

Mapping dynamism in visual identities applied in destination marketing

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Abstract

Due to the recent global downturn in tourism since 2020, there is a greater need for innovative solutions to reinvigorate the industry. In addition to government regulations, destinations can also do much to entice visitors. There is a growing need for new marketing approaches to regaining the trust of tourists. There are ways to initiate the involvement of tourists and build trust before they start their journey. Successful destination brands exhibit inclusivity and present their values in diverse forms, leading to a high degree of consumer involvement.

The destinations' image reflecting openness can be an excellent tool and applying dynamic visual identities can support this strategy. As the competitive landscape changes turbulently, destinations are forced to evolve constantly as well. Using dynamic visual identities (DVI) can be an appropriate long-term strategy to surpass short-term marketing communications tactics.

This inquiry investigates the field of DVIs designed for destination marketing purposes to identify how dynamism is present in the visual identity system. We explore where and how dynamism most often appears in dynamic logos designed destinations. We study what types of dynamic elements make up the logos of destination DVIs. As most cases (75%, N = 44) in our sample are from later than 2013, findings are unique to this narrow research area in tourism marketing and DVI research in general.

With the process presented, destination marketers and designers can expeditiously assess the visual identities used in different market segments in order to develop communication assets that provide the most differentiative power and fit their strategy the most. Researchers can use this productive approach as the basis for further research on dynamic logos.

Keywords: dynamic visual identity, destination marketing, tourism, design communication

1. Introduction

The topic of this paper is the examination of the tourist destinations’ visual identities. Tourism is among the first industries drastically affected by the globally spread Coronavirus. Although the research does not focus on these impacts, it is inevitable to mention it since the experiences gained during this period will influence the new direction in the reset phase. Tourism is not an exception either. Before the worldwide epidemic, the professional statistics, figures and research (WTTC, UNWTO) were about the global prosperity of the tourism industry.

In 2017 in Europe the spending from leisure tourism – generated by inland tourists together with ones from other countries – gave 77.8% of direct touristic GDP and spending from business tourism meant 22.2%. In 2018 according to the expectations, they increased by 3.4%; however, by 2028, they will have raised by 2.3% and reached 480.3 million USD (WTTC, 2018). Not only its contribution increased, but international arrivals too (the number of the tourists who spent at least five days in one destination). In 2019 world tourism reached 1.5 billion arrivals which meant a 60% increase; within ten years in 2009, 892 million arrivals were registered worldwide) (UNWTO, 2020). The number of tourist arrivals achieved in 2019 fell back by 30 years in 2020, a figure quoting the number of tourist arrivals of the 1990s (UNWTO, 2020). A slow recovery can be predicted in tourism, which assumes that tourist destinations need to determine new Unique Selling Propositions (USPs) and promote them to tourists. Destination marketing will be a crucial activity in the new normal and one of these tools could be the improvement of the destinations’ visual identities, which will increase the tourist engagement before the trip.

In addition to the practical applicability of the research, the scientific added value of the study is also crucial, as applied primary research in a new field: the image of tourist destinations, which was unprecedented. Due to the interdisciplinary approach of scientific work, the essential intersection points of two disciplines - design communication and tourism - were examined. The research question of this study is the following: Where are the dynamic elements located in logos of DVIs used in destination marketing?

The study follows the structure of the scientific paper to aid the reader, and the document is structured in four discrete sections after the introduction. Before presenting the methodology, the paper shows a widespread theoretical background from the destination image throughout the evolution of the brand experience to the Dynamic Visual Identities. Then, the data collection and analysis are introduced, and the qualitative research includes 44 DVI cases related to tourist destinations. This part is followed by the examination of the symbol and logotype type combinations and dynamism. Finally, the paper summarizes the research results and their practical usefulness for the competing tourist destinations, which indicates the future research directions.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Destination image

The background of the paper is place marketing which appeared as an individual concept in the 80s. Researchers had already dealt with it before, however the topic emerged at that time. Scientific work does not intend to deal with the evolution of scientific theoretical considerations, however, in order to see the connections, it is essential to understand the meaning behind them. Two research directions have played an important role in the development of place marketing: on the one hand, works that “branch out” from classical business-oriented marketing and try to extend the applicability of marketing to the marketing of non-profit organizations (KOTLER – LEVY, 1969; KOTLER, 1982); on the other hand, which appeared and spread in the ’70s primarily within psychological research.

First, LYNCH (1960) made place marketing examinations and formulated the fundamental theories. His pioneer work resulted in several research pieces on the topic, and more and more people started to deal with preconceptions of towns and cities, mental and cognitive maps (GOULD–WHITE, 1974; TUAN, 1974; PEARCE, 1977; POCOCK – HUDSON, 1978). In the center of place marketing is the town image, formed by the preferences of the targeted social groups. In the case of the urban image, the most important finding is that man never moves and acts in space on the basis of the real space, but on the basis of its subjective representation - the mental space (LYNCH, 1960). It means that individuals consider different things and relationships important from the same realistic place. As a result, we consider forming features, apart from the intangible elements, the experiences, values and traditions related to the place (MARCHIOR – CANTONI, 2015).

The word image in touristic context took a lot of time to appear by the time it got from medical interpretation to its economical interpretation. The word image originates from the Latin *imago* which comes from the merger of *'imitari'* (to imitate) and *'aemulor'* (to aspire). The expression image itself appeared in psychological terminology for a long period. Implementing it into marketing happened in the 1950s when GARDNER and LEVY (1955) examined the decision-making customers of supermarkets. In general marketing image meant the idea, which is created in the customers mind by promotions, advertisements, packaging and greatly influences the decisions in connection with shopping.

At the very beginning of the evolution of image, the concept appeared in reference to other interpretations than economical. At that time, it arose regarding towns and cities too, and actually, parallelly they started to deal with personal, institutional and national image. As a result, the concept of image expanded and referred not only to things, but to persons, geographical places, too. The image was defined as the totality of thoughts, ideas and impressions formed about the given person, thing, space, which is the psychological representation of the objective reality existing in the consciousness of the individual (BALOGLU – MCCLERAY, 1999).

The tourism image is the engine behind the success of any destination, and accordingly it is an essential element of marketing strategies (HUNT, 1975; CHON, 1990; ECHTNER – RITCHIE, 1991; GALLARZA et al., 2002). According to WEICHHART et al. (2006) the image of tourism can be seen as a picture of the physical material world, a set of ideas, expectations, thoughts, and impressions that contain elements of cognitive knowledge as well as emotional evaluations. The image formed in the target groups is not a set of opinions considered and thought through several times, but a - mostly subjective - image that is a reflection of various assessments and associations (ECHTNER – RITCHIE, 1991). The tourist image is extremely complex as it involves the reflection of many phenomena. The most prominent are landscape, natural environment, cultural attractions, but other important, yet less uniformly accepted image elements are accommodation, hospitality and gastronomy, accessibility of the destination, climate, shopping opportunities and tranquility (KLADOUA – MAVRAGANI, 2015). By properly applying conscious communication it can contribute to forming a positive image of cities and towns.

The image is constantly evolving, even if it is not managed. In this case, the image is generated spontaneously, and it is likely that the image messages reaching the target groups do not transmit the most ideal image of the destination. Therefore, its main task is for each destination to build and shape its own image, which is a key factor in travel decisions. Although the image of the destination can be shaped to a limited extent, conscious planning can give the image we want to the outside world. The current image of the destination refers to its current state, while the wish image refers to the future, desired state, the latter can also be called a vision (MACINNIS – PRICE, 1987). A marked, attractive and positive image can only be developed if decision-makers keep in mind the main aspects of designing the image of the place. The

image of the city must be true, realistic, believable, simple and well distinguishable. If a place spreads too many kinds of images of itself, it can lead to confusion. It is a good opportunity to stand out from the competition if the destination has a unique attraction that can attract visitors. However, some destinations do not have such attractions, so destination marketing managers should seek to create new attractions or add existing functionality to existing facilities. Tourist attractions support the development of the destination in several ways. They help to develop a dynamic and attractive image of the destination, support an increase in living standards, and strengthen local self-awareness and pride among the local population (LEE et al., 2014).

2.2. The relationship between experience and image

The literature generally classifies the sources of information in the individual's conscious image into three groups: individual experiences (direct experience or close acquaintances as sources of information), professional information (openly or closely induced image elements such as tourist advertising, travel agency information, travel reports) and things (independent, organic elements such as school knowledge or media) (GUNN, 1972; FAKEYE – CROMPTON, 1991; GARTNER, 1993). These sources are closely intertwined, individual experiences are the most decisive, so the image communicated about a destination must be based on reality. As a result of new international trends emerging at the beginning of the third millennium, there has been an increase in the number of ‘experienced tourists’ who are rich in personal experiences, in other words, ‘they have had a variety of experiences’ (SCHMITT, 1999).

These new types of consumers are able to compare competing cultural programs, facilities, and destinations, and as a result, they make much more quality-oriented in their tourism decisions. Visitors are no longer content to observe events only passively, but also want to take an active part in these experiences (STAMBOULIS – SKAYANNIS, 2003). Thanks to the changes, the generation of experience is increasingly becoming a central element in the success of tourist attractions. All tourist attractions that want to stay competitive must adapt to innovation.

The introduction of new technologies — computers, IT technologies, satellite communications — and the advancement of new production methods, foreign investment, and multinational corporations have accelerated the process by which the world has become a ‘global village’ (McLUHAN, 1962). In this global village, through the application of modern information technologies, interactivity and the active involvement of the consumer in the service - knowledge transfer, entertainment - processes are becoming easier and easier. In our experience-seeking society, visitors will choose a destination that offers the opportunity to generate personal experiences.

2.3. Brand experience and its outcomes

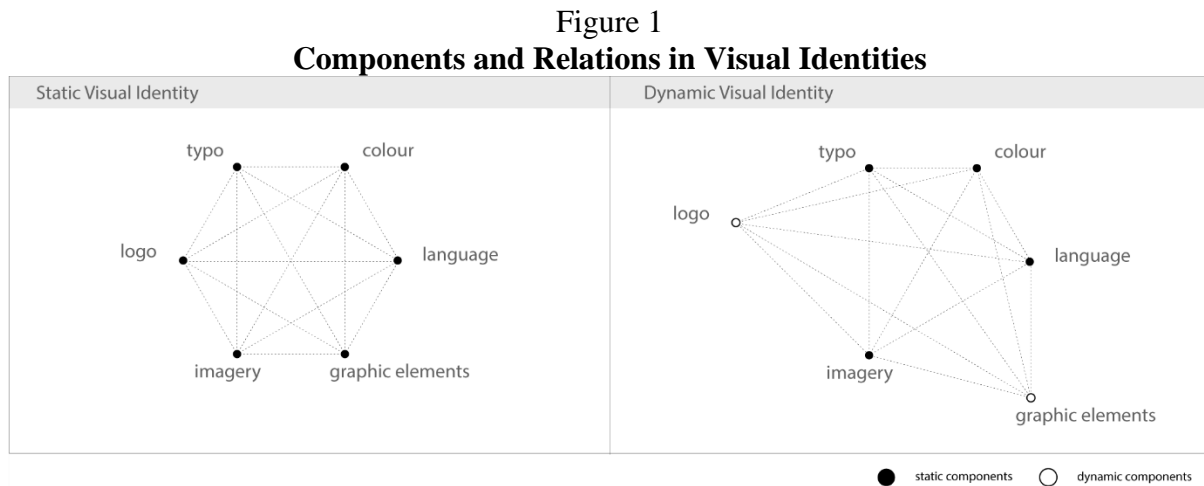
Since the 2010s, the increasing availability of the Internet and digital technologies have increased consumer engagement with the brand (SIMON – TOSSAN, 2018). These include electronic bulletin boards, discussion forums, social networks, blogs, vlogs, gamification, virtual and augmented reality, artificial intelligence, listservs, newsgroups, chat rooms, and personal web pages (DE VALCK et al., 2009). Still, it is also vital to mention brands' visual identity, which increases engagement through consumer interactivity. Brand communication is becoming more and more visual (SALZER-MORLING – STRANNEGARD, 2004; SCHROEDER 2004), and graphic elements are becoming increasingly crucial than verbal elements in brand advertising (POLLAY, 1985; MCQUARRIE – PHILLIPS, 2008). Brand experience is generated not only by the consumer's shopping experience but also by its interactions with the brand (HAMZAH et al., 2014). Brand experience is critical in building trust (KHAN – FATMA, 2017; MATHEW – THOMAS, 2018) because consumers feel that a brand can deliver on its promise and build trust (FOURNIER, 1998; DELGADO-BALLESTER

–MUNUERA-ALEMÁN, 2005; RAMASESHAN – STEIN, 2014). A particular approach to foster great consumer experiences can be the application of dynamic visual identities.

2.4. Dynamic Visual Identities

Brands can be considered as living constructs (NEUMEIER, 2006). This is supported by the fact that contemporary brands' visual identities do not tend to be completely static designs in many cases either. Such visual identities are freed from the constraints of consistency (GREGERSEN – JOHANSEN, 2018). Moreover, DVIs can be called non-conventional (KREUTZ, 2001), flexible (LEITÃO et al., 2014), fluid (PEARSON, 2013), mutant (SANTOS et al., 2013), or dynamic (FELSING, 2009; VAN NES, 2012) identities as well. DVIs denote an up-to-date approach to how living brands can express themselves. DVIs, as a set of components where one or more of the elements are subject to change, the VI system can evolve so that brands can survive in response to rapidly changing internal or external events (VAN NES, 2012).

We use the following system shown in *Figure 1*. to determine the dynamic components of visual identities based on VAN NES (2012), as this simplistic model is more geared towards visual elements. Hence, it provides a reasonable basis for an evaluation that does not closely evaluate components like name or other linguistic assets.



Six elements (logo, typography, colors, imagery, graphic elements, and language) of the VI and their relations can be static and dynamic according to managerial and designer choices

Source: Adapted from VAN NES (2012)

In DVI systems, dynamism is achieved by any input variable driving the change to appear in multiple outputs (VAN NES, 2012) according to the creators' intentions. MARTINS et al.'s (2019) literature review builds a model from the characteristics offered in previous articles on the topic and suggests the analysis of Variation Mechanisms and Functions as a basis for further DVI research. This method distinguishes between dynamism applied in the logo and dynamism present in the VI system.

It is helpful to break down the logos into constituents: 1. symbol (or emblem) and 2. typography parts (logotype). The emblem is the graphical mark employed to represent the brand. The logotype is usually the name of the brand or other textual identifier designed with sophisticated typographic treatment. Some brands use both constituents, and some utilize only one of them as the primary visible identifier of their particular entity.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

Since several studies and books cataloging high-quality DVIs are available, some design agencies and professionals known for developing DVIs are listed already. This fact enabled us to use the method of snowball sampling. This process is often used when a complete listing of members is not available or cannot be compiled (FINK, 2003).

We collected possibly appropriate sample items by examining their sets of works and the ones published or mentioned in conjunction with them. As VERMA et al. (2017) state, this is a non-probability type of data collection, so it relies heavily on the researcher's judgment. To increase the quality of the sample, the researchers collaborated with a group of designers to decide the appropriate cases.

To broaden the spectrum of cases, we conducted thorough and in-depth online keyword searches. We can consider using multiple data sources to approach methodological triangulation (DENZIN, 2017; FLICK, 2002, 2018). The rationale behind this mixed-method data gathering was to increase the scope and depth of materials, as FLICK (2002: 227) proposes, and acquire a broad spectrum of cases eligible for future qualitative analysis.

This combination of procedures resulted in a relatively large number of possible cases (n=212). To narrow down the sample to DVIs related strongly to destinations, we filtered out all DVIs from other industries or fields of tourism-related services like events and transportation. By this, we got a considerable number of valid items (n=44).

3.2. DVI Cases

Represented destinations vary in type and size. Starting from the micronation of Principality of Sealand with just a few people, through the Italian town of Rutino with less than a thousand inhabitants, we find large cities of millions of people like New York, Sydney, or Melbourne. The line of administrative units does not stop at the city level; more extensive regions such as French Bordeaux Métropole or West Coast Council, a local government body in Tasmania, also appear.

The range of the publication dates covers two decades, from 2000 to 2020. 33 (75%) of the sample items are from after 2013, which supports the claim that this analysis fills a research gap not only in the field of tourism marketing but covers an interval in time that seems under-researched in DVI literature so far.

3.3 Data analysis

We examine the logo element of the six potentially dynamic DVI components. Analysis of the logo components is also in the scope of the present inquiry.

As the method of the analysis, we used the model of features and mechanism developed by Martins et al. (2019). This procedure distinguishes the appearance of dynamic elements in the logo and other parts of the VI system. Analysis done in this way classifies the DVIs by scrutinizing (1.) The Focus of the DVI, (2.) Dynamism in the VI System (S) and the Graphical Mark (GM), (3.) Variation Mechanisms (VM), as well as the different (4.) Features (F). Deciding the static or dynamic nature of the constituents of the logo plays an important part also.

By revealing the specificities of this area of tourism marketing, it is possible to gather valuable insights into how destination brands have used the tools of DVI-s so far and get a glimpse of best practices. Since this paper's scope covers the identification of the dynamic elements only, we will share VM and Feature analysis results in a future publication.

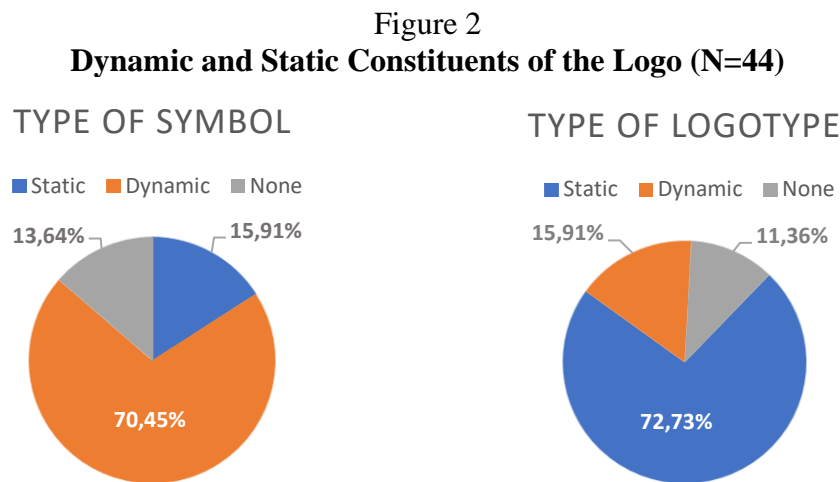
4. Results

The research question of the present paper is: Where are the dynamic elements located in logos of DVIs used in destination marketing?

Results show that the symbol constituent is the most typical element to contain some degree of dynamism. In most cases it is accompanied by a static logotype representing the destination. Majority of the dynamic logos use one dynamic component.

4.1. Mapping the logos

Based on the work of Martins et al. (2019) we examined the constituents of logos separately to find out if dynamism was applied to it. As *Figure 2* shows below the symbol element was dynamic in 70.45% of the cases. The peculiarity of the remaining logos was that they were found static (15.91%) or were utterly absent (13.64%) in close proportions. In case of the logotype element of the examined dynamic logos, vast majority (72.73%) of them were static, in 15.91% dynamic and in 11.36% they lacked this constituent entirely.



Source: Own research

4.2. Symbol and Logotype type combinations

Since dynamism can be captured more in the symbol part than the logotype, we consider this constituent a primary expression of dynamism. With this in mind, we present the crosstabulation of symbol and logotype below, percentages calculated within symbol type categories.

By examining the proportions of the logotype group categories within the groups of the symbol component (*see Table 1.*), it is clear that logos with a dynamic symbol are paired with static logotypes in most cases (77.4%).

A noteworthy finding is that in all cases where symbol and logotype constituent was present, and the symbol was static, it meant that the logotype was static. This unique coexistence was observed in 7 cases (15.9% of total cases, N=44).

When there was no symbol included in the logo, a dynamic logotype represented the entity in 3 cases, a static logotype in 1 case, and there was no logotype included at all in 2 cases.

Table 1
Crosstabulation of Symbol Type and Logotype Type

| | | Symbol | | | | | | | |
|----------|---------|---------|----------|--------|----------|-------|----------|-------|----------|
| | | Dynamic | | Static | | None | | Total | |
| | | Count | Col. N % | Count | Col. N % | Count | Col. N % | Count | Col. N % |
| Logotype | Dynamic | 4 | 12.9% | 0 | 0.0% | 3 | 50.0% | 7 | 15.9% |
| | Static | 24 | 77.4% | 7 | 100.0% | 1 | 16.7% | 32 | 72.7% |
| | None | 3 | 9.7% | 0 | 0.0% | 2 | 33.3% | 5 | 11.4% |
| | Total | 31 | 100.0% | 7 | 100.0% | 6 | 100.0% | 44 | 100.0% |

Source: Own research

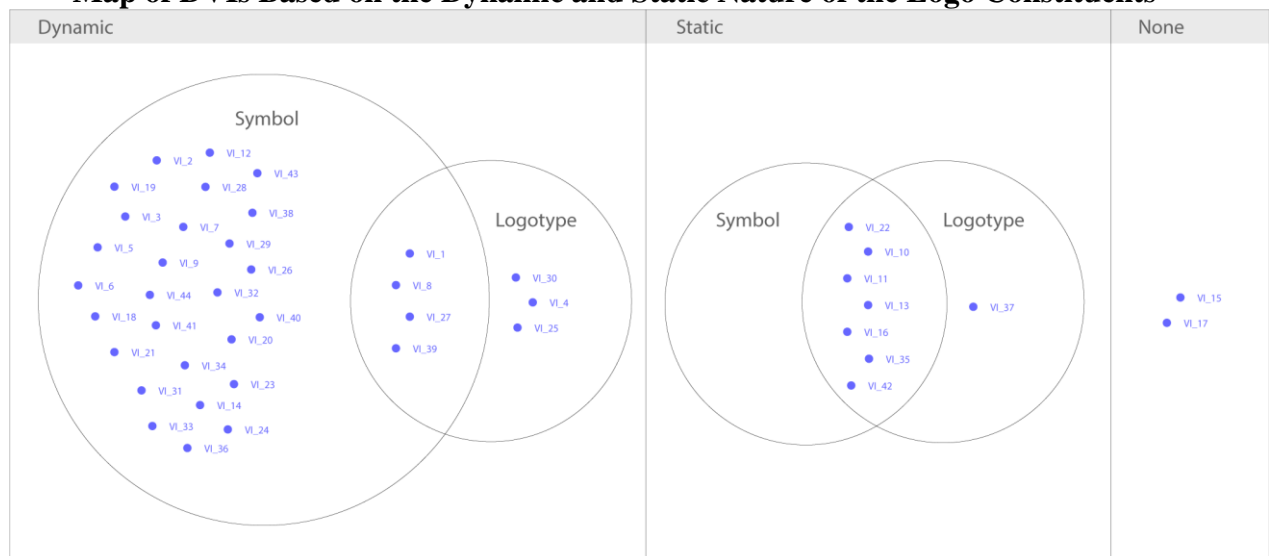
4.3. Extent of the dynamism

In 4 cases (9.09%, N = 44) there were two constituents considered dynamic.

Results (see Figure 3) show that the majority (61.36%) of the dynamic logos used in this field contain only one constituent that can be considered dynamic. In most cases presented here this component is the symbol (emblem) of the logo. Alongside these there were 3 cases where we can call only element dynamic.

In DVI cases where no dynamism was observed in the logo element of the VIS, logo constituents were both static in 7 cases, there was 1 case in 44 where only a static logotype was available. In quite exceptional instances (2 cases) we found that there was no logo included in the visual system at all.

Figure 3
Map of DVIs Based on the Dynamic and Static Nature of the Logo Constituents



Source: Own research

5. Theoretical and managerial implications

An important outcome of our results is that categories based on where dynamism is present in logos are not evenly populated (see Figure 3). We can assume that this distribution is not coincidental, so it seems worth treating these categories separately. The presented findings provide a basis for classifying and analyzing the dynamic logos used in destination DVIs in

further studies. We suggest that by determining which category a dynamic logo belongs to, one can get examples of the closest comparisons for benchmarking.

We can assume that this distribution is not coincidental, so it seems worth treating these categories separately. We suggest that by determining which category a dynamic logo belongs to, one can get examples of the closest comparisons for benchmarking.

From the managerial perspective, it can be an essential factor to consider what strategies brands use to introduce dynamism in their visuals. In the complex manner of mapping the competitive landscape, one can find support using the scheme shown above.

When designing a destination DVI, designers need to assess which type of logo fits the given brand strategy. To achieve as much differentiation as possible, it is worth using the less mainstream types of dynamic logos: changing elements should be used in both the symbol and the logotype, or dynamism needs to be focused only on the logotype constituent.

6. Limitations and further research directions

Using the applied analytical framework, we could get where the dynamism is implemented in the DVI logos. However, the characteristics of their application in practice have not been discovered yet. A good research opportunity is to examine the logos within the above categories to comprehend qualitative characteristics, performance, and efficiency measurable in practice. Another limitation of this investigation was that we examine designs themselves only, not their relationship to the entity represented. In order to facilitate successful design projects and valuable research results, there is a need to reveal how the connection between the applied graphical elements and the entities they represent is made. What kind of creative strategies do dynamic destination logos utilize to generate value? A suitable framework for thematic qualitative analysis may be Designcommunication - DIS.CO (COSOVAN, 2009; COSOVAN – HORVÁTH, 2016; COSOVAN et al., 2018), a design and research toolkit organized around the theory of communication integrated into the design.

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