

Telecom Italia rolls out a unified brand to make choices simpler for customers

Brand strategy and media chief **Carlotta Ventura** tells George Stenitzer why the company is converging many brands into just TIM



Carlotta Ventura,
brand strategy and media chief, Telecom Italia

Telecom Italia has approached its customers and markets until recently under separate brands for its landline, mobile, internet and international wholesale businesses, mainly:

- Telecom Italia, the historic landline brand;
- TI Sparkle, the international provider for fixed and mobile operators, ISPs, OTTs, media and content players, application service providers and multinational corporations;
- TIM, the mobile brand.'

Compounding this complexity, Telecom Italia also offers entertainment and OTT services to customers both under the brand TIMvision and under its own brand names.

For example, it started offering Netflix videos in October 2015, in an effort to spur greater demand for high-speed internet in Italy.

This house-of-brands approach presents complexity not only to business and consumer customers, but also to retailers and the overall business. Now, Telecom Italia is making the complex

simple, starting with its branding. "We've decided to have just one brand for all the commercial offerings," says Carlotta Ventura, group SVP for brand strategy and media at Telecom Italia. "Simplicity of choice is one of the core reasons that we're changing the brands."

A STREAMLINED APPROACH

Ventura is spearheading a multi-year programme to combine all the existing brands into one: TIM.

The TIM brand promise is "Connected to Life. Always. Everywhere. Better." The brand strategy defines three values, Ventura notes. "It's about proximity, quality and security. That's our promise to our clients." One sign of the change: the company has already rolled out its new website at tim.it. For the first time, all of the company's offerings are now in one place on the internet.

Adding muscle to the brand changes is an aggressive investment programme to bolster TIM's networks. In support of the Italian government's plan to upgrade Italy's telecoms infrastructure and spur economic growth, TIM will invest €10 billion over the next three years. One-third will represent innovative investments - that is, ultra-broadband networks - into Italy's infrastructure, including programmes to expand the fibre network to reach 75% of the population by 2017, and expand the 3G and 4G mobile networks to cover 95% of the population by 2017. In addition, Telecom Italia will invest an additional €4 billion in Brazil, focusing on improving its 3G and 4G coverage.

"We are changing the brand for three reasons," Ventura explains. "First of all, it is due to the convergence of the markets and the convergence of the technologies. So we are converging our marketing offers to make them simple to understand and simple to choose."

"The second reason is efficiency and effectiveness. The third reason is budget. If you have to support so many brands, of course, it takes much more money to explain the role of each brand in the architecture."

"Mobility, embodied in the TIM brand, is pushing us to make this choice as our peers have done."

In choosing its mobile brand to become its master brand, TIM's move parallels branding changes elsewhere in Europe. For example, France Telecom unified its brands under its mobile

brand, Orange. Similarly, Telefonica is adopting the Movistar brand. "At the end of this year we will be the same as other peers, with just one brand for all of the commercial portfolio."

The new TIM logo is due to be unveiled soon - in January 2016. Global branding powerhouses Landor and Interbrand are competing to produce the winning TIM logo. It's a global battle, Ventura notes, because Telecom Italia is the sixth largest telecoms service provider in the world. As it revamps its brand and logo, TIM is looking beyond its domestic competitors to the global arena.

"Our logo is about how we want to be perceived for the next 10 or 15 years; we want to future-proof our brand and make it easy for customers to associate our brand with TIM. With our operations in Brazil and Argentina, we are already

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Carlotta Ventura, brand strategy & media chief, Telecom Italia

a much more global company than people know," she says. "The new logo is, let's say, just a step in this journey. We have a lot of milestones, because we started about two years ago with communications to our stakeholders. We started talking to colleagues in the business and we started talking to the news media. We launched our new website in July, which has millions of users. Then we started working on all our customer touch points - the call centres, technicians and new shops that will launch in December 2015. So we are halfway down the road."

CHANGING DNA

Changing the brand is proving hardest for Telecom Italia employees. "The initial communications with employees about changing the company brand, the commercial brand, were quite tough because you have to ask your people to change their DNA somehow," says Ventura.

"But we started talking to them and listening to them, doing a lot of surveys and research, and gathering internal information. After five or six months, they started trusting us.

"Now I think that our most motivated stakeholders are employees - because they feel this choice is a good choice, that we are really convinced of this decision. We are preparing a better future for the company, and of course, for employees. Yet the employer brand will go through some big changes over the next year," Ventura says.

One way that customers gain simplification from the new TIM brand is "one single sign-on to have the opportunity of buying and using all of the portfolio, which we are doing with TIM," she says.

"You just need one point of access, and then you can create a personalised communications and connectivity offer. This is simpler, because if you have to build up your own quad-play, you use all TIM building blocks. Instead of putting together



different offers from different brands, which is complicated, we are making a simple global offer for our customers.

"We will brand the shops TIM, the website TIM, the call centre TIM - and this is one way we are simplifying our customers' lives. We think that the digital life is nothing more than a better way to live your daily life. So we are putting together the offline with the online with customers' own on-life experiences."

On-life? "We position TIM as the facilitator of all your connections - e-payment, e-commerce, e-education - to digital life," she says. "That's what we mean by 'on-life'."

She adds: "You can trust a reliable brand to get in touch with your life in a better way. A lot of our life has been simplified thanks to information, communications and technology. For example, buying music, buying books, and communicating are much more quick and simple than before.

"But over-the-top brands cannot exist if there is not a network. We are not a dumb pipe; we are the platform that facilitates the relationship among our customers and the services they choose. And we offer services of our own such as Netflix - that is the TIM vision of entertainment, the entertainment suites with our brand."

TIM's 80,000 worldwide employees are learning the new brand voice as they become TIM ambassadors to customers. Among them are 30,000 technicians who work with customers in the field. So Ventura is constantly on the road to talk with colleagues and share the findings of her brand research.

TIM takes seriously its responsibilities to invest in infrastructure in order to support businesses and the economy. "Italy is a country of not very young people. TIM is their connection to the world, so we have to be very responsible. Part of that responsibility is to help the country grow by helping businesses grow again," Ventura says.

"For business customers, information, communications and technology is the core. As you may know, small and medium-sized business are very important to the economy in Italy, and we are trying to make ICT and the cloud simpler for them. We are trying to help them start to regrow their businesses again." TIM hopes its new brand, network investments and new voice will help the company carve out an even bigger role on the global telecoms stage. [4]