

# Communication Management

## The product

The heart of the "Graz 2003" product was not the 6,000 individual events. These were actively advertised as a sort of cross-selling offer, only on the spot, i.e. at the point of sale. The heart of the product was represented by unmistakable, unique symbols, unambiguously identifiable with Graz both at home and abroad, and achieving their communication at symbolic level: the Island in the Mur, the Clock Tower Twin, the Kunsthaus as friendly alien. It was the way in which the public spaces at the motorway exits, the railway station, the airport, and everything up to the city was presented, down to the Lift to Mary and the art taxis, which brought the experience home to everyone. However, as a product, Graz 2003 also discovered its own media at the same time: namely the inhabitants of Graz themselves. Projects such as the Mountain of Memories struck such a deep chord in the consciousness of the population that it was the people of Graz themselves who became the most important means of communication for Graz 2003. Only in this way was it possible to generate the image of a City defined by means of culture itself, in which there is always something going on and in which there is always something to be experienced and discovered.

## Competitive strategy

The competitive strategy for Graz 2003 therefore consisted of simply ignoring the competition. On the international plane, Graz 2003 achieved its communication by means of significant incomparable symbols, images and messages which could only originate from Graz and from nowhere else.

## Dramaturgical marketing

The fact must be conceded that for many years past many important decisions on the infrastructure of Graz such as the Kunsthaus, the new City Arena, etc. had been put on the back burner or not properly addressed, and accordingly, it being only because of the Cultural Capital year that any distinct change took place in the quality of infrastructure in the city within a very short period of time, Graz 2003 was a real stroke of luck for the city. However, we exploited this good fortune to the absolute maximum in our dramaturgical marketing. To reinforce this effect of a city rediscovering itself through its communication presence, the following scenario was developed:

### 2002 - the year of preparation:

In the year 2002, two advertising campaigns designed by Lowe Lintas GGK were carried out under the slogans "Graz - who would have guessed?" and "Graz - anything goes". The important aspect here is that these campaigns were only run in national and international mass media. Virtually no attention was directed to regional media and specialist cultural media. The external approach adopted was: tell them. The internal approach was that what is regarded as important in Vienna, Berlin and Venice - but not in Graz - must indeed be important, namely reinforcing self-confidence. In Graz itself, in the course of this year the Cultural Capital kept a deliberately low profile in the field of traditional advertising, to allow it to achieve a dramatic increase at the opening of the event. Irrespective of advertising, however, during this time intensive information was provided for all of the important groups of people on the ground to promote speculation among them. Behind this lies the 'football manager' effect: just as each one of us is a football manager, so, under the surface, each of us should be an expert when it comes to cities of culture. This was the mix which was to provide the basis for the gala opening presentation.

### The opening: the Big Bang

The earliest signs took the form of an unfortunate unplanned accident: when, a few weeks before the grand opening, the Island in the Mur was to be floated into its final position, for a few days it was left stranded at the quay like a beached whale, due to a lump of rock in the river bed. The first test for the football coach effect was passed: thousands of local inhabitants strolled along the bank for a look, and now everyone is a marine engineer.

However, the great opening as originally planned took place some time later: practically overnight, after the Christmas period, in no time at all Graz 2003 assumed such a massive visual image throughout the whole city that the entire city was turned into a branded world. The objective here was to make the conversion of the city due to the Cultural Capital year sudden and distinctly visible, to present an unfamiliar 'city experience' effect and in so doing to attribute all of the positive changes in the city unambiguously to Graz 2003.

However, once again what was crucial was the indivisible unity of product and brand: in spite of the difficult mid-winter time, no previous city of culture had previously dared to programme such a tightly-packed, comprehensive inaugural

festival lasting four days as did Graz 2003. All of the major programme lines for the rest of the year were already set in this frantic opening. It is only at the actual opening event that one enjoys the full attention of the international press, and it is at the opening that the climate of opinion is formed for the rest of the year's programme - and it is also here that the seeds of a subsequent myth can be sown. 130,000 visitors stormed the inaugural festivities, braving temperatures as low as minus 9 degrees, with the international media providing comprehensive reports couched in the highest terms.

**The programme year:** consistently aggressive follow-up addressing all communication channels and markets: Graz 2003 as a content company.

For the year of the programme itself, the communication mix was designed distinctly differently from before: traditional advertising was virtually completely removed from the national and international mass media, and replaced by a mix of aggressive press work on the part of the Graz 2003 press section, co-operation on content with important national media, and intensive below the line and guerrilla marketing activities at cultural rendezvous and festival locations throughout Europe, accompanied by a small number of selected point of interest advertising measures. In the ongoing programme year, Graz 2003 was, with its 108 programmed projects, primarily a content company with interesting content to offer to the media. Traditional advertising of the programme was only undertaken in the regional area, and in this instance with a conspicuous outdoor advertising media profile. The objective was primarily to win over the required high numbers of visitors from the regional area, to ensure that the city remained busy at all times, thus making it possible to live the experience of the Cultural Capital in the form of a bustling city.

For the summer, a further change was applied: targeted now were additional people making impulse decisions to visit from the neighbouring summer holiday areas. At the same time, there was intensive processing of the market primarily by means of promotions and also directly within the source markets as well as in the neighbouring regions. In this phase, the teams promoting Graz 2003 were often active at the same time in 7 different locations throughout Europe.

#### **Cheek and instrument transfer**

Graz 2003 relied to a disproportionately high level on below the line and guerrilla marketing activities. In the process, what were in some cases simple instruments of communication tried and tested in other sectors were reapplied in the cultural sector: the Venice Biennale was swamped with little green and blue bags, and the inhabitants of Salzburg who had failed in their attempt to win the Winter Olympic Games were confronted at the Salzburg festival games with balloons and bicycle rickshaws bearing the cheeky slogan "The Cultural Capital greets the Capital of Sport", busy squares were cordoned off without warning by Cultural Capital barriers and the Graz 2003 hot air balloon landed in Linz at the Klangwolke event bearing the slogan "Linz on the Mur", right in the middle of the major festival of our Upper Austrian neighbour, just as unexpectedly as it appeared elsewhere. Promotions of this kind had to be generated as well as addressing target groups in the source markets, and for the most part, they achieved their goal.