

Document: ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/Inf14
Distribution: 09/11/2021

ACCOBAMS COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

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Presented by the Secretariat

Issue: presenting a state of play on the development of a Communication Strategy, which is considered of crucial importance to strengthen the ACCOBAMS communication means through effective and harmonised communication tools according to pre-settled procedures that will serve the main purpose of improving the visibility of ACCOBAMS work, alongside with its activities and outcomes as a successful regional cooperation mechanism.

1. Action requested

To acknowledge the state of play regarding the development of an ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy

2. Background

As part of the 2020-2022 ACCOBAMS Program of Work (activity CA4a), and in consultation with the Bureau, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat recruited FCB to develop an ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy proposal in view of its presentation for adoption at the next MOP, to be held in November 2022 in Malta.

A step-by-step approach began with the diagnostics phase of the current communication tools used by ACCOBAMS, whose report was presented to the meeting of National Representatives last July and is reflected in the current document.

It was followed by the creation of a Communication Steering Group that would liaise with both the Secretariat and FCB and provide guidance on the drafting of the Communication Strategy. The Group encompasses the ACCOBAMS Secretariat; the CMS Secretariat; the sub-regional coordinating units - SPA/RAC and Black Sea Commission Secretariat – as well as of national representatives appointed by a few ACCOBAMS countries - Algeria, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco and Syria.

In parallel, a draft Communication Strategy was elaborated by FCB and shared with the members of the Communication Steering Group in view of receiving initial inputs prior to a first discussion planned for early December 2021. At the current stage the draft Communication Strategy is exclusively discussed within the Steering Group. A revised draft is to be submitted to the Bureau meeting in January 2022 and then to the Extended Bureau meeting in April 2022, in the run-up to its adoption by the MOP in November 2022, with all ACCOBAMS constituents being given the opportunity to provide contributions to the process.



Introduction

This diagnostic report provides an analysis of the existing ACCOBAMS communication tools, highlighting areas where an intervention is advised and contains an overview of communication activity developed by IGO's in similar areas as ACCOBAMS.

Being part of FCB Lisbon's work methodology, this report is the starting point for developing a communication strategy for ACCOBAMS, and it is the result of a series of interviews with leading members of ACCOBAMS Secretariat; the analysis of a series of documents obtained through ACCOBAMS; and also documents and findings obtained through our desk research.

Lisbon, 9th March 2021

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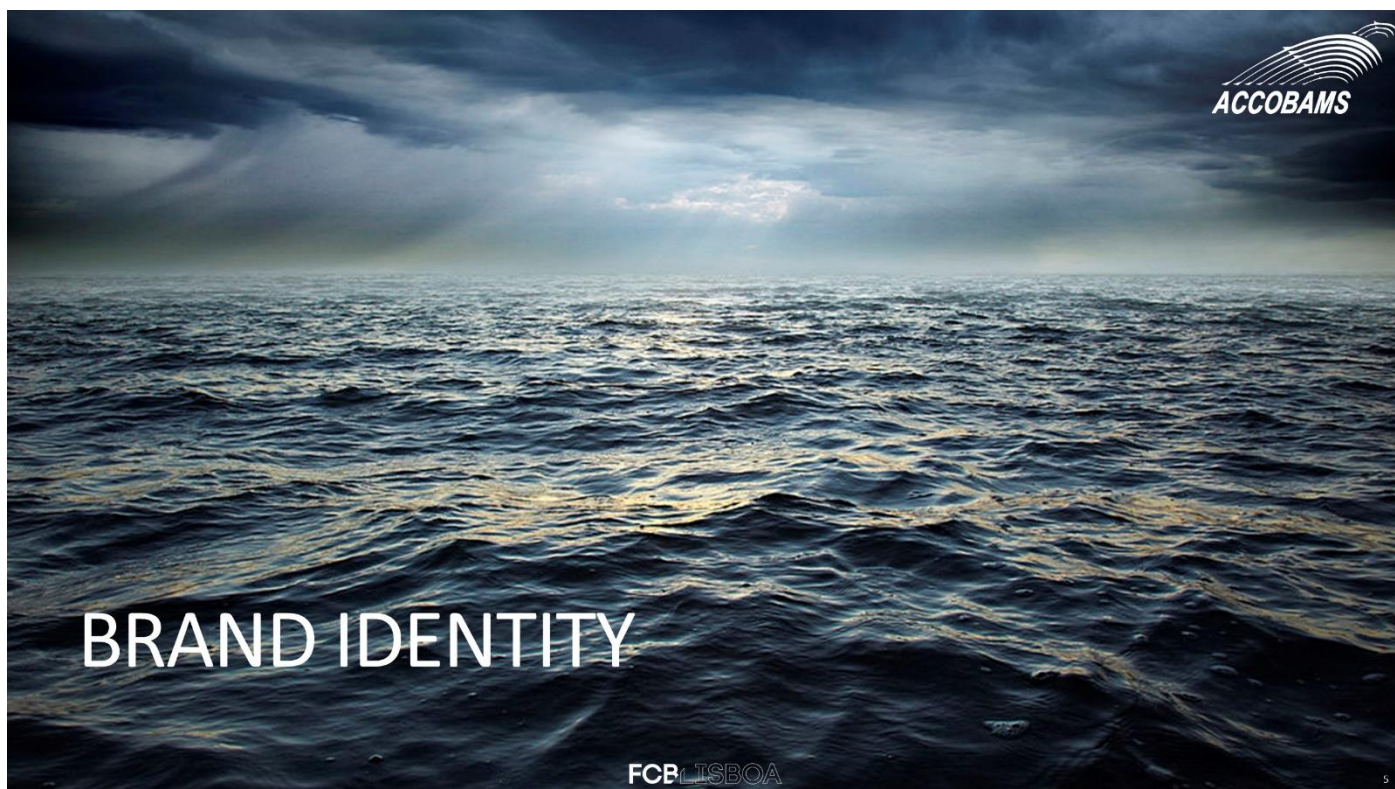
brand positioning

ACCOBAMS PURPOSE:
to reduce threats to cetaceans notably by improving current knowledge on these animals.

Although the Organization has its purpose defined, this was not converted into a brand positioning in order to define how ACCOBAMS intends to be perceived by its various stakeholders. An organizational strategy is in place but it needs to have a correspondence in terms of brand strategy, addressing specific goals.

In the heart of that communication strategy should be ACCOBAMS brand positioning, expressed through a Brand Positioning Statement transversal to all stakeholders.

POSITIONING ACTION NEEDED:
We need to convey a brand dimension to ACCOBAMS organisation. By defining the ACCOBAMS brand characteristics and traits we will be providing the organisation with (brand) strategic pillars that will determine how do we want to position ACCOBAMS amidst other IGO's that operate in similar and/or complementary areas.



brand identity

Although the ACCOBAMS logo is commonly applied to most communication materials, we detected several issues that must be tackled to make brand identity more consistent:

- 1 TWO BRAND EXPRESSIONS:
ACCOBAMS AND ACCOBAMS SECRETARIAT
All communication should be branded ACCOBAMS despite being generated by the Secretariat.
- 2 BRAND & SUB BRANDS
Most of the time the ACCOBAMS brand appears as secondary to its sub brands. Examples as follows:

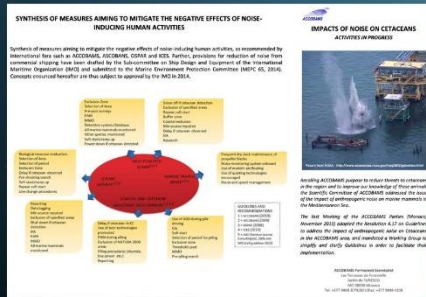
Example 1: The proportions of the institutional logo and its anniversary logo are inverted (IWC anniversary logo, for example, managed to communicate its anniversary keeping their main logo in the center of the message).



brand identity



Example 3: Some of the documents/findings produced by ACCOBAMS are poorly branded.



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ABSENT BRAND

All communication should be branded ACCOBAMS since every communication is form of brand expression. Sometimes the brand is absent.

The pdf files that describe the cetaceans species in ACCOBAMS website have no branding whatsoever.

The great majority of Facebook and Twitter photos and images are not branded (even third parties images can be branded if authorised by the authors).

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BRAND PARTNERSHIPS

While communicating projects or findings with partnerships ACCOBAMS should enhance their own brand (example: "an ACCOBAMS partnership with _____") instead of diluting the brand among others. All communication materials from ACCOBAMS should enhance the brand.

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brand identity



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BRAND LOGO

While not being imperative for the future communication strategy, it would be advisable to review the ACCOBAMS logo. Its design is bit dated and the logo itself is not actually built to fully function in digital communication - since the model of communication will tend to be based in digital communication, it would be advisable to evolve in terms of design.

IDENTITY ACTION NEEDED:

Reviewing the institutional logo to make it more adequate to the available communication channels.

The development of a brand style book would be advisable to establish a set of rules to be applied in terms of brand identity: logo usage in print and digital materials, logo behaviour in different situations, identity templates for stationery, reports, findings, leaflets, etc.

The brand book protects the brand and makes its usage more consistent, across partnerships and across communication suppliers.

Example of "I love NY" brand style book [here](#).

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brand mood

By "Brand Mood" we mean the way the brand presents itself physically and also the tone it uses when speaking (brands use specific tones - friendly, formal, down to earth, inquisitive, serious, just to name a few). Its like a personality trait, that influences the way it is "dressed" and the way it "behaves and speaks".

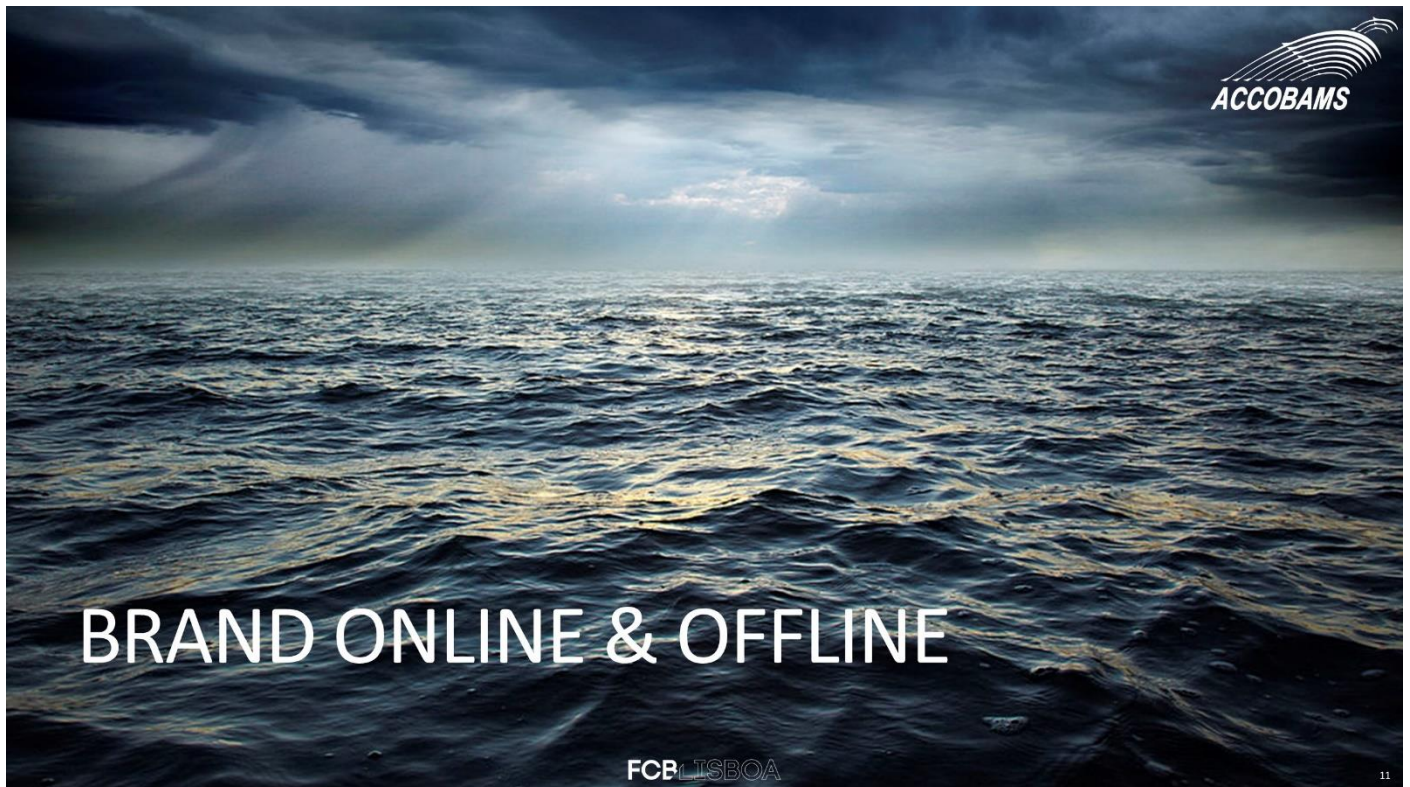
ACCOBAMS doesn't have a coherent brand mood today. Without it its more difficult to be recognisable as the brand appears to its audiences differently along the time. The more consistent the brand mood is the more recognisable (and visible) the brand will be.

The colour blue and sea are the two common elements of most ACCOBAMS communication. We could say that they are part of the actual brand mood. But we are missing other elements that make part of brand identity that help define and build a consistent brand mood: font types, design style, brand properties, tone of voice - all these contribute to form a unique identity and mood that, in time, will be associated to brand.



BRAND MOOD ACTION NEEDED:

The development of a brand style book would be advisable to establish a set of rules to be applied in terms of brand identity that help define a brand mood, the way that the brand behaves when communicates. While brand identity gives us the rational side of the brand, brand mood deals with the emotional side of it.



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brand offline

It is not visible in ACCOBAMS offline communication activity a key message (or a set of messages) that resume what the organisation stands for. The communication material, as described before, are not homogenous graphically and communicate specific activities without a central message.

Note: In online communication (specifically in Facebook) a central message was created encapsulating a core message: "Dolphin and whale conservation".

ACTION NEEDED:
Developing a brand signature would help establish its brand positioning. This should be part of the future brand strategy - a signature that expresses how the brand wants to be recognised, differentiating it from other organization with similar activities.

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brand offline



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Although most of the brand materials are developed according to a number of constant elements (similar colour palette, the sea, the cetaceans, a number of rules should be set in order to define a more consistent brand style, specially when the brand communicates by its own.

Communicating through or with partnerships is usually a more free process in terms of style, but the brand should retain its main characteristics. For instance in the good practise handbooks there is no reason for the ACCOBAMS logotype to appear in black & white.

ACTION NEEDED:

Developing a brand style guide to help graphic designers, marketers, web developers, community managers, etc. to stay on the same page and present a unified vision of the brand to its stakeholders.

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brand online



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Although it is a bit dated in terms of design, the website is well organised and it is relatively easy to find a specific piece of information in the desktop version. The mobile version is not as easy to navigate as the desktop one.

The way the website is structured leads us to believe that it is more directed to internal audiences ("Meetings" being the second tab) making it less appealing to general audiences.

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brand online



ACTIONS TO CONSIDER:

The website should be more fluid in navigational terms. It would make more sense to design it following a more outer directed approach: who are we/ what do we do/ where/ with whom/ with what results. The purpose of ACCOBAMS should be shortly described in the homepage.

We miss a "Media Section" that can be used as part of a PR programme to increase awareness on activities and events developed by the organisation.

If we consider the website to be part of the brand communication and an expression of its positioning, then we believe that ACCOBAMS should modernize its online presence.

In the end of the day, the website is ACCOBAMS best and biggest touch point to its various stakeholders.

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BRAND ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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brand on social media



example

ACTIONS TO CONSIDER:

The great majority of visual content published in Facebook and Twitter is not branded.

If you brand your material (even the material of your partners published in your social media pages, with their consent) you are increasing the chances of amplifying the visibility of your brand when someone picks one of your photos and publishes in their social media page or somewhere else with public access.



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brand on social media



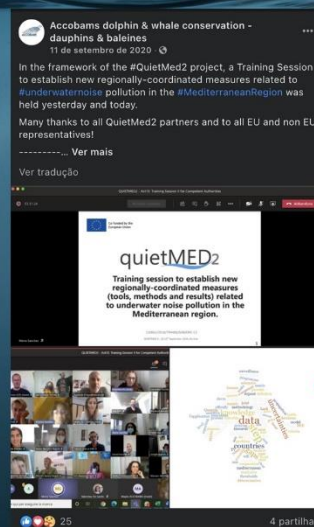
ACTIONS TO CONSIDER:

Include context in every visual content you publish on Facebook.

When you publish content using a group of visuals, your content is part of the group and it not part of each individual visual. If you consult a specific visual on the photo section you will find no context for that specific visual (see example on the right).

You should provide the context when you publish your group post. Enter each specific visual and provide a context (and if possible an #accobams tag and a link to your website where people could read more about it). (Twitter does this automatically and replicates the group content in every single visual)

Understand that social media is a mean to increase people's interaction with your organisation.



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COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

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COMM. OBJECTIVES



In its Call for Submission, ACCOBAMS defined an ambitious set of goals for its communication activity scheduled for the triennium 2023-2025, as described in the right.

Communication activity is considered key to improve fund raising and therefore creating a virtuous circle :

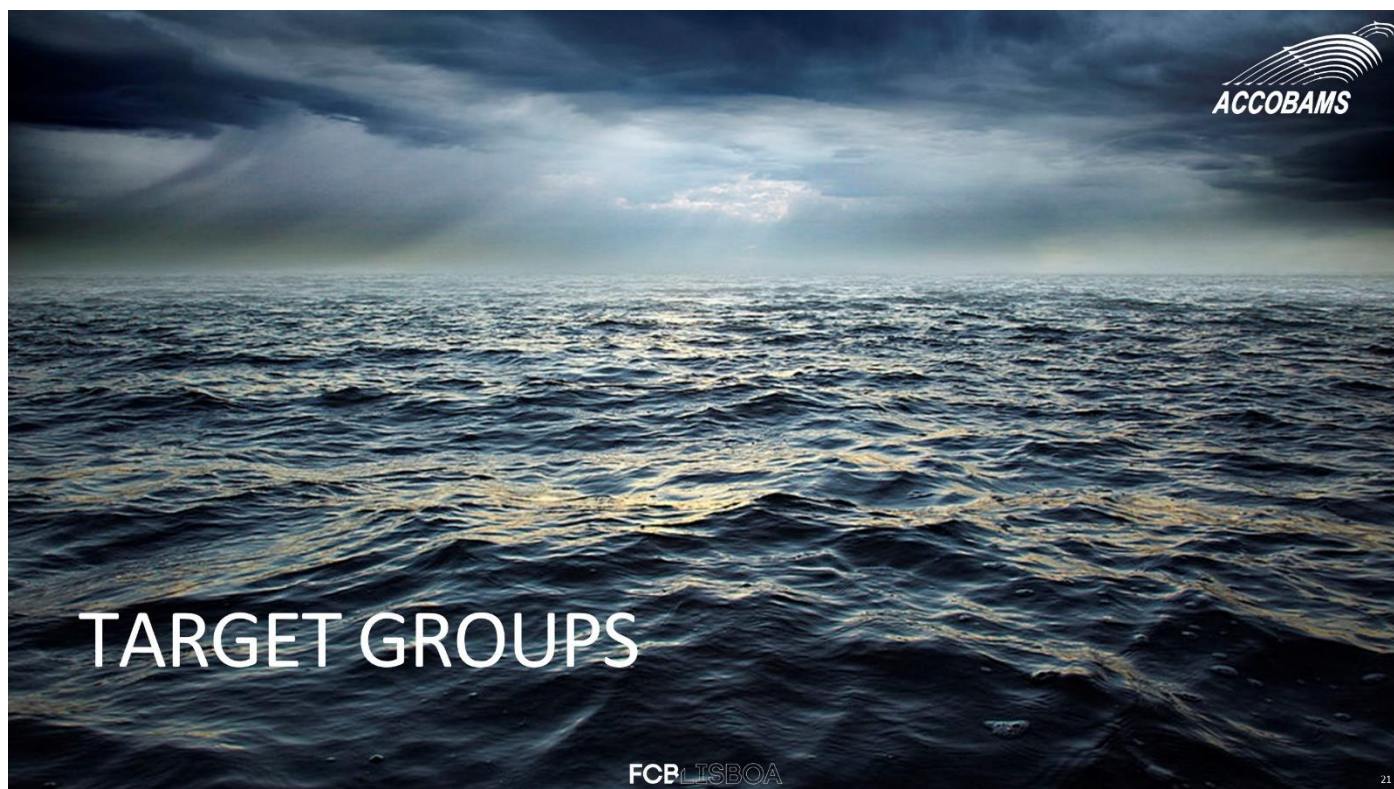
ACTION NEEDED:

The list of goals must be prioritised in order to be financially achievable, having in mind that changing perceptions and increasing the organisation's profile is a cumulative process that takes time (and investment). We will need to create priorities according with the available resources.



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target groups

In our work sessions with Secretariat members, several communication targets were identified (to be considered in the future communication strategy):

INTERNAL TARGETS

1. **Country representatives/ National Focal Points (NFP)** of the 24 member countries including the Bureau, coordination units, steering groups.
2. **IGO's e NGO's** partnerships

EXTERNAL TARGETS

1. **Other public managers** (other than NFP) in different institutions of the 24 member countries.
2. **Specialist organisations and professional associations** with interest in the Mediterranean and Black Sea that can amplify ACCOBAMS messages.
3. **Journalists** from different areas and ACCOBAMS information users (University students, individual researchers and interested people)
4. **General public** (with special focus on children).

ACTION NEEDED:

Since not all of these targets can be approached simultaneously (each of these clusters has different set of interests and motivations) because it would imply a considerable level of communication investment, it will be necessary to select them according to ACCOBAMS communication objectives and the key messages that will come out of it.

When defining the communication strategy it is advisable to approach these segments in different phases, identifying priority targets for each year of the triennium. This segmentation will have an impact on the media strategy to apply in each year and also in ACCOBAMS content strategy.

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A split-image background showing a calm ocean surface above and a deep, blue underwater scene below. The ACCOBAMS logo is in the top right corner. The word "recommendations" is written in white, lowercase, sans-serif letters across the top. A large, light blue number "1" is on the left. The text "BRAND IDENTITY" is in white, uppercase, sans-serif letters. Below it, a paragraph of text is in white, lowercase, sans-serif letters. The FCB LISBOA logo is in the bottom center. The number 24 is in the bottom right corner.

recommendations

1 BRAND IDENTITY

If we consider the brand logo to be the central expression of a brand and the starting point for the building a specific perception about any organisation, we should evaluate if, despite any communication strategy to be developed to ACCOBAMS, we should keep the actual logotype or if we should rethink it and refresh it, turning the organisation brand identity the beginning of a strategic process to convey a more relevant and modern image and increase ACCOBAMS reputation and awareness.

recommendations



2

BRAND STYLE GUIDE

Along with refreshing brand identity it will be necessary to develop a brand style guide that establishes a specific set of rules that helps everyone (internal and external audiences) to perceive the brand in a unique and only way.

The brand style guide defines design styles, colour palettes, type fonts, editorial styles, the general look & feel and the way the brand behaves when communicates in offline media, online media, solo, via its sub-brands or via partnerships.

The brand style guide is a tool that guarantees brand consistency in every material produced by the brand.

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recommendations



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THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR 2023-2025

A communication strategy to be efficient needs focus. If we aim too many goals at the same time we will probably disperse key messages, resources and investment. In order to achieve a reasonable set of goals we must define priorities. FCB Lisboa recommends the following priorities:

- 3.1. Define a brand positioning and a brand positioning statement defining how do we want to be perceived.
- 3.2. Prioritize ACCOBAMS communication goals along the 3 year communication plan.
- 3.3. Identify the most relevant targets to impact (considering every specific year of the triennium)
- 3.4. Identify the most relevant ACCOBAMS key messages and prioritize it for each target (considering every specific year of the triennium)
- 3.5. Define a communication calendar that takes advantage of ACCOBAMS activities along every year.
- 3.6. Define a PR strategy (based in Secretariat) that can amplify communication and organizational activity, establishing a regular news feed for the media.

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recommendations



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CONTENT STRATEGY

Refreshing and redesigning the website to change the organisation image and profile will open an opportunity to define a content strategy that helps to structure the future website and influence the way ACCOBAMS communicates regularly to its various stakeholders.

Having in mind the communication strategy the content strategy should:

- 4.1. identify and prioritise the content themes (ex: ASI Survey, Whale Watching Best Practices, Pollution in the Mediterranean, Netccobams data base, ACCOBAMS for Kids, etc)
- 4.2. having in mind the communication targets for each year, create relevant content clusters to address them
- 4.3. create content around ACCOBAMS regular yearly activities
- 4.4. constantly curate content (inside and outside ACCOBAMS) to feed social media pages and website dynamic pages (News section, Media section)

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thank you.

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