

# DESIGN AND RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE VISUAL BRAND IDENTITY FRAMEWORK

## DIZAJNIRANJE I REKONCEPTUALIZACIJA OKVIRA VIZUALNOGA IDENTITETA MARKE



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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The aim of the paper is to redefine and conceptualize the essence and connections of visual brand identity through a new perspective. It begins with a critical examination of current visual brand identity theories, identifying and addressing their inconsistencies. Based on the collected data, this study proposes a novel theoretical framework for visual brand identity, in which visual brand identity is systematically integrated with digital platforms and content elements.

**Design/Methodology/Approach** – Using a literature review as the basis, theories and concepts of visual brand identity are presented. The extracted concepts and theoretical approaches are compared and synthesized employing qualitative research methods.

**Findings and implications** – The present research study establishes a new framework, named the Visual Brand Identity Window Framework, which is grounded on the existing scientific literature on visual brand identity theories and approaches.

**Limitation** – The framework can be further developed through feedback on new scientific theories. Economic, societal, cultural, and technological changes could influence the visual brand identity definition and toolkit,

### Sažetak

**Svrha** – Cilj je rada iz nove perspektive redefinirati i konceptualizirati bit i povezanost vizualnoga identiteta marke. Rad započinje kritičkim preispitivanjem postojećih teorija o vizualnom identitetu marke te identificira i razmatra njihove nedosljednosti. Na temelju prikupljenih podataka istraživanje predlaže novi teorijski okvir vizualnoga identiteta marke unutar kojega je on sustavno integriran s digitalnim platformama i elementima sadržaja.

**Metodološki pristup** – Na temelju pregleda literature predstavljene su teorije i koncepti vizualnoga identiteta marke. Primjenom kvalitativnih istraživačkih metoda izdvojeni koncepti i teorijski pristupi uspoređeni su i sintetizirani.

**Rezultati i implikacije** – Istraživanje uspostavlja novi okvir pod nazivom *Visual Brand Identity Window Framework*, utemeljen na postojećoj znanstvenoj literaturi o teorijama i pristupima vizualnom identitetu marke.

**Ograničenja** – Okvir se može dalje razvijati putem povratnih informacija o novim znanstvenim teorijama. Ekonomske, društvene, kulturne i tehnološke promjene mogle bi utjecati na definiciju i instrumentarij vizualnoga identiteta marke čineći njegovo kontinuirano istraživanje poticajnim i vrijednim zadatkom.

making its ongoing exploration an engaging and valuable task.

**Originality** – The framework introduced in this study is unique, as no similar framework with the approach like this one exists in the literature on visual brand identity. Its value lies in clarifying, systematizing, and rendering transparent the contradictions and diversity in the literature. It defines the concept of visual brand identity and presents its components based on the academic literature. The established framework illustrates and unifies the relationship of visual brand identity with both digital and traditional spaces, as well as its relation to content elements. The established Visual Brand Identity Window Framework provides a practical and accessible structure that can assist both scholars and industry professionals. It can be a starting point for future research and support strategic decision-making in brand identity management.

**Keywords:** content elements, platforms, visual brand identity, visual brand identity elements

**Doprinos** – Okvir predstavljen u ovom radu jedinstven je jer u literaturi o vizualnom identitetu marke ne postoji sličan model s ovakvim pristupom. Njegova vrijednost je u pojašnjavanju, sistematiziranju i transparentnom prikazu proturječnosti i raznolikosti prisutnih u literaturi. Okvir definira koncept vizualnoga identiteta marke te prikazuje njegove komponente na temelju akademske literature. Uspostavljeni okvir ilustrira i objedinjuje njegov odnos s digitalnim i tradicionalnim okruženjima kao i povezanost s elementima sadržaja. Uspostavljeni *Visual Brand Identity Window Framework* pruža praktičnu i pristupačnu strukturu koja može biti korisna i znanstvenicima i stručnjacima iz prakse. Može poslužiti i kao polazište za buduća istraživanja te podrška strateškom odlučivanju u upravljanju identitetom marke.

**Gljučne riječi:** elementi sadržaja, platforme, vizualni identitet marke, elementi vizualnog identiteta marke

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, due to the turbulence of the changing environment, it has become increasingly important for businesses to differentiate themselves in the market so as to appeal to consumers. Brands rank among the most valuable intangible assets of a company, and their management is both an art and a science (Kotler & Keller, 2012). For consumers, brands provide a means to identify the manufacturer of a product and assess its performance, underscoring the strategic importance of intangible assets for both companies and their customers (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Branding is an important area of research because how consumers perceive a brand and its elements is crucial to the success of the brand (Aurand et al., 2005). Leading researchers in the field Ward et al. (2020) determined that one of the critical elements and key questions in marketing science is which brand identity elements should be selected as branding tools during the design and development of individual brands. Such elements help consumers to distinguish a brand from competitors and make it easier for consumers to recognize and buy (Ward et al., 2020).

Even though visual brand identity is crucial for companies' market success, there is no comprehensive framework in the existing academic literature that summarizes the elements of visual brand identity and interprets them in the context of both digital and traditional platforms.

Visual brand identity, as explored in the marketing literature, is often linked to the widely recognized frameworks of brand identity (Aaker, 1996; de Chernatony, 1999; Kapferer, 2008; Urde, 2013). However, these models have not sufficiently addressed the implications of digitalization and online brand building, even though websites play a crucial role in communicating brand and organizational values through their design and functionality (Rowley, 2004).

This underscores the need to consolidate the elements of visual brand identity into a cohesive framework, considering both digital and

traditional brand representations. The objective of this research study is to establish a new framework for visual brand identity, considering both digital and traditional platforms, based on existing scientific theories. The theoretical background is formed by theories and definitions of brand identity and visual brand identity. The study focuses on the development of a visual brand identity framework. The following chapters will present the scientific approaches to visual brand identity. Subsequently, the conceptual definition of visual brand identity and related prior research will be introduced based on the literature. The research methodology, the new visual identity framework, and the included concepts will also be detailed. This study concludes with the research findings, an overview of its limitations, and recommendations for future research.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Visual cues are crucial in the marketing environment because they influence consumer behavior and perceptions of products and brands (Eklund & Helme Falk, 2018; Hultén, 2011). Most scholars recognize visual identity as an integral component of corporate identity (Aaker, 1996; Bartholmé & Melewar, 2011; de Chernatony, 1999; Kapferer, 2008; Urde, 2013). According to Gregersen and Johansen (2018), multiple conceptual definitions, such as Corporate Visual Identity (CVI), Visual Brand Identity (VBI), and Visual Identity (VI), exist in the field.

In the scientific literature, Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) is described as the most tangible aspect of corporate identity (Bartholmé & Melewar, 2011; Simões et al., 2005). These authors, referencing Simões et al. (2005), consider CVI as comprising five elements: company name, symbol and/or logotype, typography, color, and slogan, which "reflect the company culture and values and that create physical recognition for the organization" (Bartholmé & Melewar, 2011; Carter, 1982; Dowling, 2001; Melewar & Saunders, 1999; Melewar & Saunders, 2000; Olins,

1989; Pilditch, 1970; Simões et al., 2005, p. 158). CVI has also been described as “the symbols and graphical elements that express the essence of an organization” (Gregersen & Johansen, 2018; van den Bosch et al., 2005, p. 108).

Melewar and Saunders (1998) and van den Bosch et al. (2005) define CVI as consisting of the company name, symbol and/or logo, typography, color, slogan, and additional graphical elements (Bolhuis et al., 2018; Gregersen & Johansen, 2018). CVI allows the organization to become visible, positively influences corporate reputation as a symbol, projects the structure of the organization, and serves an internal function by enabling employees to identify with the company (Bravo et al., 2012; van den Bosch et al., 2006).

The concept of Visual Brand Identity (VBI) is defined as the “face” of a brand (Phillips et al., 2014a). Visual Identity (VI) encompasses all visual elements associated with an organization (Bravo et al., 2013). As stated by Kaur and Kaur (2021, p. 247), “... visual identity pictures what company stands for and what it is through its various visual elements.”

The British Standard Institute describes visual identity, also referred to as corporate design, as the “visual expression of an organization’s corporate identity” (Balmer, 2008; Stoimenova, 2017, p. 348) and “the principal means by which an organization manifests visually its corporate identity” (Balmer, 2008; Stoimenova, 2017, p. 348).

Additional visual elements are often observed in the analysis of printed materials. Typically, printed materials include a brand’s logo, selected fonts, color palette, background, visual forms, and photographs, all of which contribute to a cohesive visual representation while also conveying desired associations (Phillips, 2014a).

The relationship between visual identity and architecture or interior design has also been explored (Alessandri et al., 2006; Balmer, 1995). According to Balmer (1995, p. 26), “visual identification” refers to the way a company utilizes its

logo, defines its style, and incorporates architectural and furnishing elements to communicate its corporate philosophy and personality. Bravo et al. (2012, p. 678, Table I) consider aesthetics, including architecture, office design, and staff appearance, as subdimensions of visual brand identity.

Under the holistic concept of sensory identity, the sensory domain linked to an identity element determines whether that element belongs to visual identity within the sensory identity system (Bartholomé & Melewar, 2011). Gregersen and Johansen (2018) assert that these visual elements are typically applied on platforms such as websites, buildings, brochures, and clothing.

In their study, Phillips et al. (2014b) note that holistic examinations of visual style have received little attention in academic research. Instead, individual visual elements are often analyzed in isolation from other brand elements (Phillips et al., 2014b).

The existing literature reveals a multitude of definitions and approaches to the concept of visual identity. However, an analysis of the literature highlights considerable variation and inconsistency in the application of the term. In summary, there is no unity in the conceptual framework of visual brand identity nor is there a well-structured framework in the literature that addresses visual brand identity and its elements as a cohesive whole.

### 3. METHODOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT OF VISUAL BRAND IDENTITY WINDOW FRAMEWORK

The new framework is based on dominant brand identity and visual brand identity theories. The method of qualitative comparative data analysis of relevant theories or theoretical models is used to set up the new framework. “The use of qualitative methods is appropriate for studying complex processes” (Eisenhardt, 1989; Tourky, 2021, p. 117). Qualitative research enables a high-

er level of detail and consequently facilitates the generation of new and more detailed insights as well as diverse viewpoints and perspectives (Chetioui et al., 2020; Harambašić & Škare, 2024). The purpose of the framework is to identify, based on academic literature, the connections between the contents dimension and platforms dimension and the dimension of visual brand identity. Additionally, it is aimed at compiling a detailed inventory of elements associated with the visual brand identity dimension while also mentioning elements related to the contents dimension and platforms dimension. Throughout this process, it is essential to recognize that the concepts of the visual brand identity framework, the visual brand identity dimension, and the elements of visual brand identity are distinct and should not be used interchangeably.

Research questions based on the problem statement are as follows:

RQ1: What are the dimensions of the brand identity framework?

RQ2: How can the dimension of visual brand identity be defined?

RQ3: Which are the elements of the dimension of visual brand identity in detail?

The use of these concepts in literature does not form a unified system. In this chapter, the study compares scientific theories, identifies their common points, and organizes them into a comprehensive framework.

### 3.1. Brand core

The theoretical basis of the structure of the Visual Brand Identity Window Framework is Aaker's theory of brand identity. Aaker defines the structure of brand identity as the core identity (brand core) and extended identity and also writes about the core of brand identity: "It is the centre that remains after you peel away the layers of an onion or the leaves of an artichoke" (Aaker, 1996, pp. 85-86). The brand core is the center of the brand identity, around which there are different brand identity dimensions, such as

visual brand identity (Aaker, 1996). The brand core is highlighted by numerous researchers as a key concept (Aaker, 1996; Kapferer, 2008; Urde, 2013). It has been described as the "timeless essence" (Aaker, 1996), the "source of identity" (Kapferer, 2008), and the "promise" (Urde, 2013). In de Chernatony's (1999) model, the brand core is represented as a part of the centrally positioned culture, embodying immutable core values. In Aaker's model, to this center connects the extended identity. The extended identity (Aaker, 1996), which encompasses for example visual brand identity, is inherently linked to the brand core. Consequently, the Visual Brand Identity Framework, of which the visual brand identity is a part, is also closely intertwined with the core of the brand identity. Furthermore, in this study each dimension of the framework and the elements of dimensions analyze and synthesize the conclusions of authors cited in brand research. When the dimensions and elements are described in detail, they are individually referenced.

Differences identifiable in the use of concepts in academic literature also play an important role, as their analysis is also necessary for establishing the framework.

## 3.2. Brand dimensions

It is important to note that this study only deals with the dimension of visual brand identity and its framework. The other dimensions of brand identity are not discussed in it. However, Figure 1 also points to the existence of the other brand identity dimensions related to the core of brand identity. These dimensions in Figure 1 are marked with dashed arrows. The following chapters present each dimension of the Visual Brand Identity Window Framework.

### 3.2.1. Visual brand identity dimension

The foundation of visual brand identity lies in concepts such as Aaker's (1996) "symbol," de Chernatony's (1999) "presentation," Kapferer's (2008) "physique," and Urde's (2013) "expression". The visual brand identity dimension includes

the visual components which, according to academic literature, create the brand's face (Phillips et al., 2014b). These components are characterized by their static nature and temporal invariance. Their permanence ensures the brand's easy and quick recognizability (Magrath & McCormic, 2013; Woo Jun & Lee, 2007).

### 3.2.2. *Platforms dimension*

Within the scope of this study, which centers on the visual brand identity dimension, the platforms are understood as a medium through which elements of the visual brand identity dimension are manifested. Platforms are widely regarded as self-evident constructs in both colloquial usage and academic discourse. Due to their inherent integration with brand-building practices, they play a pivotal role and are frequently acknowledged in scholarly work. For example, visual brand identity elements reach consumers through touchpoints (Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024) or applications such as letterheads, advertisements, and brochures (Bartholmé & Melewar, 2011). Despite their importance, the linkage between platforms and visual brand identity has not yet been formally integrated into a model. When defining the dimension of visual brand identity, it becomes clear that platforms—due to their distinct functional role—cannot be considered a part of the visual brand identity dimension. Nevertheless, their inseparability allows them to be situated within a common framework. In the proposed model, the interface or point of engagement is conceptualized as a platform (Gregersen & Johansen, 2018).

### 3.2.3. *Contents dimension*

Regarding the content elements, researchers have articulated the following: Magrath and McCormick (2013) emphasize that brand research has highlighted how supplementary brand elements—such as texts, images, brand sounds, videos, and relationship characteristics (Okonkwo, 2007; Rowley, 2004)—are better categorized as complementary content attributes rather than components of corporate visual identity (Magrath & McCormick, 2013; Woo Jun

& Lee, 2007). These elements function independently of brand design and primarily serve marketing objectives, such as building brand relationships and enhancing brand image. Unlike visual identity elements, content attributes are not permanent features of a brand; instead, they are dynamic and subject to regular changes (Magrath & McCormick, 2013). The views of the referenced authors provide the basis for treating content as an independent dimension. The novelty and significance of the framework lie in its distinction between visual and content dimensions while emphasizing their close relationship by integrating them within a single framework. The visual dimension and the content dimension serve different roles in brand building. The function of the visual brand identity dimension is the visual expression of brand identity. It consists of long-term, permanent elements. The function of the content dimension manifests itself primarily in advertisements, where it is often altered and re-edited. This study accepts these conclusions and, building upon them, conceptualizes content as a distinct dimension within the visual brand identity framework.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. **Defining the dimensions of the Visual Brand Identity Window Framework**

Visual brand identity elements are manifested through diverse platforms, enabling their engagement with consumers (Gregersen & Johansen, 2018; Rowley, 2004; Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024). Complementing these visual elements and their platforms are the content elements, which also inhabit both digital and traditional domains. Wheeler insightfully notes that “The marriage of design and content is the only marriage that lasts” (Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024, p. 154). Thus, platforms and content elements are important components of the visual brand identity framework, as they are closely connected to the visual brand identity dimension that incorporates design elements. Based on the methodological

procedures conducted, this study answers the first research question as follows:

To answer RQ1: The Visual Brand Identity Window Framework, which is directly connected to the brand core, includes the following dimensions: visual brand identity dimension, digital and traditional platforms dimension, contents dimension.

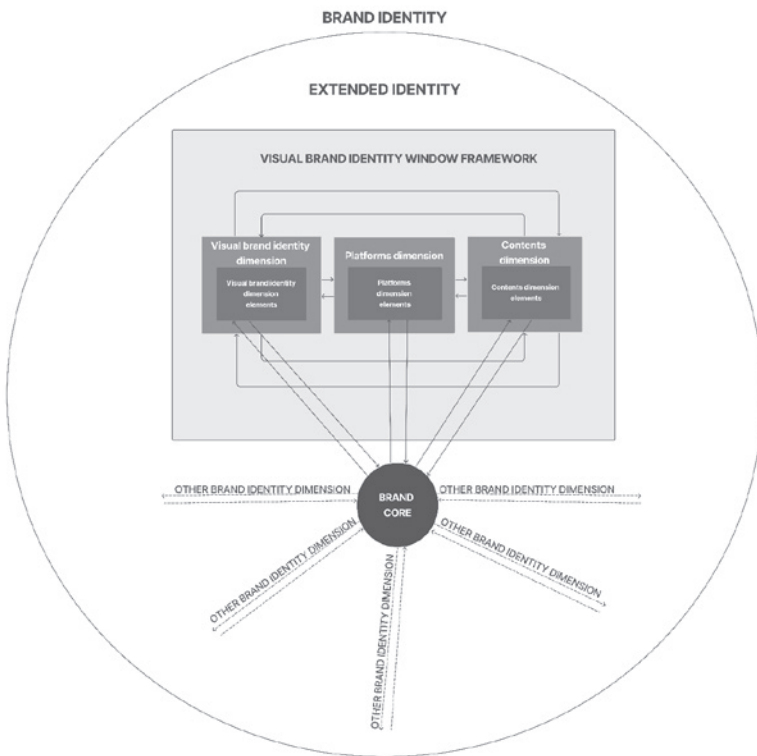
The Visual Brand Identity Window Framework is presented in Figure 1.

## 4.2. Defining the visual brand identity dimension

The visual brand identity dimension can be defined based on the author's theories presented in Chapter 3.2.1 and the answer to RQ1. In this framework, the author of this study defines the visual brand identity dimension as follows:

The visual brand identity dimension includes elements that are interpreted without a carrier platform or content elements, perceived

FIGURE 1: Visual Brand Identity Window Framework



Source: Author's own work, 2025.

Note: Brand identity: Aaker (1996); de Chernatony (1999); Kapferer (2008); Urde (2013)

Brand core: Aaker (1996); de Chernatony (2010); Kapferer (2008); Urde (2013)

Dimension of visual brand identity: Gregersen and Johansen (2018); Melewar and Saunders (1998);

Simões, (2005); Stoimenova (2017); van den Bosch et al. (2005)

Dimension of digital and traditional platforms:

Boukis (2020); Christodoulides (2009); Gregersen and Johansen (2018); Kalmegh (2022); Kohli et al. (2015); Rangaswamy et al. (2020); Ward et al. (2020); Wertz (2023); Wheeler and Meyerson (2024)

Dimension of contents elements: Gregersen and Johansen (2018); Jun and Lee (2022); Magrath and McCormick (2013); Rowley, (2004); Wheeler and Meyerson (2024); Wheeler (2009); Woo Jun and Lee (2007); Aaker (1996)

Other brand identity dimensions: These arrows indicate the dimensions of brand identity that were beyond the scope of this study.

through visual sensory channels, and that provide visual stimuli. These elements function as the visual representation of the brand within the framework.

To answer RQ2: The visual brand identity dimension consists of any element that is a visual expression of brand identity without content elements and platforms.

This definition is partly the same as the British Standard Institute's definition, in that it uses the term visual expression of brand identity. At the same time, this study also undertakes to determine the relationship of platforms and contents to visual brand identity, in which regard it draws on numerous ideas in the literature.

#### 4.3. Defining the elements of the visual brand identity dimension in the framework

This chapter presents the visual brand identity elements that were included in the visual brand identity dimension of the framework and based on what literature.

Within the holistic system of sensory identity, sensory perception determines which identity elements belong to visual identity (Bartholomé & Melewar, 2011). Regarding the brand name and slogan, Bartholomé and Melewar (2011) note that these elements may belong to multiple dimensions depending on their usage. The brand name is a static, constant element of the brand, it is also auditory. Therefore, this study categorizes the brand name as an auditory identity element. However, since it also has a visually perceivable domain, this aspect is classified as part of visual brand identity elements, referred to as the brand name design.

The slogan, while also being auditory, is a dynamic and changeable element. According to Aaker (1996, p. 232), "An effective slogan has the power to capture the essence of a brand identity, yet it can be changed, replaced, or augmented more easily than the brand name." Consequently, this study identifies slogans as content elements, as their defining characteristic is their

dynamic and changeable nature. The visually perceivable aspect of the slogan is categorized as the slogan design.

The role of pictures in literature is dual. Some studies refer to them as "imagery" or "brand imagery," but often no distinction is made when naming elements with different functions. "Imagery" is typically associated with marketing and promotional purposes, while "brand imagery" promotes brand values, lifestyles, and personality (Magrath & McCormick, 2013; Rowley, 2004; Wertz, 2023). Wheeler and Meyerson (2024, p. 83) use the term "imagery style." This study introduces the term brand imagery style, highlighting that imagery serves as a content element, whereas the brand imagery style refers to the style of imagery carrying the content element.

Based on the holistic approach to visual elements (design elements) and the definition provided in the answer to RQ2, the following compilation of visual brand identity elements is presented. While the terms like brand name design, slogan design, and brand imagery style are not explicitly used by the referenced authors, their functions align with the interpretations adopted in this study.

The collection of visual identity elements based on the literature are the following: logotype (Ward et al., 2020), logo, symbol, color, typography, graphic elements (Gregersen & Johansen, 2018; Melewar & Saunders, 1998; Simões et al., 2005; van den Bosch et al., 2005; Stoimenova, 2017), color palette (Magrath & McCormick, 2013; Rowley, 2009), brand name design, emblem, signature, icons (Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024), heraldry (Stoimenova, 2017), favicon (Magrath & McCormick, 2013), motion (Heeter, 2000; Magrath & McCormick, 2013; Wertz, 2023; Wheeler and Meyerson, 2024), brand imagery style (Magrath and McCormick, 2013; Rowley, 2004; Wertz, 2023; Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024), illustration (Humberstone, 2015), presentation style (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012; Balmer, 1995; Biswas et al., 2017; Bravo et al., 2013; Eklund & Helmefalk, 2018; Kirby & Kent, 2010; Magrath & McCormick,

2013; Melewar & Saunders, 1998; O’Cass & Grace, 2004; Stoimenova, 2017), and slogan design (Rowley, 2004).

To answer RQ3: Visual brand identity elements in detail include symbols, logo, emblem, icons, heraldry, favicon, motion, logotype, signature, brand name design, color, color palette, typography, graphic elements, brand imagery style, illustration, presentation style, and slogan design.

As organizations grow, it is essential to address the changes required in the process of rebranding and redesign to maintain brand value and determine which elements must be preserved (Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024). During this process, it is important to note that aesthetically conscious consumers are sensitive to changes in visual brand identity (VBI) and tend to respond negatively to incongruent brand representations (Phillips et al., 2014b).

## 5. ELEMENTS OF THE DIMENSIONS IN DETAIL

### 5.1. Detailed presentation of the visual brand identity dimension elements

The elements of the visual brand identity dimension are presented in detail below to clarify their meaning and function.

According to Wheeler and Meyerson (2024), referencing Bart Crosby, a symbol as a visual manifestation must express the fundamental essence of an organization, product, or service. Symbols can be controlled and carry strong associations, significantly influencing brand personality (Aaker, 1996). In the literature, symbols are often associated with logos and are interpreted as graphic symbols in the digital space (Magrath & McCormick, 2013). Even when a symbol is modernized, hopefully, their meaning is ideally preserved and invariably continues to represent the brand’s heritage. As stated by Aaker (1996, p. 85), “A strong symbol can be the cornerstone of a brand strategy.” A logo is a symbol that represents a company, product,

or service (Wertz, 2023). It functions as a visual figure symbolizing the brand name, facilitating brand recognition and recall (Magrath & McCormick, 2013; Kapferer, 2008). The logo serves as an abbreviation for all that the brand represents (Rowley, 2004) and holds exceptional potential for unique brand ownership (Ward et al., 2020). Even when a new visual brand identity is created, it has no meaning without a logo (Wertz, 2023). Companies dedicate substantial resources and time to selecting and defining their optimal logos, involving cooperative processes with brand managers, art directors, and even the brand’s consumers (Colman et al., 1995; Henderson & Cote, 1998; Phillips et al., 2014a; Torres et al., 2023; van Grinsven & Das, 2015). In the emblem, the text appears in a pictorial element. “Emblems are trademarks featuring a shape inextricably connected to the name of the organization” (Wheeler, 2009, p. 62). “Icons are symbols that represent people, places, things, and ideas in simplified forms. ... Branded icon systems take on the brand’s look and feel, creating consistency throughout branded environments and digital experiences” (Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024, p. 160). Heraldry carries symbolic and cultural significance, inspiring individuals (Latif et al., 2024; Stoimenova, 2017). A favicon, derived from “favorite icon,” is a symbolic element used in web design (Magrath & McCormick, 2013). Motion encompasses the animation potential of logos by showing—as noted by Wheeler (2009), recalling Steven Heller and Paul Rand’s thoughts on this matter—what the immobile element wants to do. The diversity in the literature shows that a logotype refers to an integrated unit of typography, color, and pictogram or “the specific typography of the brand name” (Ward et al., 2020, p. 394). In another interpretation, a logotype is a word or words with a specific typeface that, together with a symbol, create a signature. Further complicating the terminology, both “logotype” and “signature” are often used synonymously with “logo” (Bartholmé & Melewar, 2011; Gregersen & Johansen, 2018; Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024). The brand name makes the brand recognizable to consumers, aiding in re-

call, differentiation, and serving as an indicator of quality (Griff Round & Roper, 2012; Magrath & McCormick, 2013; Park & Lennon, 2009). Colors allow brands to create a unified visual identity (Andrade et al., 2024; Labrecque & Milne, Ward 2012). Ward et al. (2020), who are leaders on the topic, say in their study that it is challenging to choose color as a unique brand identifier because of the common use of the same color by brands in the market. Color is a difficult brand element to own because its uniqueness is on average low (Ward et al., 2020). Yet, some brands can also be associated with colors (Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024). Colors basically affect emotions and express the personality; they are often associated with culturally defined messages. Typography provides a visual form for written language (Sarmiento & Quelhas-Brito, 2022). While closely related to graphics, typography is treated separately both in extant literature and in this study. The difference is that letters do not display the message, they only carry it, while a text created with a graphic approach supports and strengthens the message, refers to it, while also conveying visual messages (Balázs et al., 2013). At the same time, according to Wheeler and Meyerson (2024), typography supports brand strategy, defines personality, and organizes information hierarchically. Both are important roles in creating visual brand identity. The brand imagery style refers to the style of pictures used in graphics to visually represent brand values (Magrath & McCormick, 2013; Rowley, 2004). It can be manifested in photography, illustration, or iconography styles (Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024). "Illustrations add an element of style, flair, and character to the brand identity" (Humberstone, 2015, p. 164). It is worth noting that character elements, as distinct brand elements, can also achieve this function, often becoming cultural icons. Typically, they must be redrawn as part of advertising campaigns (Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024). Stoimenova (2017) classifies illustration as a basic design element. This element can also appear as part of an emblem. The presentation style is an attribute of visual brand identity (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012; Magrath

& McCormick, 2013) and can be defined as the style in which the brand is presented (Kerfoot et al., 2003; Magrath & McCormick, 2013). The brand can represent a recognizable and identifiable style by consistently applying the same style across all channels (Magrath & McCormick, 2013). Examples in the literature include employee uniforms (Bravo et al., 2012; Kirby & Kent, 2010; O'Cass & Grace, 2004), product presentation styles (Kerfoot et al., 2003; Magrath & McCormick, 2013), and architectural or furnishing styles (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012; Balmer, 1995; Melewar & Saunders, 1998; Kirby & Kent, 2010; O'Cass and Grace, 2004). More particularly, they include exteriors and interiors of manufacturing plants, premise, showrooms, offices, warehouse, company retail outlets (Stoimenova, 2017), style of its shops (Bravo et al., 2013), shop design, office buildings (Barholmé & Melewar, 2011) lightning style (Biswas et al., 2017; Eklund & Helmeffalk, 2018). The slogan, as a bifacial element, is addressed both as content and as a visual element. While discussed later in this study as a content element, its visual aspects are referred to as slogan design. When creating slogan design, it is important to know that "Integrated communications require that content and design work together to differentiate the brand" (Wheeler, 2009, p. 26). Perceptual science indicates that, in the recognition and interpretation of sensory stimuli, individuals know and note first the visual images, which are immediately committed to memory after perception. The color is the second in this order. "The brain takes more time to process language, so content is third in the sequence behind shape and color" (Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024, p. 52). Consequently, the visual appearance of a slogan is processed more quickly than its content.

## 5.2. Platforms and their elements

Traditional business platforms typically have two sides: buyers and sellers. In contrast, Digital Business Platforms (DBPs) are multi-sided, supporting two or more sides (Rangaswamy et al., 2020). While DBPs function as digital marketplaces where the same participant may act on multiple

sides of the platform in certain contexts (e.g., a user on eBay engaging in transactions as both a buyer and a seller), traditional marketing primarily served to inform the public about products or services available for purchase (Rangaswamy et al., 2020). Traditional marketing represents the oldest, non-online form of marketing, supporting the buying and selling of goods in physical marketplaces (Kalmegh, 2022).

The focus and scope of brand management have shifted toward online technologies and platforms (Boukis, 2020; Christodoulides, 2009; Kohli et al., 2015). With respect to visual brand identity, there is an increasing need for adaptation to platforms, particularly social media, where visual cues must align with general visual standards. The rapid evolution of businesses providing various digital platforms has been driven by digitalization.

“A platform designed to enable business interactions typically provides a relatively open and participative infrastructure for the interactions that take place and sets the governance conditions to orchestrate those interactions” (Rangaswamy et al., 2020, p. 73).

Examples of DBPs include eBay, Google, and Uber Technologies (Rangaswamy et al., 2020). The growth of platform-based businesses has been propelled by advancements in internet and mobile technologies, analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), and Big Data, along with shifting consumer preferences and consumption habits. These factors have fueled a rapid development of peer-to-peer sharing platform business models (Wirtz, 2019). Online platforms play a crucial role in enabling marketers to engage more closely with their consumers, ultimately driving increases in revenue (Kumar et al., 2018). In order for marketers to communicate with consumers and to communicate the brand and visual identity appropriately to the consumer, they can for example use online platforms, such as social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (Auxier & Anderson, 2021; Jarman et al. 2022) or video sharing platforms (YouTube; Tik-Tok (Looy, 2022)). These platforms connect

service providers (e.g., drivers, accommodation providers) with service seekers (e.g., passengers, tourists). Such platforms allow the online buying and selling of products and services, acting as marketplaces that enable users to interact, share content, thus helping build communities. In research by Keller (2025), the study of brand platforms is highlighted as a key area of focus. Platforms have been central to numerous studies. For instance, Liu et al. (2025) investigate how cross-border digital platforms influence discretionary adaptation strategies in emerging markets. Similarly, Chou and Lin (2025) examine the effects of social media platforms on box office revenue in China. Social media platforms are extremely important for promoting brands (Ma et al., 2025) and have become part of everyday life for billions of people around the world (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

### 5.3. Contents and their elements

Existing literature includes numerous studies that emphasize the significance of content elements. Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is fundamentally transforming the marketing industry, introducing a new paradigm of automated marketing content generation (Peres et al., 2023). Industry reports point to the economic potential of generative AI, quantifying its impact at USD 463 billion in the marketing sector alone (Chui et al., 2023).

Ma et al. (2025) identify various configurations of influencer characteristics and content attributes that result in high numbers of likes, favorites, and comments on social media platforms.

The literature emphasizes that content elements do not appear as static brand elements but are constantly changing due to the development of the appropriate brand image, while the design elements of the brand are fundamentally constant and static (Magrath & McCormick, 2013; Woo Jun & Lee, 2007). In this framework, all elements that are dynamically changeable and/or convey content or information are categorized as content elements. Examples include “images, videos, text, [and] sound” (Magrath & McCor-

mick, 2013, p. 101). As Rowley (2004, p. 135) notes, "... the words determine what it says, the typeface determines the style of the communication." Examples of digital content elements include videos, e-books, blog posts, event livestreams, microsites, animations, podcasts, metaverse experiences, social media posts, and direct mail ads (Stoimenova, 2017; Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024). Most content elements that appear in the traditional space can also be present in the digital space, such as slogans/taglines, text/copy, interviews, newsletters, pictures, imagery, photos, and ads (Rowley, 2004; Magrath & McCormick, 2013; Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024; Stoimenova, 2017). Due to their significance, slogans/taglines and text/copy will be discussed in detail.

The visual representation of slogans has already been discussed. It is worth recalling that the brain identifies the form and color of a slogan before processing its linguistic content, as more time is required for language comprehension (Wheeler, 2009). A slogan (Aaker, 1996; Stoimenova, 2017), also referred to as a tagline (Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024), is a concise phrase that encapsulates the essence of the corporate brand, expresses its personality, positions it, and differentiates the company from its competitors. In the UK, taglines are known as end lines or straplines (Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024). Slogans are simple and must not be arbitrary. That term often refers to a single line used in a marketing campaign (Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024). Key expectations for taglines include that they be short, easy to say and remember, also unique, evoking an emotional response, differentiated from competitors, capturing the brand essence and positioning, avoiding negative connotations, as well as that they be protectable and trademarkable (Wheeler, 2009).

The text (Stoimenova, 2017), also known as copy (Magrath & McCormick, 2013), serves to build brand relationships. It is a dynamic tool subject to ongoing editing but remains consistent with the brand's messaging. It provides textual information about the brand and its services (Magrath & McCormick, 2013).

## 6. CONCLUSION AND KEY IMPLICATIONS

Research on visual brand identity is an important area in marketing science because it helps consumers to differentiate between companies. This study fills a gap in the literature by providing a theoretical framework that is not found in existing sources. Despite its fundamental scientific and marketing importance, only sub-elements of a theoretical approach to visual brand identity and their conceptual definitions can currently be identified in the literature.

The novelty of the proposed framework lies in its treatment of visual brand identity and its platforms—operating in both digital and traditional spaces—as an interconnected system that also accounts for its relationship with content elements.

In brand identity models, the brand core occupies a central position. The new framework follows these theories by connecting the framework directly to the core of brand identity (Aaker, 1996; de Chernatony, 2010; Kapferer, 2008; Urde, 2013).

Following a literature review, this study proposes a conceptual definition of a visual brand identity framework. It also defines the dimension of the framework and identifies those elements.

The study organizes and synthesizes the various terms used in different ways or as synonyms in the literature in relation to the elements of visual brand identity dimension, which were presented in this study.

Regarding slogans, the study aligns with approaches that primarily classify them as content elements. However, it also examines slogans as visual elements under the concept of slogan design. The brand name, as a static and auditory brand element, is interpreted as part of the auditory identity based on the Corporate Sensory Identity Model (Bartholmé & Melewar, 2011). At the same time, its association with visual identity is addressed under brand name design. Similarly, due to conflicting views in the literature

regarding imagery, this study recommends classifying imagery as a content element based on its function and brand imagery style as a visual element.

The new framework developed in this study can be used by corporate marketing managers and creative directors in strategic brand planning for its ability to introduce more transparency into the connections and elements of visual brand identity. It helps in the process of creating brands that are self-identical to the company and can be easily communicated.

Since the framework is constructed using qualitative scientific methods, it holds value for both researchers and corporate environments.

## 7. STUDY LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study establishes a conceptual framework for the dimensions and elements discussed. However, its scope is limited as it does not aim to provide a detailed analysis of all components within the dimensions of the framework.

Future research could focus on changes related to the increasingly widespread use of artificial intelligence and augmented reality, which will allow the framework to be expanded with new elements. Consequently, future studies could explore and enhance the framework by incorporating additional elements.

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