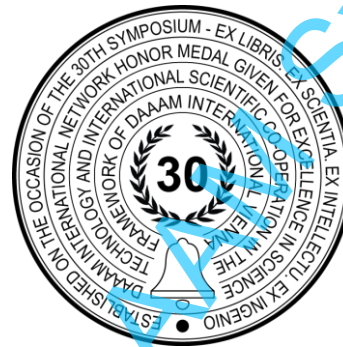


ANALYZING THE ROLE OF BRAND IDENTITY ELEMENTS IN SHAPING CONSUMER PERCEPTION: A REVIEW STUDY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE BRANDING IN TOURISM DESTINATION

Berislav Andrić, Orhan Uludag & Mehmet Saydam



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Abstract

This research aims to analyze how brand identity elements—such as name, logo, characters, slogans, and packaging—contribute to building a recognizable and authentic brand identity. The introduction defines the term "brand," examines the key elements of brand identity with examples of best practices, and discusses the importance of brand identity in today's business and marketing landscape. The study explores visual elements and language used in communication, as well as the concept of brand personality and its impact on consumer perception. The second part focuses on creating a new brand for a tourist destination.

Keywords: marketing, internet, tourism destination, branding elements

1. Introduction

Brand consists of a name and/or logo, as well as other elements and activities assigned by producers to a product, service, or idea to communicate its uniqueness to the market. A brand includes the name, symbols, and all sensory stimuli linked to the product's features and its functional or psychological benefits. [11]

Pavlek states that brand identity is a relatively new concept in marketing theory and practice. It refers to the creation of distinctive features that differentiate an individual or group from others or indicate belonging to a group with shared traits, important for building relationships with the environment. [7] The quality a brand reflects is essential for a product's survival in the market. Companies understand the value of branding, evident in the growing number of new brands created by domestic producers as markets open and new sales and distribution channels emerge. Managers must find innovative and effective ways to compete and build strong brands.

From the definitions of a brand, it is clear that various authors describe it in their own way, but common elements are present in all. Brands consist of both tangible and intangible characteristics, which help communicate with consumers and make it easier for them to decide on a purchase. When customers recognize a brand, their loyalty to its products or services increases the value of both the brand and the company itself.

In the context of global growth, authors mention that the "new normal" requires a shift from old business models to sustainable ideas and new development patterns, representing a transition to a new societal and economic structure. [8] A brand must align with the company's vision and mission, and employees should believe in the brand for customers to do the same. [11] Communicating the brand to the public is crucial, especially in field of tourism what is focus of research in tourism industry.

2. Brand identity prism in tourism

A prerequisite for building a successful brand (assuming appropriate product and service quality) is a suitable brand identity that must realistically and reliably reflect the brand's value to customers. Brand identity can be represented through a "brand prism". The brand identity prism is a model used to visually represent a brand's identity, illustrating the key components that define how a brand is perceived by consumers. It consists of six elements that shape the brand's internal and external image: [4]

1. Physical characteristics (Physique) – The tangible aspects of the brand, including the product design, logo, and packaging, that consumers can immediately identify.
2. Personality – The human characteristics or traits associated with the brand, often communicated through tone of voice, marketing style, or brand characters.
3. Culture – The values and principles that the brand embodies, often rooted in its country of origin or corporate culture.
4. Relationship – The type of relationship the brand seeks to establish with its customers, whether it's built on trust, loyalty, or emotional connection.
5. Reflection – The perceived image of the target consumer, or how the brand makes its customers feel or see themselves.
6. Self-image – How the brand sees itself and the internal view it holds regarding its mission and purpose.

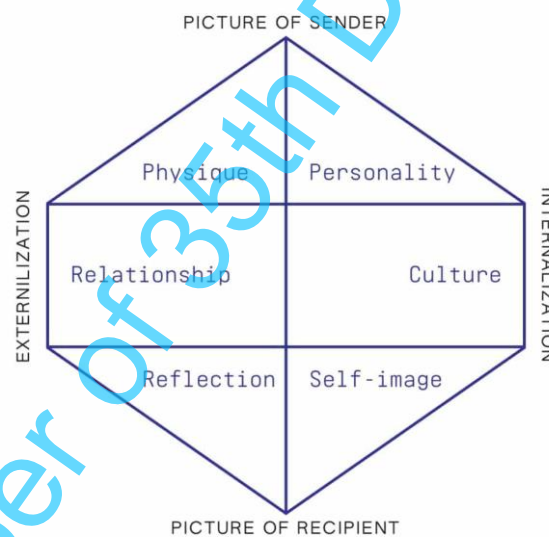


Fig. 1. The brand identity prism elements [4]

This prism helps create a cohesive and consistent brand identity, guiding how the brand communicates with the market. In the context of tourism, the brand identity prism plays a vital role in shaping how a destination is perceived by visitors. The physical characteristics might include iconic landmarks, cultural symbols, or even unique local experiences that differentiate the destination from others. The personality of a tourist destination could be reflected in the tone of its promotional materials—whether adventurous, relaxing, or culturally enriching. Culture is especially important in tourism branding, as it encompasses the traditions, heritage, and lifestyle of the destination. The relationship between a destination and its visitors is often based on providing memorable, authentic experiences, fostering emotional connections and encouraging repeat visits. The prism also helps in portraying the reflection of the ideal tourist, influencing how travelers perceive themselves while experiencing the destination, while the self-image of a tourist brand defines its commitment to sustainability, hospitality, or adventure, shaping its overall identity in the tourism market. Physical characteristics are crucial for understanding and recognizing the brand. Packaging can influence brand value, especially if the design is distinctive compared to others and offers an additional functional advantage.

3. Focus on Tourism Destination: Brand Identity Strategy

The identity and image of a brand are not synonymous, and why it is necessary to distinguish them is explained by this way: “When talking about image, it refers to the current state determined by research, penetrating into consumer perception, and if it ends there, it is a passive relationship, a statement, but—what next? When identity is mentioned, it implies branding as an active relationship towards brand creation, which is at the core of brand management”. [11]

In his work, author states that the identity of a product brand “arises from the need to determine what existing product brands actually are, or what makes them special and unique. [4] In the communication process, especially in advertising, a specific copy strategy is adopted, which changes from campaign to campaign, and in reality, only a few product or service brands have a clear image or a firmly defined long-term identity and uniqueness.”. Creating the identity of a product brand is the starting point and fundamental aspect of the entire brand management process. By developing a strategy and following the process of building a strong and unique brand identity, greater market value of the brand is achieved, and clear recognition of that product brand among other product categories is accomplished, with the potential for brand extension into other markets. “When choosing brand elements, it is necessary to adhere to six criteria: memorability, meaningfulness, likability, transferability, adaptability, and protectability” [2]

To create a strong tourism destination brand, it is important to align the key elements of brand identity, as outlined by scientific paper according to Keller: [2]

- Brand name
- Brand mark (logo, symbol)
- Characters
- Slogans
- Jingles
- Packaging
- Color.

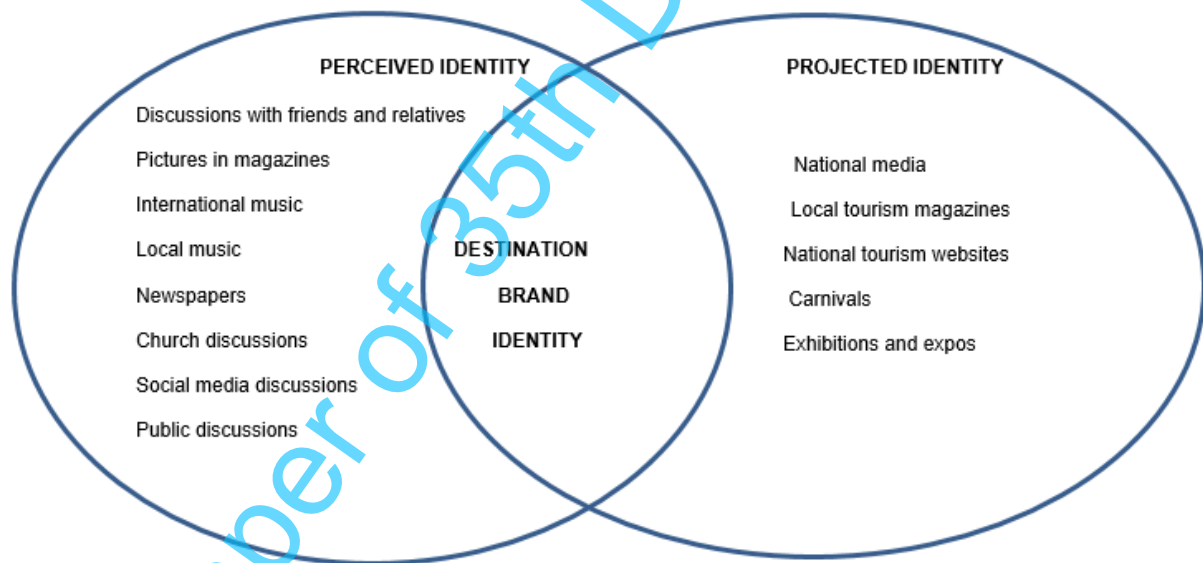


Fig. 2. Brand communication process in tourism industry [12]

Vranešević emphasizes that the criteria related to brand building, such as memorability, meaning, and likability, can also be applied to tourism. These elements are crucial for creating recognition for tourist destinations or services. Memorability refers to how easily visitors can recognize and recall a particular destination or tourist product. (Fig.2). [11] The criterion of meaning highlights how a specific tourism offering can communicate its unique advantages, such as natural beauty, cultural heritage, or unique experiences, playing a key role in building an authentic brand identity. Likability is also important as it positively influences potential tourists; the destination must be interesting, appealing, and stimulate the imagination. Furthermore, the criteria of transferability, adaptability and protectability are particularly relevant to tourism. Transferability means that brand elements can extend to different tourism services or various regions. Adaptability requires flexibility in marketing and offerings, allowing destinations to modernize and adjust to changes in the market. Protectability pertains to those brand elements that can be legally protected to distinguish them from competitors.

As consumer acceptance of a brand increases, so does their loyalty to it, making the brand stronger. This emotional connection is particularly significant in tourism, where experiences and feelings greatly impact consumer choices. A tourism product lacking these elements (brand acceptance, loyalty, and emotional connection) is considered a generic product, which fundamentally differs from a branded tourism experience.

4. Brand identity prism: focus on tourism destination

Since humanity became aware of its existence, there has been a persistent desire to explore the surrounding environment and beyond. According to the definition by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), a tourist is "a person who travels to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal, professional, or business reasons" [9]

In today's highly competitive tourism industry, destinations are feeling increasing pressure. [5] This dynamic competitive environment necessitates the creation of a clear identity or "brand" based on the destination's "personality" and its unique core values, which will differentiate it from others. Creating a brand for a destination is increasingly becoming a crucial strategic issue in marketing and business. The first and essential step in creating a new brand is developing a strategy, followed by an action plan and its implementation. Given the rapid advancement of technology and the complexity of systems,

AI can analyze data about visitor behavior, traveler preferences, reviews, and other information to provide personalized travel recommendations, activities, accommodations, and experiences. It can also assess market dynamics, seasonal changes, and other factors to adjust accommodation prices or tourism packages, enhancing competitiveness and profitability. Demand forecasting, capacity management, and overbooking can all be monitored using AI, which is vital for improving customer experiences and reviews.

Authors note that with the emergence of a new array of technological achievements worldwide, "technological tools" are the most powerful means of communication, creating a lasting impact on people's minds. [3]

The accelerated technological development has certainly improved some business processes but has also necessitated modifications to marketing research techniques in tourism. While tourism marketing emerged more frequently only after the 1960s, the global theoretical knowledge on this discipline is now well developed, providing a foundation for managing businesses in tourism.

In paper of Foley and Fahy, authors state that "the marketing strategy of a destination is a key factor in managing its image." It must be based on the core qualities of the destination to produce a consistent and rich image that forms the basis of the brand. The image of the destination should be grounded in real qualities—compelling, simple, attractive, and distinct from others. Continuous research into the opinions of visitors and the local population is essential for strategic destination marketing. [1]

When positioning a tourist destination, it is vital to know the competitive advantages, select the most relevant ones, and effectively communicate them to the target audience or visitors. Diversity of tourist needs and numerous travel motives require the development of specific forms of tourism.

In terms of rural tourism development, rural areas are structurally and functionally diverse. This diversity arises from their geographic, demographic, socioeconomic, and natural characteristics, which must be considered when planning tourism development and destinations.

The process of creating a brand for a tourist destination consists of several phases, as outlined Morgan & Pritchard:

1. Market research, analysis, and strategic recommendations.
2. Creation of brand identity.
3. Launching the brand into the market and communicating its vision (both internal and external).
4. Brand implementation.
5. Brand monitoring, evaluation, and critical review. [6]

Numerous other variables contribute to brand value, such as quality, innovation, personality, and symbolism. Gathering valid and reliable information involves a series of activities collectively referred to as the market research process. This process consists of a logical sequence of procedures that must be followed to ultimately obtain reliable and valid information that aids in decision-making in market operations. A destination brand is a name, symbol, logo, word, label, or other graphic sign that simultaneously identifies a destination and distinguishes it from others; furthermore, the brand conveys the promise of an unforgettable travel experience uniquely tied to the destination; it also reinforces and enhances the recollection of pleasant memories associated with the destination's experiences.

Creating a new tourist destination brand requires a strategic approach and collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, including the local community, entrepreneurs, tourism service providers, agencies, and marketing experts, all aimed at attracting new visitors and retaining existing ones. Theory and tourism practice notes that alongside the primary motivations for tourists visiting a destination (such as swimming, relaxation, or culture), more complex travel motivation packages arise, including intense enjoyment, outdoor activities, a strong desire for experiences, emotions, recreation, and health. Tourists seek to experience new adventures that distinctly differ from their everyday surroundings and life circumstances. Increasing tourist expectations are supported by media, advanced telecommunications, greater education, and prior personal experiences. The same factors influence the faster transmission of information and the growing significance of word-of-mouth promotion.

5. Brand identity elements research review- case study of Trogir town

On November 25, 2019, the presentation of the new brand strategy and visual identity of Trogir will was held at the Square of Ivan Pavlo II in Trogir. The city of Trogir is the first in Dalmatia to embark on a destination branding project. The aim of the project was to emphasize the authentic values and beauties of the city and to profile itself as a unique destination on the Croatian coast as well as on the Mediterranean. After a year of thorough research, work and production of new visuals, slogans, brochures and video materials, the time had come to present what was highlighted on the map of Croatian coastal cities and beyond.

The Historic City of Trogir was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1997. The city presents a remarkable example of urban continuity. The orthogonal street plan of this island settlement dates back to the Hellenistic period and it was embellished by successive rulers with many fine public and domestic buildings and fortifications. Its beautiful Romanesque churches are complemented by the outstanding Renaissance and Baroque buildings from the Venetian period.

This brand project outlines the comprehensive rebranding strategy developed for the city of Trogir, Croatia, whose historic core is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Over the course of a year, our team crafted a brand strategy that included a new slogan and visual identity aimed at revitalizing Trogir's appeal as a tourist destination while instilling a sense of pride among its residents. Our approach sought to harmonize Trogir's rich historical heritage with contemporary marketing techniques to foster increased tourism and economic growth. By leveraging the city's historical depth and cultural assets, town employees aimed to enhance its visibility as a destination, encouraging longer stays and greater spending by visitors. Methodology involved a multi-faceted approach which included: [10]

1. Comparative analysis- successful branding strategies of European cities were examined such as Eindhoven, Glasgow, and Leeuwarden. These case studies provided insights into the impact of effective branding on tourism and economic growth.
2. Surveys and interviews- extensive surveys targeting both residents and tourists to gauge their perceptions of Trogir. Additionally, they engaged in interviews with key stakeholders, including representatives from the City Council, the Tourist Board, and local cultural institutions. Insights were gathered from experts such as art historians, tourism professionals, and local craftsmen.
3. Archival research- a thorough investigation of historical documents and expert literature was undertaken to identify unique aspects of Trogir's history, geography, and culture that could be woven into the branding narrative.

The research revealed several unique elements of Trogir that distinguish it from other destinations, including its well-preserved medieval architecture, vibrant local traditions, and rich cultural events. The sentiment expressed by both residents and tourists highlighted a desire for greater community engagement and year-round activities that celebrate Trogir's heritage. The resultant branding strategy includes:

- New slogan: a memorable and engaging slogan that encapsulates the essence of Trogir.
- Visual identity: a modernized visual identity that reflects Trogir's historical significance while appealing to contemporary audiences.
- Storytelling approach- a narrative that integrates Trogir's past with its present, aiming to evoke local pride and attract visitors through immersive experiences.



Fig. 3. Brand identity rebranded elements of Trogir town [10]

The rebranding of Trogir represents a strategic initiative designed to foster economic growth through enhanced tourism. By connecting the city's historical narrative with modern marketing practices, we aim to create a dynamic identity that resonates with both visitors and residents. This comprehensive approach not only seeks to increase visitor numbers but also aims to reinvigorate community pride and engagement throughout the year. Ongoing evaluation of the branding strategy's effectiveness will be essential, including tracking tourism metrics and resident feedback to ensure that the new identity continues to meet the needs of both visitors and the local community.

5. Conclusion

In the concluding discussion of this paper on brand identity elements, important insights are reached regarding the impact of visual, verbal, and emotional elements on consumer perception. By presenting examples of successful brands, it is concluded that creating an authentic identity is crucial for market differentiation and building long-term consumer loyalty. Visual elements such as logos, packaging, and colors are often the first interactions with consumers and can strongly influence the impressions formed about a brand. This paper emphasizes the importance of brand identity elements, particularly visual identity, in establishing a recognizable and trustworthy brand.

Slogans, jingles, and other verbal components help deepen the emotional connection between the brand and its consumers. Strong verbal identification can foster emotional bonds and create stories that consumers want to share. Additionally, associating a brand with characters or personalities can contribute to the emotional feelings that cultivate loyalty to a particular brand. From this, it can be concluded that brand personality is a key aspect of identity. Consumers often perceive brands as entities with human characteristics, making it essential to strategically define a personality that resonates with the target audience. Ultimately, successful brand identities are not static; they evolve as society, technology, and consumer preferences change. Tourism companies must continuously monitor trends, conduct market research, and adapt their image to remain relevant and appealing. The use of new technologies and innovations is desirable, as is artificial intelligence, which can be a significant support in the strategic decision-making process.

In the context of creating a tourist destination brand of Trogir town, brand identity elements also play a very important role. Destinations need to view their identity from a holistic perspective, considering various cultural activities in the broadest sense, and reflect on the long-term impact of tourism on the local community and natural environment. They should present their resources and stories to potential visitors in a way that is attractive, authentic, and sustainable.

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