nineteenth century. Industry was responsible for urbanization and consequently competition grew between traders, so many merged to form stores and further expansion gave rise to the Department Store. Indeed the first Department Store was the Bon-Marche which began as a small shop in Paris in the early nineteenth century. Stores such as Selfridges and Harrods were firmly established by 1860. A trend for Department Stores soon developed. Ireland by 1880 had many well established stores Clerys, Arnotts, Switzers and Brown Thomas were the main ones which still survive today.

Identity for the Department Store a hundred years ago was not the same as one would find today. Firstly, they were smaller and generally family run containing a similar set of values so identity was easier in this respect. The main emphasis was on the range of goods available and this was seen through their window displays which were usually packed with goods. This was even further reflected through their advertising. An 'Informational' advertisement was usually put in a newspaper which told consumers something about the products characteristics. Figure (1) shows such an advertisement Arnotts ran in 'Weekly Freeman's Journal' in 1887. This gradually changed from the twenties onwards, as consumerism matured so did marketing and advertising. Advertisements became 'transformational'. Attitudes of consumers towards brands were altered, lifestyles were attached to particular brands, and through buying those one could achieve personal and social success. This is the mass consumerism we know today. Department Stores were also more of a 'Store' in their layout. Products were usually put behind counters. this layout allowed for very little interaction between Customer and Product. The sales assistant very often influenced customer decision, in other words they were the chief marketers (figure 2). The layout today, in comparative terms, is more like walking into an exhibition where goods are designed to look attractive by their arrangement and positioning. All these elements are

involved in the store's identity, and wrapped, one could say, in the architectural style and labelled with the store name. Changing attitude over the years would seem to be a deciding factor in a Corporate Identity. The basic principles remain unchanged. Trends are responsible for changing attitudes in a store's identity. Choosing a store today is a process of interaction between retailers marketing strategies and individual situational characteristics of buyers. One must realize that marketing only came into existence with the retail store after 1920, so Corporate Identity before this was far more general. Psychological factors were not the main strategy a store used for identity - product range was more important.

Corporate Identity is perhaps more important today because there is so much competition between shops. The market is saturated with brands and if all these shops are to survive, they need a better or different identity to the next shop in order to attract customers. Increased competition also increases the standard of identity which results in constantly changing trends. For example, the recent trend for Department Stores to have 'boutiques' within the store specifying the all important 'Brand name'. This change was needed so that they could compete effectively with their competition. The position of a store vis-a-vis its competitors undoubtedly influences what the store says and how the store says it. So the Identity therefore is largely determined by its competitors.

The Department Store is caught between large chain stores who likewise provide a wide assortment of goods but have strong price appeal based on economics associated with self-service and operational efficiencies, and the small limited-line speciality store which offers a personalized service. Today, in order to survive, Department Stores are changing their underlying identity. They are now starting to offer a more personalized service along with their wide range of 'free' services such as deliveries, store-credit cards, nursery

facilities and elaborate displays - qualities which most of their competitors would not possess. They are dispensing with their dowdy old formats and refurbishing with a new layout which allows for better customer - product interaction. These changes I will discuss further when analyzing Brown Thomas and Switzers.

So who is responsible for Corporate Identity? Years ago, the shop owner decided the store identity. They took care of everything. Today however, there are certain groups of people responsible for each aspect of the store's identity. A good identity depends on a relationship between Store Management, (who dictates the store's basic aims) and the various Graphic, Display, Architectural, and Interior Designers. Design depends greatly on what the customer wants so extensive market research should be carried out before embarking on an identity. Marketing companies are employed for this purpose. Their job is to obtain information about their competitors, statistics on population, age groups, carry out surveys which are aimed at a wide mixture of people. The results are then analysed, formulated and given to the designers so they know the type of people they are catering for. Once the visual elements of identity have been put together, it is up to advertising agencies to project the store's image through other media so as to reach as many people as possible - a very different and complex identity system to that of a hundred years ago!

There is no special recipe companies use to create an identity but the most successful ones do contain an underlying formula. Theorists refer to this as the 'Gestalt' philosophy (German for put-together). When applied to a Department Store it means 'an organised whole in which each individual part affects every other, the whole being more than a sum of its parts' (Pilditch, 1970, p.65).

This applies mainly to the store's advertising and display strategies which tie each individual department together in a



coordinated way. This adds strength to the identity of a whole Department Store. A good example would be a typical Bloomingdales promotion. Every autumn (or Fall) they promote a different country throughout the store incorporating clothes, perfumes, accessories and any other products from different departments associated with the country and this is achieved mainly through advertising and special displays.

In Ireland the same theory applies. The major Department Stores here however promote on a smaller scale as their budget does not allow for lavish displays and advertising.

## 2. GRAFTON STREET AND THE EVOLUTION OF SWITZER & CO. AND BROWN THOMAS

Dublin's City Centre used to be a mixture of traders and dwellers in the early nineteenth century, and the area around Grafton Street was always considered an expensive place to live and consequently to shop. It acquired this exclusive name because of its location; The fashionable areas to live around this time were St. Stephen's Green, Merrion Square and Fitzwilliam Square, all very close to Grafton Street.

In the 1830's railroads were constructed all around Dublin. This new form of transport stimulated the exodus of many of the privileged and middle classes from the centre to the suburbs - hence Grafton Street was gradually converted into a series of shops while still retaining its exclusive name.

Figure (3) shows a plan of Lower Grafton Street in 1950. As one can see, many of the shops dealt in speciality items. Among the shops here one can see Switzer & Co. and Brown Thomas & Co.



Switzer & Co. was founded before Brown Thomas & Co. in 1838 by a 'friendly Swiss immigrant' at number 91 Grafton Street. They were known as Woollen Drapers, Tailors and General Clothiers. Within a short time the store was firmly established. Soon there was a staff of over three hundred employed. It seems a lot then but many of these people would have been responsible for turning out quality clothes. (In 1850, one could buy knickerbockers for £1 - !)

Ten years later, in 1848, Mr. John Brown opened a Haberdashery and one year later he formed a partnership with James Thomas. Right from the very start they dealt with a mixture of only the finest imported and Irish made goods. They were Linen Drapers, Silk Makers, Cashmere and Mantle Makers, Milliners, Lacemen, Hosiers, Glovers and General Outfitters. By 1890, they too had a staff of over three hundred. Their premises were described as:

very extensive and forms one of the most striking features of Grafton Street with numerous plate glass windows presenting, with their attractive exhibition of goods, a recharge appearance perfectly in harmony with the high-class character of the establishment. (Liddy, 1987, p.124)

Despite the famine disaster and resulting depression, both stores did not suffer; in fact, they continued to grow. Figure (4) shows the look of Grafton Street in 1885. Most of the shops are quite small with canvas canopies overhead. Brown Thomas and Switzers were the only Department Stores on Grafton Street and would have enjoyed the prestige the street had to offer.

Brown Thomas and Switzers did of course have competition with the other major Department Stores. Clerys, (established in 1853 as the 'palatial mart') was situated right in the centre

of Dublin in Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street), Arnotts (established in 1845) was in the heart of Henry Street, the main trading area in Dublin. The largest store of all, Pims (established 1843) was on South Great Georges Street. They all stocked similar quality goods and most were situated in prime shopping locations where there was a constant flow of people. This is an important consideration for a store.

Both Brown Thomas and Switzers have changed hands regularly over the years. Brown Thomas managed to retain their original identity throughout such changes with only slight variation. However, Switzers has suffered under different management, but only within the last twenty years.

## PART II

### ANALYSIS.

As both Switzers and Brown Thomas are situated opposite each other on Grafton Street, it would suggest, as they were both Department Stores, that a certain amount of rivalry existed between the two. Indeed it has been mentioned in newspapers in the past. They duplicate their merchandise in particular areas such as cosmetics, specific brands of jewelery and accessories. They also stock many of the same brands of clothes. Their prices therefore are equal in these areas. Brown Thomas & Co. however stock some very exclusive brands of clothing (with similar price tags!) in their 'Private Lines' Department and Ralph Lauren boutique. They also stock speciality goods such as Fortnum and Mason in their food hall, which Switzers, and every other Department Store, do not have. This is where they appeal to a different, more wealthy, clientele. Unlike Brown Thomas, Switzers have a furniture and Hardware section.

It is not known whether Mr. Brown, when opening his shop in 1938 purposely intended it to be a 'speciality' one in order to avoid direct rivalry with Switzers or whether there was just a 'gap in the market'. I can only assume that there was such a gap as there was a lot of very wealthy aristocrats in the mid-nineteenth century who could afford such goods. Switzers on the other hand have always aimed their merchandise at the upper-middle class bracket.

#### 1. SHOP FRONT.

The first impression a person gets of a shop when walking by is the visual look outside. It tells the viewer the type of merchandise it stocks, what age group and gender the stock is aimed at and whether it is expensive. Architectural style

also plays an important part in Corporate Identity. By looking at the building and attached signage, one can tell whether the shop is conservative or avant garde.

Switzer & Co. started out in No. 91 Grafton Street and gradually expanded to occupy four shops on the street. Each shop was of different period style architecturally and as one looks up one can see the windows are arranged at different levels. In 1913 Switzers coordinated the window space to tie in with No. 91 which is in the Edwardian style. It was described as "the best Edwardian shop front in Dublin".<sup>1</sup> Messrs. Donnelly and Moore, architects of the period executed the shop front in Art Nouveau style, incorporating a terracotta frieze.

The shop's Wicklow Street entrance used to have bronzed framed high windows, including six curved glass panels which complemented the Grafton Street entrance. Over the shop front (on the Wicklow Street entrance) the Switzer name was inlaid in mosaic and gold leaf surrounded by nineteenth century elaborately scrolled stone. See figure (5). Fortunately, this is still in existence today.

Brown Thomas is similarly carried out in Edwardian style. They became well established by 1890 and had expanded to take over more adjacent shops by 1930. It would have expanded earlier only the shop was then owned by Gordon Selfridge and he was more interested in expanding his own 'Selfridges' store in London. It was only when the shop was sold to John McGuire in 1947 that the shop really began to thrive. He had previously been managing Clerys. The McGuires were an artistic family and this showed throughout the store. His son Edward, who succeeded John in 1960, purchased 'the Bailey', a public house, and redecorated the front in white panels with small Georgian window panes to match those on the Grafton Street side. He believed it would provide an extra service for its customers. (He even opened a fish restaurant, but it soon closed).



In 1976, Combridges, an art supplies shop adjacent to Brown Thomas, was purchased, and as this store had not changed its Edwardian facade, Edward McGuire decided to refurbish Brown Thomas using the Combridge style. This was needed to create a unity between all the acquired shops. Every detail of the wrought iron work just over the shop windows was restored. The script used was based on the original Combridge style. Also where restoration was not possible replicas were commissioned.

Switzers, sensing that Brown Thomas was taking business away from them took the retrograde step in 1973 to dispense with their traditional shop front and put up a marble facade, an idea manager Denis Brennan got from a store in Sydney. Many of the stores on Grafton Street also had changed their shop fronts to aluminium and plastic. Switzers replaced their curved wooden window frames with straight black anodised aluminium ones set in white marble. This marblized look gradually took over half of their Wicklow Street frontage. The Dublin Corporation would not allow the complete Wicklow Street facade to be taken over by marble. Switzers also replaced the canvas canopies with a permanent thick timber one with a marble facia. The architects, McDonnell and Dixon said the marble 'looked well in the Seventies, but maybe not now'. This is an understatement! As one looks down Grafton Street, aesthetically the timber canopy protrudes too much, interrupting one's clear line of vision down Grafton Street. One of the reasons for having such a canopy was to level out the varying architectural styles into one complete unit visually. A lot of natural light is also blocked out of the store, which in today's current trend of using natural resources to their utmost effect, is not good. Perhaps the only good purpose it serves is to keep the rain off people's heads and protect the window display from fading in strong sunlight. Many Buskers play under it also, so maybe it has added to the general atmosphere of Grafton Street!

The Switzer logo (the old one which is not being used as their current identity) was put onto the marble front in gold using a modified script typeface. The gold is not seen to its advantage against the marble background, and as one can see in figure (6) the gold became increasingly black as time went by and even ran down the marble due to weathering and pollution. This sign is still in use today. Their current logo is no longer set into the marble, but is placed in the bottom left-hand side of their windows, which is most unusual. However this is only a temporary arrangement as future plans for the store's image are being made. This current logo was designed in 1989 by Campaign Services Advertising Agency (Birmingham). In fact, I am told it is based on the same type Campaign Services use themselves only changed to 'Switzers'. On the shop front the logo, executed in the 'Berling' typeface, is reversed out in gold on black with a black bar underneath which is used to denote different information. In this case it reads "Grafton Street, Dublin" (figure 7). The Berling typeface, which is a variation of the Roman typeface suggests sophistication and stability by its serifs backed up by the classic gold against black. The letters are widely spaced and capitals are used which evoke a feeling of monumentality indicating aloofness and lack of that 'personal touch'. A 'sharp' personality comes across which is reinforced by the typeface's angularity, particularly in the 'W' and 'Z'. The only soft yielding qualities are to be found in the 'S' and the curve of the 'R'. This sharpness is further reinforced by the hard-edged black background, hardly the most suitable association for a friendly Department Store. It also resembles Clerys' logo, which on the shop front is gold placed on a warmer deep green background. In fact many shops such as Next, Laura Ashley and Richard Alan use the plain Roman caps as their logo which do not give a particularly friendly first impression. However, unlike Switzers, this was perhaps not their intention. (Figures 8 - 10).

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Switzers old logo in figure(6), which was the specially designed type they used for decades, is more in tune with their friendly nature. As a total opposite to their current logo, it contains virtually no acute angles, using a friendly lower case. This was an updated version of a logo they used in the Thirties. Figure (11) shows the logo applied to their old vans. This was the type of identity most people associated and still associate with Switzers. However, the management decided to change the logo in the mid-Eighties as they felt it had dated and did not give the impression of stability, so the next brief given to the designer was to project a stable and reliable impression. Switzers was in bad financial difficulty at this time, with a debt close to eighteen million, so they could not afford to spend a lot on their new image. The result was too drastic, a complete change from their old identity. Today one sees the old script Switzers logo on the marble plus their new one on the windows and as one enters, overhead (figure 12) one is bombarded by this mixture of type-faces, each fighting for attention. This takes away from any unity the store hopes to achieve. Instead of having a clear entrance into the store, there is an aluminium free-standing sign advertising their restaurant. One good thing they have on their entrance doors is a welcome sign in four different languages which is something Brown Thomas does not have, even though they depend greatly on tourists as customers.

The Brown Thomas logo has changed, too, over the years. Currently, they use the original 'Combridges' typeface, a variation of the Roman type. It is also gold reversed out of black background. The typeface is more substantial than the 'Berling' face, as it is used in the bold case and is not as sharp. Their inscription is also very traditional (figure 13).

The shop front typeface is not, however, Brown Thomas' logo. This is placed lower down, on the upper part of the window itself, in order to hide the track lighting used in Display. Arnotts also use two typefaces on their shop front, a commercial



script and caps for clarity. Brown Thomas' use of commercial script works to their advantage as it is a very controlled well balanced script but also very personalised and dependable. It was designed in 1975 by Irish International Advertising and in the space of fifteen years, has become synonymous with the store's identity proving its success. Their previous logo, however, was quite similar (figure 14). This logo here was used for decades with success so they felt only small alteration was necessary. Brown Thomas always used their logo in brown against a white background but as Brown Thomas was renovated, the logo changed to gold on black indicating the exclusivity of the store.

The typefaces they have used over the store through the years have altered according to fashionable trends which would suggest that their current typeface will change too in the future. Hence they do not insist on a timeless logo, but prefer to change with the times. For example, figure (15) shows Brown Thomas using a san-serif type in 1946. In figure 16 a photograph taken in 1966 shows Brown Thomas sprawled down the side of the building in plastic relief - a real sign of the sixties! One can see below the initials 'BT' overlapping. This referring to Brown Thomas as 'BTs' they felt was less sophisticated so they reverted back to Brown Thomas.

It can be seen that over the years the public have been visually trained and it is no longer necessary to have large sprawling signs, though they do still exist today. Instead they have been replaced with the simple understated sign. Most of the stores along Grafton Street use type for their identity with the exception of Banks and A-Wear, a shop also owned by Galen Weston, who use symbol and type together. Symbols are very subjective, people can read all sorts of meanings into a symbol, which is why Department Stores do not use symbols over their shop front. They may have symbols on signage inside the store which refer to a specific type of

merchandise just as A-Wear's symbol relates to fashion. Logotypes are more objective, as they do not signify any particular meaning or merchandise. A logotype is an outer sign of inner quality.

## 2. WINDOW DISPLAY

Window display forms a major part of visual identity mainly because this is often how first impressions of the store are formed. In addition to the qualities mentioned earlier, window display also projects a certain lifestyle for which their goods are aimed, through quality of merchandise, printing and whether they are bold or subtle. All this information is received through a person's quick glance at the window. It is, therefore, very important for displays to hold one's attention long enough to evoke interest in entering the store.

A good display must also instil a yearning to buy and this is achieved by the Display Designer, who is responsible for the layout, lighting and atmosphere of the windows, using these to create an emotional response on the part of the potential buyer.

Window displays have always reflected the current culture of the time. Figure (17) shows a Switzers display in 1946. The windows were cluttered with goods. Grafton Street became bombarded with shop fronts showing their huge array of merchandise and this presumably was becoming too much for the public to take in. Change was needed, so Brown Thomas' manager, John McGuire, in the fifties employed an artist, Nora McGuinness, to design their windows in order to attract more customers. Unfortunately, there are no recorded photographs but, apparently, her window displays were so incredible and unique they stopped traffic on Grafton Street. She was the first Display Designer in Dublin.

The window displays in Brown Thomas reflect a particular lifestyle, one that is rich, luxurious and seductive. It is always a treat to look at their windows. They have four Designers working full-time on Displays which are changed every two weeks. A lot of research is involved which includes visits to other major cities such as Paris, Germany and London for inspiration from the major stores. The display manager is able to see the new trends in display; he interprets various mixtures of ideas to suit his own formula. Displays in Brown Thomas are planned very much in advance, usually having every second or third display a major one with minor ones interspersed throughout the year. The reason for this is that they are quite restricted in their budget and use the same props from one display to the next. Hence, every minor display will usually be quite stark, sometimes using no props at all, as they are being repainted or altered in some way. They also use the same models which are resprayed twice yearly and new make-up applied. The models used are replicas of real live models which is a good identifier with the current scene in fashion.

In most of their displays, Brown Thomas, use only the richest, most expensive materials and items of clothing in their window to project this over luxurious effect (particularly at Christmas). This is helped by over-emphasizing accessories, one of their policies in displays. This is done purely to attract attention and is very successful. They do not wish to suggest that the general public dress like this; it is purely for fun and fantasy, like being on stage. Unfortunately, I have no photographs of their Christmas display, but it is undoubtedly their best as they use all these techniques mentioned along with dramatic lighting and rich colours.

The display in figures 18 - 20 is a minor one as there are very little supporting props. The surrounding space allows the eye to rest on the models which are arranged so that the eye leads from one model to the next. Figure 18 shows a



triangular composition (like that of a religious painting). Here the eye is led from the tallest model down along the next model's arm to the model sitting down. The direction of her legs draws the eye out of this display and back into the model behind where the eye can rest. The foreground and background are linked together by this ethnic pattern on the urn which is echoed on the backdrop. This also unifies the window, along with highlighting. There is however no element of spring in this display (March 1991), the colours are quite subdued.

Their accessories (figure 20) are given a special window. Here they have wrapped a dummy with fabric and over-accessorized with shoes, bags, gloves and jewelery in a very casual fashion.

In contrast, their Ralph Lauren display (figure 21) reflects a casual country lifestyle. They use the traditional 'dummy' to display clothes which are set on a veranda looking out toward the sea, which is indicated by the sand in the foreground. The Ralph Lauren setting is always natural. Their winter display is usually arranged very traditionally, with a few old leather suitcases, and old straw hat and maybe a bale of straw and lots of natural wood, (in fact, the wood seen in figure 21 is stripped to its natural colour and varnished). This is offset by warm lighting which completes the image. The emphasis is always, however, on leisure (for the wealthy).

Brown Thomas' Men's store is situated on Duke Street where their display holds less importance. A theme which runs through their Women's fashion on Grafton Street is always carried around to the Men's department. The pattern is repeated yet again in figure 22. Brown Thomas rarely have men on their own in a display, there is nearly always a woman there to support.

Generally in Dublin, Men's Displays tend to be very traditional and a little staid, projecting no real personality. Men's



display has a long way to go before it reaches the standard of Women's and I am sure this will change, as the new Nineties man is more fashion conscious and will do his own shopping.

Switzer's approach is geared towards selling particular merchandise and fashion. There are six on their design team. In their fashion windows, they choose specific outfits, which they have well stocked in store, for display. They use very little supporting props and generally have very simple repeated vertical models, both male and female, with a relatively plain backdrop. Their windows are far less packed with goods than Brown Thomas. It is a kind of hard sell window display technique, where the lavish 'extras' as seen in Brown Thomas, are kept to a minimum as they feel it detracts from the purpose of the display - to see the particular item shown. Also simple windows attract a more realistic and budget-conscious shopper.

Switzers window display can be broken down into three sections; their main display which occupies four windows, is used for fashion; two subordinate, one depicting their crystal and china, aimed at tourists and the other showing household goods, generally aimed at the housewife. Figure 23 is a fine example of a small household display. They have treated the pans like an art object, a piece of sculpture on exhibition. Their use of red lighting which indicates heat very strikingly sets it off.

Unlike Brown Thomas, they relate their windows to other areas of promotion found inside the store and in magazines. This can be seen in relation to their promotion on 'Home Event' which coincides with Dublin's 'Ideal Homes Exhibition'. Their main display on Grafton Street which is normally given over to fashion, is filled with household goods (figures 24 - 26). There is less unity than Brown Thomas between their windows, as each one has a different format. It is more commercial

as each item is priced, unlike Brown Thomas. They have also used a number of supporting props in figure 24 which emphasise the naturalness of the furniture. The lighting is well arranged here. They have two lights inside the dresser, on the left, and daylight is suggested through the trees. However their best display is in figure 26. Unlike any of Brown Thomas's displays, this has a very personal and funny character. The arrogant Butler (which is like 'Jeeves', a P.G. Woodhouse character) is on his way to serve 'mother' a cup of tea. This is a Mother's Day display which is supported by the 'Thanks Mother' photograph in the background. (This photograph is in fact an advertisement for a competition and can be seen in both newspapers and inside the store). Surrounding him are suggested presents laid out in a traditional manner. The 'Home Event' is further reinforced inside the store in the furniture and household department (figure 27).

Switzers, however, is most famed for their Christmas window which is animated every year, with little moving warm furry gnomes. Although it is especially intended for children, adults too are greatly captivated. The Display manager, Raymond Jenkinson, started this tradition in 1977. He got a German modelmaker Heimo Mordelt to make the required gnomes and Switzers display staff made the surrounding props and display themselves. Each year there is a certain theme for their windows. They like to keep away from fairytales because of their association with witches, poisoned apples etc. Only happy stories are depicted with warm background lighting, reds, yellows and soft tones highlight the furry gnomes. They start their preparations as far back as February so all can be unveiled on 16th November which is the same date Santa's grotto opened.

The intention of the display was not to increase sales but they regard it as a gesture to the city, a bit of theatre and fantasy. Proof of this was in 1986 when they had no display, there was no noticeable change in trade. The future of the

Christmas display is uncertain because of Switzer's financial difficulties. It would be a great pity to see this tradition disappear, as it enlivens Grafton Street a great deal. It is in this way Switzers come across as being the friendlier store. Brown Thomas remain cool and sophisticated. Both stores have other recurring displays in addition to the Christmas one, appropriate to the time of year, at St. Patrick's Day, Easter and Halloween.

### 3. INTERIOR DISPLAY AND SIGNAGE.

As the customer enters the store, displays are continued inside. While windows are designed to stop traffic, interior displays are designed to either guide the shopper to specific items in stock or to reinforce the shop's image - displays used for decorative purpose.

Most interior displays are small and act like a quick reference index to what is available within the specific area. It makes the complex job of choosing easier for the buyer, making shopping an aesthetic as well as enjoyable experience.

Switzers in 1990 decided to change their interior display from being rather complicated and disordered to very simple and clear ones. For example 'Accent' a large young fashion department on Switzer's ground floor, used to have fashion displays on hangers which were attached to large boards which separated 'Accent' from 'Saxone' the shoe department beside it. This made 'Accent' into a mini-shop which was not consistent with the overall Switzers' identity. Figure 28 shows Accent's new display area. It does not block any views, can be seen clearly coming down the escalator, and the direction of the surrounding window acts as a pointer towards 'Accent'. A clear view can now be seen between 'Saxone' and 'Accent' (figure 29). Throughout the store they are continuing to open up space, which many competitors lack.



Their previous heavily segmented look within the store was due to the general fashion trend in the late 1970's and 1980's. During this time there was a rise in shopping malls and arcades with smaller shops which posed quite a threat to the Department Store. On Grafton Street alone, there were three arcades; Grafton Arcade, Fifth Avenue and Grafton Court. On Henry Street, there was ILAC, which attracted a greater mixture of customers as there was a larger variety of goods offered. There was also a rise of 'category killers' (stores carrying a broad assortment in one targeted category of merchandise such as HMV music store) and 'niche retailers' (stores carrying a narrow but deep assortment such as Benetton, The Gap, etc). This affected Switzers' identity by stimulating them into setting up a 'store within a store', where each person referred to specific goods such as coats and suits, coordinates etc. Brand name was less important. Today most of Switzers' sectioning is identified by Brand Name (figures 30 and 31) as this has become more important today.

Brown Thomas use a variety of interior displays according to the different departments and space available. On entering the store they have two matching displays in the middle of their cosmetic counters (figures 32). These bear no relevance to the cosmetic industry. They are related to the fabric, swimwear and accessory areas. They also have such displays at their cashiers in the clothing departments called 'point of purchase' promotions, in which items, usually cosmetics and accessories, are displayed in a special case built into the cashier's table. This is intended to increase other departmental sales.

Brown Thomas also use a different type of display (figure 33) in which no articles of clothing or accessories are advertised. This particular display is used to indicate the Men's department in a purely decorative manner, enhancing the store's image.



Upstairs, 'Private Lives', their exclusive designer department, demonstrates a good use of narrow space available by displaying women's clothing on hangers all in a row, emphasized by modern spot-lighting (figure 34). They also use photographs when there is limited space. There seems to be a current trend for photographs to take over interior display, most likely because every inch of space is important as selling space when rent is an average of £140 per square foot on Grafton Street. 'Next' use photographs with their logo underneath supported by a three dimensional display for maximum impact and this is very successful. Not only do photographs tell the wearer how to coordinate a look, but they put it into context. With the aid of models it is easy to identify the clothes. 'Next' is the only store on Grafton Street to use this approach.

Unlike Switzers, Brown Thomas' displays tend to be treated very exclusively, encasing merchandise in old period furniture which can be found all over the store (figure 35). Similarly, their 'open' accessory displays on ground floor are usually laid out traditionally on tables covered in materials such as lace and are very similar to those found in 'Laura Ashley' at the top of Grafton Street.

Brown Thomas rely more so on signage and lighting effects than interior display, mainly because the store is composed of small compartments leading off the main floor. They have also built structures to give the impression of little 'curiosity' departments similar to that of a shopping arcade. The best example of this is 'Private Lives'. As the name suggests, their compartments are very private and exclusive, more expensive than their regular stock. 'Acquiesce' on the top of Grafton Street, is very similar to 'Private Lives' in their interior design - traditional hardwood floors contrasted with ultra-modern lighting. As Switzers seem to be coming more open in plan, Brown Thomas are moving in the opposite direction becoming more segmented, so it is very important to have the shop well

signed for direction. This closed-in feeling is also backed up by the colour scheme of the shop. Although the main emphasis is on white, cream and grey, their departments use rich mahogany, deep bottle greens, burgundys and old classic colours throughout their interior. Switzers on the other hand use pastel shades to support their use of white, making the store look larger.

Most of the signs in Brown Thomas work very well with their identity on the shop front. The separate departments are signed directly onto the wall, in relief, which produces a nice shadow when lit. They use a classic Roman typeface 'Times' (figure 36). They also use script for variation in some areas of the store. Their Food Hall, for example, is beautifully rendered in script which is repeated across their shelving. The flowery subtle wallpaper gives a conservative, unobtrusive atmosphere to the area. Their Food Hall is owned by Fortnum and Mason, of London, a store of similar image and layout.

In contrast to this conservatism, Brown Thomas upstairs have a young Fashion Department 'Wardrobe' which is quite dynamic and very upbeat. Designed by 'Design Factory' here in Dublin, the signage on entering 'Wardrobe' is a combination of the 'neon' 1970's and typographic 1980's (figure 37). It is very young and fashionable. This sign will probably date quickly, but is that such a bad thing? After all, fashion itself dates quickly. It is a specific department of Brown Thomas which contains many brand names that appeal to a youth market. Brown Thomas segregate departments according to age, as in 'Wardrobe', as well as brands, as in 'Ralph Lauren'.

Switzers also have a youth department which is divided into different brands. Their 'French Connection' boutique is similarly furnished with wood. Their signage works very well here (figure 38). 'French Connection' is written on opaque perspex so that no light coming from the window is blocked out.

Switzers' general signage, however, is of fairly poor quality. Figure 39 shows an example of badly laid out type which is too big with very little spacing between the words. It is in fact, of similar standard to Brown Thomas store directory (figure 40). This is an old sign they used in the 1970's which has altered as their departments altered as one can see by looking at each floor guide here.

Switzer's guide is very clear, situated over their elevators and at each escalator. They use colours which match their pastel walls in many departments - a sign of good coordination. However, their directory is in no way related to the store logo, the store's main image, the result is two conflicting images which only confuse the identity and weaken its impact. Their type is san-serif a complete change from the Roman caps they use in all their other signs (figure 41).

#### 4. SHOPPING BAGS

The shopping bag's original and main purpose is to carry purchased goods. However, its uses have been expanded over the years. It now serves as an effective form of advertising. Even just walking up Grafton Street, one can tell a lot about someone by looking at their shopping bags.

Paper bags were originally used and, in fact, there has been a recent return to the paper bag as they are so environmentally friendly. Bloomingdales use their 'Big Brown Bag' which is immediately identifiable. Print quality is excellent as the surface lends itself better to colour than plastic. 'Next' produce very colourful yet tasteful bags according to the seasons.

Plastic bags boomed in the 1960's but the quality of print was bad on plastic. However, in 1982, four colour process printing called flexography enabled a finer colour resolution and, thus, more clarity, producing some very dynamic shopping bags.



Both Switzers' and Brown Thomas' bags come in a variety of sizes in both plastic and paper. Unfortunately, I do not have an example of Brown Thomas' earleir bag, but I am told they have remained fairly uniform in shape. A certain prestige is associated with a Brown Thomas bag. They play an important role in the Brown Thomas 'tradition' which can be seen by their choice of words on the bag. Their current range of bags is one of the most expensive on Grafton Street. They are made of superior plastic and thus have a longer life expectancy. Consequently, their bags will be used over and over again. Although their design is quite striking it is still very traditional. However, through market research it was found that the customer did not want much change. They changed their bags tow years ago. Figure 42 shows their previous bag (on the right) where the script was quite ornate and hard to read. It is also more expensive because of the white plastic handles attached to the matt printing. They brought out an alternative cheaper bag (on the left) making the type simple and changing the blind, their Edwardian reference, to make it more ornate.

Switzers have gone through a variety of bags according to their change in logo (figure 43). The logo on their current bag is printed in matt on a white gloss background. Much of the type is lost when reduced on a smaller bag due to the narrowness of the typeface, an important factor which was overlooked when the logo was designed. A good logo should be applicable in all given situations.

It is only in their shopping bags that colour is applied in the logo, as the shop front is black and gold. They chose blue and green, signifying an earthly quality (sea and land) which resulted from their previous logo which can be seen in their stationary (figure 44).

## 5. STATIONARY.

So far I have discussed the area of Corporate Identity which is seen by the public and which is the most influential (disregarding advertising for the moment). According to Henrion and Parkin;

"There is a spectrum of 'tones of voice' appropriate to different kinds of items. At the 'loud' end of the spectrum are advertising, signs, vehicles and retail packaging which are seen in brief glimpses amongst highly competitive surroundings and have to shout to attract attention".

In the middle of the spectrum are most of the stationary and publications which, though temporary in use, can take for granted the main attention of the person, and need only moderate emphasis to do their job of reinforcing the image.

At the 'quiet' end of the spectrum are the items in long-term use, - durable products, buildings (as distinct from signs and displays which they may carry) and furnishings. Here, any over-emphasis becomes increasingly irritating as time goes by. Again internal stationary functionally needs less emphasis on identity than external stationary." (Henrion; Parker; 1967, p.11).

I refer to this quote as it was written in 1967 and, although much of what they claim is true, it is more important to design of the 1970's. Today the emphasis is not so much for design to have to 'shout' to attract attention; instead, design has become more subtle because of the public's visual education which has gradually progressed over the years.

However, both Brown Thomas and Switzers have adhered to this statement regarding their stationary. Both of their designers

have merely taken their logo and plonked it at the top of an A4 sheet of paper and centered it so it looks well. Virtually no thought has been put into either design.

It came as a shock to look at the Brown Thomas letterhead. It is unbalanced, too much space between Brown Thomas & Co. Ltd. and their address, leaving the remaining telephone numbers top heavy (figure 45). Intended, I am sure, for short-sighted people. The 'Brown Thomas' is far too big and bold; even the print quality is bad. It probably would have pleased Henrion and Parkin in 1967, but today logos are being designed with more subtlety and refinement such as Harrods in figure 46. Surely this restraint is a trait of Brown Thomas' Corporate Identity and should come through on their letterhead. Their compliment slip is similar, worse in fact, as it is not even centered (more space to the left).

Switzers logo does not look too bad at the top of the page. However, as one looks down one sees a mixture of badly spaced, heavily printed and crooked (look at fax number) words which are an eye-sore. They use an envelope which is left over from their last logo.

Their previous letterhead was a disaster and they found difficulty in applying it to other printed material (figure 46). It is better designed however, even though it is geared towards tourism. This was an expensive mistake for Switzers. It has absolutely no relevance to their merchandise.

Both stores feel their stationary is adequate to get the message across. The fact that it almost looks like a 'stamp' means it can be applied in other situations such as invoices and quotes etc. very easily with no further design needed to adapt to the various applications. This, I feel, is an easy and cheap way out of design. Many other shops have excelled in design, for example, 'Esprits' printed material (figure 47) 'Next', 'Laura Ashley' and 'A-Wear', to mention a few.



All immediately evoke a good design sense which is to be even more prominent in the 'nineties'. Perhaps they should take a note of how Banks coordinate their printed material.

## 6. PROMOTION AND ADVERTISING

A thesis could be written on Advertising and Promotion alone, it is such an important area of Corporate Identity. However, as I am more concerned with visual style rather than marketing objectives, I shall discuss just a couple of campaign styles in relation to the store's identity.

Advertising is intended to reach a large number of potential customers nationwide, whereas promotion reaches people on a smaller scale within the store. It is considered, in Switzers' opinion especially, that the sheer presence of products and their visibility can attract customers, counting for a lot more than any amount of preconditioning through advertising. That is why a larger share of Switzers' marketing budget is going towards promotion.

Both Stores carry out a vast number of sales promotions during the year. There are basically two types of promotion. Those which are intended to sell merchandise through "free offers" (such as 'get a free nail treatment when you purchase any two Revlon products to the value of £15 - save £7') and those intended to back up the store's policies of goodwill. The latter are not linked with any brand and usually take place at specific times throughout the year. Switzers, for example, capitalize on tourists around St. Patrick's Day when they have harpists in their crystal section where they will also engrave crystal free. They also give away whiskey and shamrocks. Both stores frequently organize fashion shows which not only sell clothes, but are also very relaxed social occasions where a certain rapport between customer and staff is built.

Direct response advertising is used to make the public aware of a promotional event. It stimulates an immediate response. Newspapers are generally used as they appeal to a wide range of readers. Brown Thomas use the Personal Section at the back of the Irish Times (figure 48). Brown Thomas have no design input here as the layout is done by the Irish Times. Switzers on the other hand, use the Herald and Evening Press for most of their Direct Response, particularly for sales.

Sales attract a vast number of people which fall outside the store's regular clientele. The main people attracted are generally the middle-class price-conscious. It is during this time that Switzers and Brown Thomas are most competitive as they are both seeking bargain customers. Their advertising strategies are similar.

Switzers present their sales data in a very clear, well ordered and most importantly, attention grabbing format (figure 49). The reversed Roman type in the black bar is directly related to the Switzer logo. They have managed to combine both the store identity along with individual brand names with ease. Having the actual brand name typeface makes for easier identification which Brown Thomas did not use in their Christmas sales advertisements. The Brown Thomas logo is more noticeable and their sales format comes across as being quite exclusive by their use of grey which adds depth and highlights the various brands (figure 50).

The second type of advertising and perhaps the most important for a company's image is called 'Institutional' advertising. It is designed to attract customers over a long period of time. Brown Thomas launch a campaign twice yearly to reinforce their image. They fill half a page of the Irish Times with colour images backed up by poetic type. Tradition, reliability, expertise and customer service were the four qualities of every advertisement in the Irish Times. Figure 51 shows the one they had before Christmas. Another example

of this campaign, one which is quite different in style to their Christmas advertisement is in figure 52. This advertisement is aimed at their cosmetics department. Instead of taking a subtle approach which would normally be associated with cosmetics, they have quite blatantly numbered their services from one to ten. This is supported by fairly crude illustrations which look as though they were a quick after-thought to compliment their layout. Very little subtlety or prestige is suggested through the visual style of this advertisement, and in this respect, the store's image is not reinforced even though the actual verbal content does emphasize it.

Switzers ran an eight page campaign in 'U' magazine (September 1990) which emphasized their more personalized qualities centered around a good customer/staff relationship (figure 53).

They designed the front page to look like the cover of a magazine by tapering the type around the image. Here they have taken a psychological approach to fashion, telling women what was 'in' and how to wear it. This verbal information is then visualized on the following pages. Their logo coincides with brand name on each of the six pages in a standard format. The article is finished with a personal touch which gives across the message that Switzers cares most about the customer, so have made shopping more pleasureable and simpler by dividing their fashion floor into clearly branded sections. Their future 'instutional' advertising is going to emphasize their staff being highly trained to give customers advice on choice and suitability. This should provide good competition with the recent shopping malls sprouting up around Dublin. They want to project the image, as do most department stores, that a 'family-type' run store offers a far more personalized service all under one roof, but also that they stock all the well known brands.



The third type of advertising is 'non-institutional' or 'Promotional' advertising in which the main purpose is to sell a particular brand.

Advertising brands, for the department store, is quite difficult in a fairly saturated market which contains the same products and brands and perhaps a better way of advertising. Newly trained advertisers and marketers have very innovative formats. Both Brown Thomas and Switzers have kept their respective agencies for a long time so their formats have remained fairly conservative.

Advertising is an extra cost for Department Stores as all they really want to do is make people come into 'their' store and buy the brands already available in speciality shops, their competition. So advertising a particular brand more than their image may, in effect, be advertising for their competitors. This brings me to question should brand names be copied directly on to the Department Store's advertisements, as people will identify with say 'Wrangler' and just walk into a Wrangler shop as a result of Switzers' advertisement.

Brown Thomas and Switzers (and other Department Stores) use this special brand advertising in such a way so as to sell a particular lifestyle, by coordinating a particular brand with their own background setting to project a certain store quality.

Switzers had a campaign in February 1991 which consisted of a sixteen page feature in 'IT' magazine; window display and interior display, all on New York (figure 59). This was a good concept in which their identity would be seen in the magazine and further reinforced as they walked by and inside the store. However, I feel the money they spent on getting Miss Ireland over to New York and taking photographs of her could have been better visualized. Their campaign was intended

for the modern woman, the business executive, which is their association with New York. In many of the photographs, which are a little bit suspect in quality, she looks totally out of place against the background. She is wearing clothes that are too old for her and she is so unnaturally posed, similar to fashion shoots of the 1970's and early 1980's. Other stores use much more aesthetically photographic angles. Even their last campaign as described earlier (figure 53) was more visually interesting. Instead of reinforcing the Switzers logo, they have stressed New York on every page.

Brown Thomas use the same format in most of their promotional advertising. They use a wide variety of magazines ranging from 'U' and 'IT' to 'Phoenix', theatre programmes and even 'Car' magazine.

Their usual format is to have an image which is cropped at the bottom to leave room for their logo and address. Brand name is also mentioned on the same scale as their logo. A typical example in figure 55 depicts a well dressed woman in suitably elegant surroundings, here having breakfast in a 'French' restaurant having croissants and coffee. The photograph says she is not the type to slave over a hot stove. She is fairly wealthy, not afraid to be seen eating alone or without a 'man', independent and very aware of what is going on around her. She is the ideal woman of the 1990's, this is how women would like to perceive themselves.

Brown Thomas' main competitors in the magazine world would have to be Richard Alan who buy space at the beginning of a magazine. They rarely put their models into context. Instead, they let the clothes dictate the lifestyle. Acquiesce are also quite competitive. Their layout, however, changes a lot. The only feature of recognition is their logo which has been put on a black bar just like Switzers and just like Brown Thomas! (figure 56).

Market Research indicates that advertising works best when coordinated with known trends. Perhaps this is why many advertisements look the same. The market becomes saturated with the same type of advertisement. Only the discerning eye can tell the difference between a Richard Alan and a Brown Thomas advertisement without their logo. Many companies seem to be afraid to try new formats and experiment with different methods within magazine boundaries. I feel there is not enough differentiation between different Department Store advertisements. Independent retailers are already attracting more attention through their unusual camera angles, lighting, experimentation in printing using duotone, black and white right through to amazing colour combinations, even advertising on tracing paper (however, this falls out of the magazines' standard paper and can be very annoying while turning the pages, just like perfume testers). A look through Vogue magazine demonstrates my point. It is far more visually exciting and not necessarily more expensive.

Women's fashion advertising is perhaps the most important type for Brown Thomas as it accounts for nearly half of their stock. Switzers break down their advertising budget into three equal areas; Household, Fashion and Tourism.

Tourists are very important to Switzers, especially Americans. They like to promote not just 'Irishy' goods but known brands as well. They use 'Cara', a tourist orientated magazine, chiefly for this purpose but also buy space on tourist maps and brochures. One year, they even hired a boy to hand out a Switzers promotion pack to every American tourist getting off the bus in Nassau Street. This promotion pack (figure 57 in the middle) was made with their old logo in 1986 (a logo they got directly from Barkers shop in London. In this they stressed quality, service and value as well as tax-free goods - very competitive. Inside the folder is a 'good shopping guide to Ireland' (figure 57 on the right).



The folder also contains individual brand catalogues. They have updated this folder into a more portable smaller version with the new Switzer logo on the cover incorporated into a Celtic design.

In addition to general advertising - the stores also produce catalogues at Christmas. In 1990 both Brown Thomas and Switzers brought out a gift catalogue, both using the exact same format of paper, yet both pertaining to their respective clients (figures 58 and 59).

Brown Thomas used a high quality coated paper with quite an exciting layout. They describe their gifts in terms of excellence, unashamed luxury and sophistication incorporated into very poetic language. They aimed this catalogue at the very busy business person who has little time to shop.

Switzers took a more limited approach, aiming their catalogue towards fairly wealthy women who may be too busy to shop. Their selection of clientele this would appeal to was very small. Most women like to sample perfume rather than refer to a catalogue and order by mail. They should also have used a different format to Brown Thomas as it only increases competitive awareness and Brown Thomas' is clearly more superior in quality.

## PART III

### WHAT THE FUTURE HAS IN STORE.

Switzers was a major topic of interest in 1990 with all the newspapers forecasting who would buy the store as it was on the market. It had previously been owned by 'House of Fraser' (who also own Harrods) since 1985 and the reason they sold Switzers was because they wanted to expand their companies in the United Kingdom, their home base (according to House of Fraser). Brown Thomas, owned by Canadian, Galen Weston, bought Switzers for 8.5 million and they paid off Switzer's debt of 20 million, so a total of 28.5 million was spent. No information was available on the store's future plans but it was rumoured <sup>2</sup> that all going well, Brown Thomas will move their units into Switzers and develop the existing Brown Thomas as a shopping arcade. There were certain sales conditions however:

1. Switzers is to be maintained as a Department Store group.
2. The new company would employ Switzer's staff.

One reason Switzers came into financial trouble, along with every other Department Store, was that they were slow to react to the changing trends around them. As new Speciality shops came, Arcades, ILAC, and more recently Stephen's Green Centre, Switzers continued to operate under the policies of service, quality and value; policies nearly every other store promises (Dunnes Stores, for example). It is only recently they have begun their personalized programme offering brands under one big friendly roof.

It is interesting that most Department Stores, not just in Dublin, but Belfast also, are at the moment going through major refurbishment. This is positive proof that they are updating their 'image' in order to win back their lost customers. It is therefore important for the Department Store

to build customer loyalty. Through promotions and advertising campaigns, which are very difficult for a shopping complex because of the wide variety of shoppers they appeal to, a very definite character can be built up. With this increase in personal interest, I think the Department Store days have not ended and the future is actually very promising. Clerys for example, have taken a nostalgic approach to their new campaign, advertising their traditional values. They are really coming back into the market as a well established store. Their refurbishments were expensive. They are aiming their new image at a slightly more upmarket clientele than before. This is partly due to the Council who are trying to upgrade O'Connell Street and also due to chains such as Dunnes Stores and Primark who are extremely competitive price-wise.

The appeal of Brown Thomas, the speciality store, is that everything it does is carefully tailored to meet a specific lifestyle segment with a unique product mix which is found nowhere else under one roof. So in effect Brown Thomas have very little rivalry around Dublin.

In 1987, the manager of Switzers, Denis Brennan, was planning on a new corporate look to upgrade the store. He proposed taking away the canopy and removing the entire frontage installed during the 1960's. The shop would be stripped back to its former glory and everything repaired. Their architects, McDonnell and Dixon, (who made all the changes in the first place!) were to reinstate the original entrance doorway and replace the solid wooden doors in traditional style. I also think this would have been a great step forward, if combined with up-to-date marketing strategies of coordinated promotion and advertising right through the store.



## Conclusion

Corporate Identity is a unique trademark or logo which is a visual representation reflecting a company's basic aims. It is necessary for the Department Store to be coordinated for maximum impact. Paul Rand, in his book 'A Designer's Art' says 'a trademark is created by a designer but made by a corporation'. Identity is therefore the coordination between design and store personality.

Within the last 100 years there has been a change in identity. Pure junction and information which was the identity given to the public, seen in window display, interior layout and advertising gradually gave way to an identity which relied on what the public wanted through market research. A greater interaction with products and a more aesthetic sense of design evolved.

Both Switzers' and Brown Thomas's shop front has remained fairly stable over the years. However Switzers, only within the last twenty years, changed their visual identity many times which coincided with their growing debt. Their current shop front has three conflicting logotypes which is most confusing and does not project a great sense of unity. Cracks in the wall cannot be papered, which is what Switzers seemed to be doing.

Inside the store, Brown Thomas continue to project this luxurious image through their expensive furnishings and unique displays. They are also moving into very segmented, individualized departments, in order to compete with smaller boutiques along Grafton Street and Powerscourt Townhouse Centre which is also very exclusive and private in appearance. Switzers are opening up more in layout, giving a large appearance so as to compete effectively with places like the Stephens Green Centre who have taken business away from lower Grafton Street.

Brown Thomas rely a lot on advertising. Their main advertisements are 'promotional' but they also run 'institutional' campaigns twice yearly where they emphasize quality, exclusivity and personal service, thus adding to their prestige.

Switzers do a lot of promotional advertising also, but their main emphasis is on 'in-store' promotion which they feel is more personal. Their coordination in advertising and promotion is better than Brown Thomas and can be more closely related to Blooming Dales, on a smaller scale of course!

Finally, a corporate identity must be memorable and to be memorable ~~and to be memorable~~ it must be unique. Brown Thomas is very unique, in fact, 'there's no place quite like it' as they say themselves. Switzers need to establish their identity firmly in the public's mind, which means they need to project just one identity at one time, instead of three. However, I believe there is a good future in Department Stores and Switzers, under Brown Thomas ownership, will hopefully have a good future too, by stabilizing an identity which relates to their friendly nature.

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