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The Historical Heritage of Tomas Bata as an Incitement for Application of Creativity in Marketing

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Abstract

The objective of this contribution is to point out the implementation of Bata's legacy as an incitement for applying creativity in marketing within the contemporary education. Tomas Bata's business style has been used by prestigious companies all over the world because it still remains a pillar for modern entrepreneurial activities. As the first one, he put the customer on a pedestal and this strategy is today one of the most significant factors in business areas with the strongest competition and is becoming the necessity for marketing specialists in the search for new approaches to customers. The market is currently filled with a number of almost identical products; however, in the center of attention is the one that offers the maximum in a creative way. The presented study shows a creative approach in the promotion of Bata's philosophy in innovative marketing.

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1. Introduction

Tomas Bata is a name that has the strength of a symbol and in many cases also evokes a range of associations connected with the name such as for example Bata's shoes, Bata's business philosophy, Bata's Zlín, Bata's architecture, Bata as the innovator in the area of education and in the area of marketing and promotion.

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Bata's legacy is reflected at almost every step, not only in Zlín, but in many other Czech and foreign cities as well. Many businessmen have been inspired by his business approaches, by his courage to embark on innovative steps. He was the first businessman to put the customer on a pedestal. This strategy is currently one of the most significant factors in business fields with the strongest competition and is becoming the necessity when marketing experts search for new approaches to the customer. A number of major companies were formed on the basis of implementing Bata's thoughts and approaches, and a number of companies which were established by T. Bata himself, have been running their business until today. Of course we need to mention the fact that in many cases these companies have gone through the process of nationalization, privatization or various forms of restructuring. An example of a company established on Bata's legacy is Tescoma that proudly claims to follow Bata's thoughts. It was formed in 1992 on a green field site in Zlín in the Czech Republic and today it is world famous and respected company producing household goods. On the other hand, another company from the region of Zlín, Fatra Napajedla, established in 1935 by Bata concern, is currently operating as a part of Agrofert concern with a diverse portfolio of products. Originally, it was formed as the first processor of plastic materials in the Czech Republic. The present-day company Continental Barum Ltd., producer of tyres, has a similar history. It was established in 1932 and the impulse for its formation (at that time) was the lack of tyres of good quality for transport of products from Bata's companies around the world. Thus already in 1932 the first tyres of Bata's brand were produced and two years later, in 1934, there was a significant expansion in production of tyres and new tyres of Bata brand gradually pushed out all competing products from Czechoslovakia. These days the company Continental Barum Ltd. is a significant producer of tyres on an international scale. (www. continental Barum, 2014).

However, it is only a small insight into the legacy that proves just how much T. Bata was important in the past and how he is still important today. The heritage he left behind in the form of his business and his life philosophy is the biggest legacy. The goal of this paper is not only to briefly introduce the personality of T. Bata, but also to point out to the implementation of Bata's heritage as the impulse for application of creativity in marketing in the present higher education.

2. Theoretical and Historical Basis

2.1 Bata and His Business Philosophy

Already at the beginning of his career Tomas Batsought the knowledge of all new. His goal was the implementation of new knowledge, new technologies and new machines to production and he adapted everything to these requirements, whether it was working and technological processes, new organization of production and work or new machines. He understood clearly that rational production, the power of machines and machine mechanization became the prerequisite of a successful business. At the same time he knew that the way to business success is based mostly on the overall setting of the company "organism" and thinking of its employees. He understood that business success is not the work of the businessman himself or (the most perfect) machines, but mainly of the employees and the team spirit in the company. And it was this knowledge that directed him to the creation of a complex system, an integrated model of company life that outgrew into building the city and the region, into a social and political program that he could fulfil as the town Mayor in Zlín in the years 1923-1932.

2.2 Bata as the Creator of a Town

In September 1923 T. Bata defeated left-wing candidates in municipal elections, his election group won the majority in the municipal council and T. Bata became the Mayor of the town of Zlín. This event started a new peculiar chapter in the development of the town that went hand in hand with the development of Bata's company. On one hand the dynamic development of the shoe factory was evident: construction of standard buildings with reinforced concrete skeleton, brick lining and large areas of windows, on the other hand a big draw for people attracted by the possibility to get living together with work. When the first construction stage of the new factory buildings was starting in 1925, the architect Gahura published his project of the industrial area with the name "The factory in gardens". In the following years a unique factory complex grew there – long rows of modern factory buildings surrounded by trees and lawns caused not only surprise, but mainly admiration, because there was created

an example of effective and yet good-looking industrial area. The architectural character of factory buildings gradually spread beyond the factory area. The colour harmony of red bricks, white concrete and characteristic greenery gave the town its distinctive character persisting until today. In 1927 the architect Gahura introduced the project of building the town of greenery. Bata's and Gahura's garden town became a materialization of modern urbanistic conceptions and it gave a big opportunity to significant architects such as V. Karfík and M. Lorenc, whose work is an example of high level and quality of interwar architecture even today.

During this period there were developed large quarters of houses for employees of Bata's factories, multi-story buildings of hostels for young factory employees, the so-called *young men and young women*. Schools, a gym with an adjacent school complex and a summer swimming pool were built for employees' children.

At the same time besides residential neighbourhoods and school buildings Bata's company financed the construction of a shopping centre (one smaller and one bigger department store), the building of the Big Cinema (for more than 2 000 spectators!) and the hotel called Community House (Společenský dům) nearby. In 1938, a prominent landmark of the modern industrial town was built, the "skyscraper" housing the administration of Bata's factories. (Pokluda, 2004)

2.3 Bata and His Social Employment Policy

Bata had a very efficient influence over his employees by developing his own social policy. He took care of their housing and according to the project of the architect J. Kotera in the period of 1918-1921 groups of houses for factory workers and officers were built on the western edge of Zlín. The size of houses reflected the employee's position in the company. From war period T. Bata provided his employees with advantageously priced food supplies. Employees' children were looked after in the company kindergarden and there were other advantages, e.g. cinema for employees for free and so on.

We can say with a clear conscience that it was him, who contributed incredibly to the development of not only Zlín, but to the development of the whole region of central Moravia and thanks to him the quality of life for local population increased significantly in many respects. We can mention the implementation of regular wages payment, development of a prominent social program, initiating of career development of his employees and their language knowledge, participation in urban development of the town, supporting social care in the town: founding kindergardens and a library, building a modern hospital, creating music groups and sport teams and so on. He became a patron of art, he contributed to the construction of a modern traffic infrastructure, implemented innovative elements in the areas of planning, production, quality management for product, business and services. He created and financed his company education as Bata's School of Work, but also supported differentiated municipal education after 1928. "Zlín became a state within a state, the execution of the American dream in a Moravian valley." (Kostka, 2010)

Bata succeeded in finding the balance between the social level accompanied by social control of individuals and the level of the individual's freedom and responsibility. Bata's production system makes employee's life free in many respects, because he frees them from hard work that is done by machines. He provides them with free time and activities for its fulfilment, he develops a sufficient amount of free space and facilities for leisure and cultural activities, and he builds the above-mentioned factory colonies of houses in which he provides everyone with individual, modern and rationally arranged and well thought-out housing. However, it is true that at the same time he strives in his employees and Zlín resident for strict keeping of work and life ethics, he outlines sufficient mechanisms for social control over individual behaviour.

2.5 Bata's Innovative Approach to the Customer

There are many innovations by which Tomas Bata has been inspiring us till today, but at the forefront there is still remaining Bata's approach to customers. It was the slogan "Our customer is our master", on which he built up his philosophy, and which was not just an empty phrase. A majority of steps, procedures and novelties were executed mainly with respect to customers. "Bata followed a simple principle, when he tried to offer customers more than minimum of what they ask for and at a price lower than the required minimum." (Morávek, 2010) As an

extra bonus there was the behaviour of shop assistants, who were – following Bata's instructions – interested in all comments and feedback from the customers. They were then used for further company development. Another novelty was the database of customers, to whom various promotion materials were subsequently sent to. This was not only a matter of promotion, though, because Bata with his orientation on customers made a big effort to change the thinking of both consumers and employees. He believed that only through service to customers it is possible to create welfare and he followed this premise all his life.

Bata thus became an innovator in the field of marketing and approach to the customer. Especially worth mentioning is the efficient interconnection of marketing activities with artistic approach, participation of famous artists on production of advertisements (Vlasta Burian, Elmar Klos, Karel Zeman etc.). In these cases the connection brought about very creative and interesting outputs. At that time T. Bata and after his death his successor J. A. Bata understood that creativity and marketing are really close to each other and with a suitable and sensitive connection they have a potential for a huge effect.

3. Tomáš Baťa – founder and innovator in education

3.1 Company Education System

As has already been mentioned, Bata's philosophy centred on the human being in the first place. Therefore it is only natural that in his social concept of reform of life, production and business the issue of shaping an individual (accepting norms, changes in behaviour of an individual and in his attitudes) was one of the priorities in successfully enforcing the system of so-called bataism. Following the principles of pragmatism, which he advocated, his aim was that education does not come to a standstill and does not become mere lifeless mechanical repetition of definitions without any link to the real life. On the contrary, an educational process should encourage performance, activity and creative thinking and contain positive charge reflected in its acceleration with elements of competition, because he himself promoted the idea that also the development of society (civilization) is no more than expanding the possibilities for fight, in this case for competition. Indeed, life was a real competition for Baťa – competition in which only the best can win. However, in order to achieve this target, it was necessary to focus on the character of teachers. It is them who needs to be able to spark the craving in pupils to develop their abilities and skills, which is, as a lot of research shows, no different from what today's employers demand of their potential employees, candidates leaving schools of all levels. Even if we list only some of them, we can see direct continuity in required preferences, especially in case of university students – for instance ability to make decisions, see opportunities, solve unpleasant situations, think abstractly, express oneself clearly, be enthusiastic about one's work, be willing to take on a risk, find inner thirst for entrepreneurial spirit, ambition, endurance and curiosity, determination, ability to lead others and understand them.

For Baťa, education was full-blown part of real life, not only preparation for life. Is this not the problematic issue, the typical sign of today's tertiary education, i.e. inconsistency and distance between the theory and practice that we, unfortunately, still often see at many higher education institutions? Baťa endeavoured to gradually transfer his pragmatic principles well-proven in business into the sphere of education. The first attempts were seen in the company courses, later in the Baťa School of Work. As has already been mentioned, Baťa was fully aware of the fact that an educational system cannot possibly be built merely on instilling knowledge into pupils' memories, but that it is necessary to introduce new forms and methods of teaching, whose application can be boasted by every educational institution today (universities especially) whether it be problem-solving methods, questions and project based on experience and experiment. He put an extra emphasis on learning practical skills and giving students hands-on experience directly in the company (the real life practice which is so stressed and demanded for today!), while using inspiration from abroad (e.g. in 1924 Baťa's School Missions to foreign countries brought new knowledge, experience and inspiration. In 1925 Baťa School of Work for boys opened, in 1929 school for girls opened and was closed again in 1948. Follow-up higher forms of education were available in the company Study Institute (1936), technical school (1937), School of Management (1938) and School of Arts (1939).

3.2 Reform of Public Education

However, it was not only the company education that Baťa paid attention to, he was also interested in public education. As a Mayor in the years 1923-1932 he promoted the public education reform in Zlín, supported by reformative, progressive teachers who were active in Czechoslovakia in the 1920s. He did not concentrate only on transformation of secondary schools, but aimed to implement changes in the educational system of primary schools. There again, he first of all sought to replace the current system of “isolated school of teaching” with a new type of “school of work and social life”, which emphasised the connection between school and real life. At the same time he stressed the need for creative graduates, whose benefit will be not only the knowledge of general disciplines but also of the basics of technology, economics and business. He also pointed out that it is essential to concentrate on the individual ability of a child to adapt to the environment, but more importantly on their creativity, imagination and independence. (Kostaka, 2010)

4. Baťa’s Legacy and Creative Potential

4.1 Baťa’s Legacy as Motivation for Creativity

Tomas Bata’s legacy motivated even today many young authors and artists – in a creative process as a tool for promoting the region and town as an attractive area for tourism or as inspiration for creative design used for reconstruction or revitalization of historical buildings in the Bata style. The situation, however, is not simple. A big part of the town now contains buildings officially preserved as cultural monuments which are difficult to reconstruct or make additions to, leaving young artists in a complicated position when they create designs for reconstructions. Despite these obstacles the genius loci leads them to numerous creative designs. As was mentioned in the introduction, the aim of this article is to direct attention not only to T. Bata and his contribution for the whole entrepreneurial world, but also to the implementation of his legacy as a stimulus for using creativity in marketing in today’s higher education. As an example, two specific creative solutions were selected, elaborated by two young authors – students of visual arts at Tomas Bata University in Zlín – the town of T. Bata. The first creative solution deals with a production of a unique book that informs of and promotes Bata’s Zlín in an attractive way. The second project came into existence as a part of KREAS competition (organized by TBU in cooperation with non-profit organizations).

4.1.1 Bata’s Legacy as a Motivation for Creativity in the Town Promotion

The idea to create a book entitled *Artbook Zlín* occurred to Pavel Coufalík (student at the Faculty of Multimedia Communications of TBU UTB Zlín) when he started to think about his graduate work. Even though there are numerous books about Zlín, the author’s plan was to create such a form of book, that would grasp the topic from a new angle and that would, with help of suitable promotion, aim to become in demand for bookcases of Zlín inhabitants and visitors alike. Research of books dealing with Zlín revealed that there is practically no book with free interpretation of Zlín trademark graphic designs. The final book is a result of several creative approaches the author went through.

Author’s view of Zlín

The author himself comes from Zlín. His first idea was the presentation of his own view of the town and its individuality captured on photographic paper. The town has charmed and influenced him so much that on his frequent walks with a camera he eventually assembled so many photographs that he actually built up his own archive with photographs and graphic sketches. The primary idea was “just” to present those in a book. The original plan thus was to base the book on a free graphic presentation of Zlín motifs but after further consideration he decided to add unusual photographs, adjusted so as to deliberately offer a visual experience of photographed places much more impressive than the reality itself. The aim of the author was to present the town of Zlín as a town original and unique within the whole European space. The tool to fulfil this aim was careful selection of motifs and photographs. Small adjustments, such as shifting the orange hue of the coarse brickwork towards red, were made to accentuate the fantastic atmosphere of the place. Consequently, the book became no so much a factula well-balanced publication,

but on the contrary, a slightly manipulative visual presentation that slightly glamorizes the reality through the original selection of motifs and their processing. It must be said, though, that the reality itself is unique.

Pop-up elements

In the attempt to create a unique book, an idea to fit pages with pop-up elements supplementing each chapter soon appeared. These are 3D or mobile elements related to the theme of each part, for instance models of functionalist structures of Zlín. The author decided to create these pop-up models as precisely as possible, which made him study the originals minutely and look for technical solution that would allow him to authentically include all components protruding from the rectangular ground plan, such as elevator shafts, additions, etc. Universal procedures were impossible to use for most of the models, so everything was created through lengthy trials and search for the best solution.

Artbook Zlín

The final shape of *Artbook Zlín* is a free graphic publication presenting six chapters on the history and selected topics related to the town of Zlín. Although the book also contains texts, emphasis is put on the visual aspect and original rendering. The book has 192 pages and contains six chapters with the following titles: Bata, Factory, Architecture, Advertisement, Trolleybuses, Gottwaldov.

The architecture of the book can be seen on www.pavelcoufalik.cz. The book is original in its way of processing which combines:

- Traditional book pages,
- Doublepages with pup-up elements,
- Pages printed on transparent film.

Traditional book pages contain free graphic rendering of motifs related to Zlínem (historical typography, collage of photographs and motifs, cut-outs, charts, ground plans, maps etc.) accompanied with text and historical photographs. The aim was to capture these motifs from an unusual point of view or to interpret them in an original way.

Another component is the use of transparent film for overlapping pages with maps and charts.

Pop-up pages contain 3D or mobile folding paper elements that, when the pages open, pop up and show a spacial representation or movement. These elements portray the topic of each chapter (for example in the chapter on Architecture, they depict the architectonic landmarks of the town). There is a total of 11 pop-ups in the book: Factory (3D), Clock with the time zones from the office of H. Vavrečka (mobile element), Semi-detached house (3D), Department store (3D), Bata's memorial (3D), Junkers airplane (3D), Společenský dům Hotel (3D), Bata skyscraper (3D), Bata's elevator office (mobile element), Shoe from a poster (3D), Trolleybus (3D). The pop-up models are attached to a cardboard doublepage which requires a special technological process when producing the book.

The front cover pictures a motif of modules of Zlín architecture layered with lenticular foil with a flip effect.

Target group

The book as a whole is authorial work of art, which has its informative function (pages with text and information for particular chapters) but at the same time aims to introduce Zlín theme with the emphasis on graphic design and original rendering. It is primarily intended for Bata's Zlín enthusiasts, students, artists and general public.

TBU and important companies of the region showed interest in publishing the book.

4.1.2 Bata's Legacy and Creative Connection between History and the Present Day

Another example of a creative approach that honours and reacts to Bata's legacy in the form of Zlín architecture is the solution created by young authors as a project for the student competition called KREAS. One of the tasks was to find a solution for roofing of an outdoor café run by a non-profit organization that employs disabled people, who find it difficult to participate in the working process. The café is located in a building that is a part of the urban monuments preservation area of Bata architecture called Morýs houses, and any kind of addition or reconstruction is almost impossible. While solving the competition task, students had numerous consultations with the architects of the National Heritage Institute in Kroměříž which led to the only two possible solutions. One was *seasonal structure*, placed on a selected place (terrace) and another one was the possibility to erect a *year-round structure* providing the roofing is placed towards the garden in such a way that it does not obstruct the view of the Morýs

house.

Current situation: the construction of Morýsových houses (named after the first Mayor after the war, Vilém Morýs) started in 1947 under the supervision of the architect Miroslav Drofa. From the architectonic point of view, these two buildings are interesting especially as the first apartment building that uses the principle of Bata's factory halls. To be more specific, it is a frame from reinforced concrete filled with brick masonry. Since the central module in Morýs houses is used as the corridor, it was made narrower than the central module of the factory halls, 2.6m instead of 6.15m. Another interesting detail are balconies made of prefabricated concrete components (perforated filling has, unfortunately, been replaced with metal sheet). These high-rise buildings were designed as one complex with joined maintenance. One part housed a restaurant, the other a kindergarten and nursery school. The top floors were designed as places for relaxation. The idea of collective living was further developed in the Vozenílek's Collective House from 1949 (today serving as the Alternativa Cultural Centre).

The unconventional café is placed on the ground floor on the south side of Morýs house II (address: Tř. Tomáše Bati 1276). On this spot there used to be the kindergarten and the area neighbouring on the garden is much used for relaxation until this day. That is why the café is frequented especially by mothers with children. They can let the children run freely, because the whole area is fenced off from the nearby busy road by big trees and bushes. The café's orientation towards the south ensures a lot of warmth and light, which is why, in summer at noon a need for roofing becomes quite pressing. Currently a couple of marquees and sun umbrellas are used for this purpose. The terrace of the café is bordered with a low wall with three newly created entrances. In the past the wall probably served as protection and border for children.

Final solution: Out of the two possible solutions that arose in the consultations with the national heritage experts, the students decided to prepare a design for seasonal structure. A permanent structure in the garden would require a lot of intervention – the garden space would have to be cleared of the vegetation, the area would have to be fitted with floor tiles, electric power would have to be brought to the spot to provide lighting of the area, etc. Another disadvantage would be a bigger distance to the café, which would make serving the customers more complicated. A seasonal structure on the terrace therefore seems more appropriate and feasible. From the start on the students decided that the designed addition must respect the original building, which thus became a lead and source of inspiration. Not only because Morýs house is a protected urban monument, but mainly because it was necessary to acknowledge its architectonic qualities. The main objective was to make the addition in harmony with the adjoining house module. That is why the students proposed "extending" the module into the garden, using the newly created module as the roofing for the café terrace. This solution was supported by the fact that the ground plan of the terrace and the module were roughly identical. The structure can be disassembled, its part joined with bolts and nuts. This creative solution which uses new materials while preserving and supporting the spirit of Bata's Zlín is already awaiting its implementation.

5. Conclusion

We could carry on writing about Tomas Bata, whether discussing the innovations with more significant impact or those with seemingly smaller influence. Probably only a few people know today that it was Tomáš Baťa who came up with the proverbial prices ending in the 9 figure, which look more favourable in the eyes of a customer, because they seem lower. At the same time, it was another revolutionary move in the territory at the beginning of 1920s, when Bata reduced the prices of his products by half due to the sales and financial crises after the First World War and deflation. He was then able to make an excellent use of the huge reduction in prices in marketing with the poster picturing a fist crashing the expression "high prices" which made a great impression on customers. There was suddenly an enormous demand for Baťa shoes, which brought the company not only large earnings but also practically the top position in the shoe market in Czechoslovakia. It is the creative approach, the essential connection between theory and practice, application of Baťa's legacy, that play a top-priority role in teaching at the Faculty of Multimedia Communications of Tomas Bata University, which houses (just as Bata did in his promotion films) artistic and marketing studios under one roof. The case studies presented just small evidence of the significance of a creative approach in promoting the town and region or helping a non-profit organization (in these two particular cases. It is a frequently discussed question whether creativity and art have their place in promotion.

Even Tomas Bata back then realized, that an attractive form of the message enhanced by attractive protagonists works best, yet it is the customer who must always be in the centre of attention.

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