World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology
International Journal of Economics and Management Engineering
Vol:8, No:7, 2014

Visual Identity Components of Tourist Destination

Petra Barisic, Zrinka Blazevic

Open Science Index, Economics and Management Engineering Vol:8, No:7, 2014 publications.waset.org/9998818/pdf

***Abstract*—**In the world of modern communications, visual identity has predominant influence on the overall success of tourist destinations, but despite of these, the problem of designing thriving tourist destination visual identity and their components are hardly addressed. This study highlights the importance of building and managing the visual identity of tourist destination, and based on the empirical study of well-known Mediterranean destination of Croatia analyses three main components of tourist destination visual identity; name, slogan, and logo. Moreover, the paper shows how respondents perceive each component of Croatia's visual identity. According to study, logo is the most important, followed by the name and slogan. Research also reveals that Croatian economy lags behind developed countries in understanding the importance of visual identity, and its influence on marketing goal achievements.

***Keywords*—**Components of visual identity, Croatia, tourist destination, visual identity.

I. Introduction

VISUAL identity is one of the key expressions of power which destinations use in their appearance in public and on a market. How destination visual identity is stronger emphasized, through efficient and adequate visualization, the stronger is its positive image on the market. Seen in this way, as part of the brand identity, visual identity is an important financial-economic factor [1]. Building and managing visual identity are extremely important because development of visual identity has led to strong competition among destinations. On the market, destinations offer complex tourist products which strive to sell to the general public, and this is the reason why they are willing to pay lot of attention to their visual identity [2]. No matter how destination provides good products and services, without well designed and adequate visual identity it cannot be stylistically above the competition [3].

Historical review of the activities and existence of particular destination can be traced through the development of its visual identity. There are numerous examples of destinations around the world which their current visual identity developed and changed over a long period of time, until they came to solution of distinctive visual identity, which public accepted [4]. One of these examples is Croatia, which have been building and changing its visual identity more than last 20 years.

This paper presents the findings of a study that investigate importance of visual identity components of tourist destination, and respondent perceptions of them. The study involved a sample of 416 Croatian domestic tourists. The data were collected in Zagreb due to the fact that it is Croatia's capital and important tourist destination.

Petra Barisic is with the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Economics and Business, Zagreb, Croatia (e-mail: pbarisic@efzg.hr).

Zrinka Blazevic is with the College for Management in Tourism and Informatics, Virovitica, Croatia (e-mail: zrinka.blazevic@gmail.com).

II. Concept of Visual Identity

Visual identity can be defined as characteristic, visible manifestation of organization's activities designed for easier identification in the eyes of public [5].From designers' point of view, visual identity is the face of business, their representatives' clothes, hair, attitude and tone of their voice [3].

The problem of designing efficient visual identity in organizational practice has been sporadically addressed. Some researchers discuss three factors affecting corporate visual identity – behaviour, communication and symbolism, and some of them presented more complex model of corporate visual identity comprised by more determinants, honoring the contextual embedding and stressing the reciprocity between corporate identity and its determinants [6]. In this model, communication and visual identity are treated as one variable thus confirming that two factors may, in practice, be strongly related. Scholars also discuss four elements of visual identity: corporate names, logos and symbols, colour and typeface. They claim that visual identity matters, although it is not nearly as important as what organization do, the products and services it offers, or what and how it communicates with stakeholders [7].

Since the visual identity is a set of visual characteristics serving as a means of communication with the market and overall public [8], creating visual distinctiveness should be the guiding idea when destination builds its visual identity. In this way, the brand is relieved of market saturation transforming the identity to the unique icon in the eyes of consumer [9]. When it comes to corporations, the visual identity doesn't refer only to logo and mark [3], [8], supporting typeface and primary home colours [4], but includes all segments of business, from services and products quality, development and communicating strategy, to working environment [9]. Visual identity includes logo application to all business documentation, brochures and catalogues, ads, street banners, annual reports, sales promotion, layout and markings of business premises, vehicles, sales and employees [8]-[10].

III. Visual Identity of Tourist Destination

The evolution of tourist destination visual identity and visual communications was intensified in 20th century [10]. Destination visual identity is the part of social design in the created environment. When the destination is properly designed to meet the requirements of physical and social conditions, its visual identity may carry appropriate destination identity. The relevant question is where, when and

Open Science Index, Economics and Management Engineering Vol:8, No:7, 2014 publications.waset.org/9998818/pdf

how visual identity may be attained. For instance, ten years ago Germany and Finland created national programs to promote the identity of economy through design (Finland) and by consideration of the national brand involvement of the world-renowned consultants (Germany) [11]. Visual identity represents a very important component in the appearance of tourist destination seeking to achieve the market recognition, and it is extremely important because of increased competition among tourist destinations at the international market. A complex tourist product is offered for sale to the public, who appears to be willing to pay much attention to destination visual identity [2]. Regardless of the quality of products and services offered by destination, it can't stylishly outdo the competition without the well-designed and applied visual identity.

Destination visual identity helps bind dispersed destination participants and is an important part of the marketing mix where tourists increasingly "buy the market" [12]. Destinations use numerous promotion sources carrying verbal and visual messages. For some researcher destination image before the actual destination visit depends more on visualization than on its actual characteristics [13]. Therefore, the content and quantity of visual messages are crucial in the image creation aspiring to be created in the minds of potential tourists [14]. Cultures differently interpret messages that consist of different symbols, colours, shapes and words [15], and their meaning varies from one country to another [16]. Generally, the differences in the interpretation of visual communications can be accredited to differences in the image assessment, differences in the perceptions of the persons who evaluate them and their interaction [17], and that is the reason why visual identity facilitates the understanding of sent message.

IV. Visual Identity Components of Tourist Destination

The simplest classification of visual identity components divides them at name, slogan and graphics [18]. The graphics comprises three components: logos and/or symbols, typography and colors. These elements together provide visual language for projecting consistent and clear visual organizational structure. To these elements we can add system breaks of basic documents and promotional materials [19].

A. Name

The name is verbally-vocal and typographic symbol [5] which have acoustic, visual and associative features [8]. The name identifies and individualizes destination at the market and in the public. It can be a very effective communication tool - name can be seen, and its meaning can be stored and activated in a short time [20].

The name of the tourist destination is as important as the name of the company selling consumer products [21], name also represents brand of tourist destination. For low-budget destinations the meaningful brand names are preferable. For distant and unknown destinations, the key question is whether their geographical names are meaningful for people who have not visited the place yet, and whether there are any other attribute types which should be used as symbols to increase meaningful associations for attracting tourists in the future [22].

B. Slogan

Projecting the desired image of a destination brand, by careful selection and tactical utilization of effective slogans,are essential for destination managers [23]. The slogans of tourist destinations are core of marketing campaign and advertising [24], they can be defined as short phrases which communicate descriptive or convincing information about product, service or brand [20], [24]. Serving as a central advertising theme, tourism slogan should successfully deliver its unique selling proposition and effectively communicate with potential visitors [23], they should reflect the character or personality of destination products [25] and services. Accordingly, tourism slogans are one of the best ways to communicate and deliver the themeand image of tourist destination to traveling public [23]. As a useful "hook", a powerful slogan contributes to brand equity in multiple ways: after achieving a high level of penetration, an effective slogan may serve as a reminder to the brand. In this way, the slogan provides frequent needs for customers' attention and repetition, thus reinforce the brand image and build strong brand equity [26].

Despite the importance of tourism slogans, they have been researched relatively scantily. The important exceptions are the empirical studies of [27] and [28]. By telephone interview, on a national sample of 260 US travel agency managers they examined their' perceptions about state tourism slogans. The results indicated that New York's "I❤NY" and Florida's "When You Need it Bad, We Got It Good" were the favourites of the highest number of interviewees (26% and 7% of all the respondents, respectively) [28].

Slogan which essentially shows its brand position is the ultimate aim of slogan design. Many destinations try very hard to find a suitable, long-lasting slogan. However, it is very difficult to come up with a striking and memorable slogan that summarizes the essence of destination and is equally effective in different languages renditions. Notable exceptions that succeeded in that are Croatia with the slogan "The Mediterranean as it once was", Costa Rica – "No Artificial Ingredients", and New Zealand – "100% New Zealand"(Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 Striking and memorable slogans of Croatia, Costa Rica and New Zealand

Slogans are highly effective because they convey the destination essence in a way that does not exist anywhere else [29].

Open Science Index, Economics and Management Engineering Vol:8, No:7, 2014 publications.waset.org/9998818/pdf

C. Logo

Logos are critical component in establishing destination brand identity and image [30], [31]. They can facilitate many marketing activities before actual visitor experience with a destination. As tourists have choice among thousands of destinations, logos can effectively stimulate awareness and communicate desired attributes to visitors [32] thereby reducing search costs and influencing visitor choice behaviour [30].

A logo is a symbol that used consistently over a period of time, achieves recognition of a destination. It is a symbol, or visual shorthand, that represents the destination, but it is unlike that is capable succinctly summarizing all of destination brand values without being cluttered and cumbersome. Still, if it is attractive, instantly recognizable and striking like Spanish logo *El sol de Miró*, it can be very powerful, but it is not a brand by itself [29].

The more widespread in usage by stakeholders, the greater is the impact and the recognition of the destination that generates logo. It is important that these stakeholders reflect the destination's brand values and, ideally, project them in their own marketing communication. Otherwise, the value of the destination logo will be diluted risking the weakening of destination brand image [29].

V. Methodology

This study utilized a sample of 416 Croatian tourists, who spent their holidays in Croatia as country of origin being domestic tourists. Data collection took place in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia during January 2012 using a paper-and-pencil version of the questionnaire, which filling took ten minutes. The questionnaire items were partly selected on the basis of previous literature and personal interviews with tourism and design experts. The draft of questionnaire was tested with pilot study on ten people.

A third-part self-administered questionnaire was used. In the first part respondents were asked to rate the importance of 5 distinct categories crucial in building and establishing visual identity of Croatia as a tourist destination. Respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance of each category on a direct rating scale from 1 (less important) to 5 (very important).

In the second part, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with three statements related to visual identity of Croatia as a tourist destination, and with five statements related to the name of Croatia on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). They were also supposed to rate their agreement with statements related to slogans of Croatia as a tourist destination on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

In the third part respondents were presented with a list of six statements regarding the current logo of Croatia as a tourist destination. Respondents were then asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement describing the logo on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

One open question was used where respondents were asked to give their comments and suggestions about improving slogans and logo.

VI. Results

As can be seen from Table I, respondents perceive all mentioned characteristics important in explaining the visual identity of Croatia as a tourist destination—i.e. all factors are rated 3.8 or higher. However, "Croatian flag" and "Logo of Croatia as a tourist destination" are perceived to be the most important factor influencing visual identity of Croatia (mean=3.96), closely followed by "Name Croatia" (mean=3.93). There seems to be the largest agreement among respondents in regard to the importance of "Name Croatia" and "Slogans of Croatia as a tourist destination". These two factors have the lowest standard deviations (0.93). The "Slogans of Croatia as a tourist destination" and "Croatian coat of arms" are ranked fourth and fifth respectively (means=3.93 and 3.86).

TABLE I
Perceived Importance of Visual Identity Components of Croatia as a Tourist Destination

Components	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation
Name "Croatia"	3.93	0.93
Slogans of Croatia as a tourist destination	3.91	0.93
Croatian flag	3.96	0.99
Croatian coat of arms	3.86	1.04
Logo of Croatia as a tourist destination	3.96	0.98

Table II consists of three different parts and presents the results for the second question. The first part deals with respondents perceptions about the visual identity of Croatia as a tourist destination. The second part shows their perceptions about the name of Croatia, and the last part deals with perceptions about three different slogans used during the years in promotion of Croatian tourism.

In the first part the results reveal that respondents did not agree with all of the statements. They agreed with the statements (on average) "Croatia has a clearly built visual identity" and "Croatian visual identity is recognizable in the world" (means=3.21). The respondents agreed least with the statement "They are doing enough to build Croatian visual identity" (means=2.58).

The second part deals with the name of Croatia. In that part the results reveal that respondents agree with all of the statements, with mean Likert ratings ranging between 3 and 4. The respondents agree most with the statements "The name of *Croatia* is of ideal length for memorizing" and "The name of *Croatia* is resounding" (means=4.13 and 4.12, respectively). Conversely, they agree least with the statement "The name of *Croatia* is associative" (mean=3.80). There seemed to be the largest agreement among respondents in regard to the statement "The name of *Croatia* is of ideal length for memorizing" which have lowest standard deviation=0.85.

Between three different slogans which have been used in promotion of Croatian tourism: "The Mediterranean as it once

Open Science Index, Economics and Management Engineering Vol:8, No:7, 2014 publications.waset.org/9998818/pdf

was", "A small country for a great holiday", and "Croatia – heaven on earth", the slogan "A small country for a great holiday" got the best rating. On the contrary, the worst was "The Mediterranean as it once was" which is in contradiction with UNWTO and ETC statement.In all six categories the slogan "A small country for a great holiday" has the highest arithmetic means (from 3.71 to 3.97). The respondents agreed most with the statement that "Slogan reflects the essence of the Croatian brand" (standard deviation=0.93).

TABLE II
PERCEPTION OF NAME, SLOGANS AND VISUAL IDENTITY OF CROATIA AS TOURIST DESTINATION

	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation
Croatia has a clearly built visual identity	3.21	0.83
Croatian visual identity is recognizable in the world	3.21	0.86
It is doing enough to build Croatian visual identity	2.58	1.00
Name "Croatia"		
The name of *Croatia* is of an ideal length for memorizing	4.13	0.85
The name of *Croatia* is clear	4.07	0.86
The name of *Croatia* is associative	3.80	0.99
The name of *Croatia* is resounding	4.12	0.88
The name of *Croatia* is original	3.96	1.01
Rating slogans of Croatia as a tourist destination: *"The Mediterranean as it once was"*		
Slogan reflects the essence of the Croatian brand	3.28	0.98
Slogan is influential	3.28	1.01
Slogan is memorable	3.37	1.07
By slogan Croatia carries a clear sense of its market position	3.37	1.04
By slogan Croatia carries motivation to its target markets	3.36	0.99
Slogan overall rating (1=bad; 5=excellent)	3.28	0.97
"A small country for a greatholiday"		
Slogan reflects the essence of the Croatian brand	3.86	0.93
Slogan is influential	3.76	1.00
Slogan is memorable	3.97	0.95
By slogan Croatia carries a clear sense of their market position	3.72	0.97
By slogan Croatia carries motivation to their target markets	3.71	0.98
Slogan overall rating (1=bad; 5=excellent)	3.82	0.95
"Croatia – heaven on earth"		
Slogan reflects the essence of the Croatian brand	3.48	1.07
Slogan is influential	3.44	1.12
Slogan is memorable	3.67	1.09
By slogan Croatia carries a clear sense of their market position	3.44	1.10
By slogan Croatia carries motivation to their target markets	3.45	1.09
Slogan overall rating (1=bad; 5=excellent)	3.48	1.09

In Table III there are results for the third question that deals with perceptions about logo of Croatian tourism. As we can see, the respondents agree with all mentioned statements regarding the logo of Croatia as a tourist destination. They agree most with the statements "Logo is recognizable" (mean=4.09), and least with "Logo stirs emotions" (mean= 3.19). Arithmetic mean of the responses related to "Logo overall rating" is good (mean=3.80).

TABLE III
PERCEPTION ABOUT LOGO OF CROATIAN TOURISM

	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation
Logo is recognizable	4.09	0.87
Logo is attractive	3.65	1.05
Logo is memorable	3.85	0.98
Logo stirs emotions	3.19	1.15
Squares in the logo remind of "chessboard"	3.90	1.11
Logo overall rating (1=bad; 5=excellent)	3.80	0.90

In the end, the respondents were asked to give their comments and suggestions for improving slogans and logo. The most frequent answers were related to creativity and innovations, i.e. logo and slogan should be modernized using a creative approach.

VII. CONCLUSION

As a part of an identity, the visual identity can create and change the image of tourist destinations. The concept of visual identity is extremely important for tourist destinations aiming to become competitive and successful in the tourist market. In particular, a recognizable visual identity enables the destination to differentiate from the competition, attract more tourists and achieve better financial results. Visual identity is a dynamic but controllable concept. Destinations managers should become aware of that fact and start managing their destination's visual identity in order to achieve global destination awareness and recognizable image. Destination visual identity should be the guiding principle in the destination development strategy.

In this exploratory study we tried to measure the visual identity of Croatia as a tourist destination among their residents. For the residents, and at the same time domestic tourist, visual identity represents something more than just pure promotion. For them, visual identity is part of their national identity and the way how international tourists and rest of the international public see and value Croatia and at the same time their people. It is obvious that Croats think that visual identity of Croatia is very important for the world recognition, but from their point of view it could be stronger and more recognizable. On the other hand, they are unsatisfied with the authorities responsible for building of visual identity.

Flag of Croatia and tourism logo are perceived to be the most important factors influencing visual identity of Croatia as a tourist destination. The respondents think that "The name of *Croatia* is of ideal length for memorizing", but that it is not associative. It is interesting that they do not agree with the opinion of World Tourism Organization and European Travel Commission's which state that slogan "The Mediterranean as it once was" is one of the best slogans in the world. With this slogan Croatia conveys a clear sense of its market position and motivation of the target market. It also manages to reflect their brand value on emotional way that conveys a sense of history, peace and respect for tradition and nature [29]. Respondents

think that among three different slogans this one is the worst. From their opinion logo is good enough, but both (logo and slogan) should be more creative and innovative.

At the end we can conclude that Croatian tourism managers do not use and manage visual identity of Croatia as a tourist destination at the appropriate way. The influence of visual identity on the overall image and brand of tourist destination is enormous, but they still didn't recognize that.

REFERENCES

[1] T. Myfanwy, D. M. Trueman, D. Jobber, D., "Competing through design", *Long Range Planning,* vol. 31, no. 2, 1998, pp. 594-605.
[2] W. L. Haig, L. Harper, "*The power of logos. How to create effective company logos",* New York, John Wiley, 1997.
[3] J. Bohutinski, "Novi identitetihrvatskihdivova", *Marketing u praksi*, no. 20, 2005, pp. 8-10.
[4] T. Kesic, "*Integriranamarketinškakomunikacija*", Opiniod.o.o., Zagreb, 2003.
[5] G. Keller, J. Sudar, *"Promocija",* Informator, Zagreb, 1991.
[6] T. C. Melewar, A. R. Wooldridge, "The dynamics of corporate identity: A review of a process model", *Journal of Communication Management,* no. 5, 2001, pp. 327-340.
[7] G. R. Dowling, *"Corporate reputations. Strategies for developing the corporate brand"*, London, Kogan Page, 1994.
[8] S. Rocco, "Grafičkistandardi u funkcijimarketinga", *Tržište,* vol. 15, no. 1/2, 2003, pp. 9-18.
[9] M. Babić, "Brand – jedinstvenaikona u očimaosiguranika", *Svijetosiguranja*, vol. 10, no. 5, 2007, pp. 64-69.
[10] F. Vukić, "Korporacijskiidentitetitranzicija", *Up and Underground,* no. 6, Zagreb, 2003.
[11] F. Vukić, "*Hrvatskeposebnosti*", Privrednivjesnikd.o.o., Zagreb, 2008.
[12] J. Sorrell, "Power tools", *Marketing,* November, no. 16, 1989. pp. 45.
[13] K. J. MacKay, D. R. Fesenmaier, "Pictorial element of destination in image formation", *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1997, pp. 537-565.
[14] A. D. A. Tasci, W. C. Gartner, "Destination Image and Its Functional Relationships", *Journal of Travel Research*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2007, pp. 413-425.
[15] N. Ind, "*The corporate image: Strategies for effective identity programs",*London, Kogan Page, 1990.
[16] V. Valentine, "Signs and symbols", *Survey*, no. 4, 1988, pp. 23-25.
[17] E. Lyons, "Demographic Correlation of Landscape Preference", *Environment and Behavior*, no. 15, 1983, pp. 487-511.
[18] H. Henrion, A. Parkin, "*Design coordination and corporate image",* Studio Vista, London, 1967.
[19] G. Keller, "*Design"*, Vjesnikagencijaza marketing, Zagreb, 1975.
[20] D. OzreticDosen, "Čemuslužimarka?" *Marketing u praksi*, no. 1, pp. 16-19, 2001.
[21] M. Konecnik, W. C. Gartner, "Customer-based brand equity for a destination", *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2007, pp. 400-421.
[22] N. K. Prebensen, "Exploring tourists' images of a distant destination", *Tourism Management*, vol. 28, 2007, pp. 747-756.
[23] G. Lee, L. A. Cai, J. T. O'Leary, "www.Branding.States.US: An analysis of brand-building elements in the US state tourism websites", *Tourism Management,* no. 27, 2006, pp. 815-828.
[24] K. L. Keller, "*Strategic brand management: building, measuring, and managing brand equity"*, Upper Saddle River, Prentice Hall, 2003.
[25] S. E. Moriarity, "*Creative advertising: Theory and practice",* Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, NY, 1991.
[26] S. C. Plog, "*Leisure travel",* Upper Saddle River, Prentice Hall, 2004.
[27] J. Richardson, J. Cohen, "State Slogans: The case of the missing USP", *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing,* no. 2, 1993, pp. 91-109.
[28] D. B. Klenosky, R. E. Gitelson, "Characteristics of effective tourism promotion slogans", *Annals of Tourism Research,* vol. 24, no. 1, 1997., pp. 235-251.
[29] UNWTO (World Tourism Organization), ETC (European Travel Commision),"*Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding, With an introduction by Simon Anholt",* World Tourism Organization, Madrid, 2009.
[30] C. Blain, S. E. Levy, J. R. B. Ritchie, "Destination Branding: Insights and Practices from Destination Management Organizations", *Journal of Travel Research,* vol. 43, 2005, pp. 328-338.
[31] L. A. Cai, "Cooperative branding for rural destinations", *Annals of Tourism Research,* vol. 29, no. 3, 2002, pp. 720-742.
[32] C. B. M. Van Riel, A. Van den Ban, "The Added Value of Corporate Logos: An Empirical Study", *European Journal of Marketing,* vol. 35, no. 3/4, 2001, pp. 428.

Open Science Index, Economics and Management Engineering Vol:8, No:7, 2014 publications.waset.org/9998818/pdf