

UDC 769.91:74.01.09

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2415-8151.2024.34.40>

GRAPHIC VISUALIZATION TECHNIQUES AND CITY CULTURE IN URBAN BRAND DESIGN

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Abstract. Purpose. This article examines the use of graphical visualization techniques in city brand design for effectively integrating and representing urban culture. It emphasizes the importance of cultural heritage in creating a unique city identity and enhancing its competitiveness on a global scale.

Methodology. The research combines a literature review with a comparative analysis of real-life city branding examples. Visual representation techniques are studied in specific cases, such as Arlon, Belgium, and Lviv, Ukraine, where distinctive graphic styles reflect regional characteristics. The analysis covers both figurative and abstract design approaches to understand how each method supports urban culture in the brand-building process.

Results. The study shows that integrating urban culture into brand design through graphical visualization strengthens brand identity and emotional connection with residents and visitors alike. Figurative elements, such as landmarks and symbols, highlight historical and cultural features, while abstract designs employ simplified forms to create a modern yet culturally grounded identity.

Scientific novelty. The article introduces a new approach to city branding, demonstrating how both realistic and abstract visual techniques can embody the essence of urban culture in city identity design. This research also provides a theoretical basis for understanding the visual language that conveys a city's cultural heritage and contemporary appeal.

Practical significance. The research findings offer valuable guidance for urban planners, designers, and policymakers aiming to integrate cultural heritage into branding strategies. By utilizing both design styles, cities can promote their uniqueness and enhance global recognition, supporting tourism and investment.

Keywords: city culture, visualization techniques, cultural heritage, city brand design, visual identity, city image, city identity, graphic design, logo design, corporate identity.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, city brand design plays a crucial role in representing city identity. With the progression of globalization and intensifying city competition, city brand design is not only a manifestation of a city's uniqueness but also a critical factor in attracting talent, investment, and tourists [8]. Against this backdrop, effectively integrating city culture into brand design has become a focal issue. Cultural heritage, representing a regionally distinctive and emblematic component of city culture, possesses apparent stylistic features and cultural characteristics, providing a rich resource for visual representation in city brand design [12]. The preservation and inheritance of cultural heritage respects the city's history and traditions and showcases its unique charm. Hence, ingeniously incorporating cultural heritage into city brand design enhances the city's distinctive image and stimulates residents' sense of identity and belonging.

This study explores the relationship between city culture and graphical visualization methods, focusing on the potential role of cultural heritage in city brand design as a brand value proposition influencing city form [1]. Through a systematic review of the literature and analysis of materials, we will delve into how city culture can be effectively integrated into brand design using graphical visualization methods and the specific role of cultural heritage in this process. This research seeks to provide new ideas and methods for city brand design while also contributing to the preservation and development of city culture.

The study holds significant theoretical and practical value. Examining the relationship between city culture and brand design in depth will offer insights into the trends in city brand design development and provide fresh perspectives and inspiration for the preservation and innovation of city culture.

ANALYSIS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

As a crucial component of city marketing and image building, city brand design has become a topic of significant interest in contemporary city development. Over the past few decades, scholarly research on city branding has deepened, encompassing marketing, city image, and cultural identity. Among these, cultural heritage, as one of the key resources in city brand design, has garnered considerable attention for its application in shaping city brand images.

In city branding, Viktoria Schoja [11] developed a systematic theoretical framework for city brands, introducing the concept of the

city as a brand and applying it to city brand management and communication practices. Additionally, Ashworth and Kavaratzis [2] explored the relationship between city image and city branding from historical, cultural, and geographical perspectives, providing rich theoretical support for subsequent studies. Kavaratzis and Hatch [7] emphasized the role and potential of place branding and brand identity, enhancing the understanding of local identity perspectives.

In recent years, Kavaratzis [6] introduced the concept of city marketing, emphasizing the importance of city branding in city economic development and international competition. Meanwhile, Hankinson [5] identified critical factors of successful city brand design through comparative analysis of different city brand cases, offering guidance for the practical implementation of city branding strategies. Cultural heritage plays a significant role in city brand design. It includes tangible elements like historical buildings and traditional crafts and intangible aspects such as folk culture, languages, and customs [16; 18]. According to Dong et al. [4], culture is a design resource that can be harnessed through symbol decoding and meaning transformation.

Past studies on the impact of cultural heritage on city brand design have some areas for improvement. Some studies lack a systematic research methodology and theoretical framework, remaining at the descriptive and superficial analysis stage without deeper theoretical discussions or methodological innovation. Therefore, future research should explore the role of cultural heritage in city brand design from multiple dimensions and levels, combining empirical research with theoretical exploration to provide a more comprehensive and profound understanding of city brand design.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The primary object of this research is the methodology and application of graphic design in city branding, focusing on how cities can leverage their cultural heritage and unique historical elements to forge a solid and distinctive brand identity. This is explored through detailed case studies and theoretical analysis, making the research relevant to urban designers, city planners, marketers, and policymakers interested in cultural preservation and brand strategy.

THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH AND THEIR DISCUSSION

From the perspective of visualization techniques, the basic components include three key elements: graphics, text, and color. Among

these, graphics serve as the core element of visualization, representing the most direct visual component that viewers perceive in any piece of work.

Historically, graphics have not only acted as a form of artistic expression but also played a role similar to language as a communication tool in early human societies, facilitating the transmission of information and cultural interaction [10]. In contemporary society, graphic design is widely regarded as one of the most powerful means of conveying ideologies [20]. This design form, known for its intuitiveness and visual impact, demonstrates unique efficacy in rapidly disseminating complex concepts and emotions. The application of graphic design is extensive, covering various fields such as advertising, user interfaces, and brand identity, making it an indispensable element of modern design.

Graphic design can be divided into two main categories: figurative and abstract. In city brand design, the significance of figurative graphic design not only lies in its ability to transform elements of the real world into distinct visual symbols but also in how these symbols are embedded within the city's cultural and historical context, making the visual expression both authentic and emotionally compelling. This design strategy, through the refinement and transformation of real elements, not only enhances the recognisability of the graphics but also deepens their emotional expression. It effectively resonates with the audience, strengthening their emotional connection to the brand [3].

Furthermore, the role of figurative graphic design in shaping city brands extends beyond mere visual appeal. By skillfully utilizing iconic city architecture, natural landscapes, or significant cultural symbols, designers convey the city's uniqueness and communicate its stories and spirit. For example, using images of a city's famous landmarks enhances the public's sense of regional identification. It may also evoke emotional memories and personal experiences associated with those landmarks, thereby deepening the emotional connection between the public and the city brand.

Case Studies: Arlon, Belgium and Lviv, Ukraine:

Specifically, Arlon, Belgium, and Lviv, Ukraine's brand designs exhibit unique characteristics but profoundly demonstrate figurative graphic design's powerful capabilities. Arlon, the capital of Luxembourg Province in Belgium's Walloon Region and part of the French-speaking community, develops its city brand identity around its French name «ARLON» (fig. 1). The

design incorporates direct photographs of the city's natural landscapes and cultural elements, followed by simple line modifications to enhance communication across different aspects of the city, blending modernity and tradition to reflect the city's vitality.

Lviv, Ukraine, often referred to as a «microcosm of Europe», holds the title of the Cultural Capital of Ukraine. The city's architecture is a representative mix of Eastern European, Italian, and German influences, featuring a harmonious blend of extensive historic buildings, including diverse churches and theatres. The most renowned among them is the Lviv Opera and Ballet Theatre (fig. 1). Many designers seeking inspiration even relocate here. To fully highlight this historic city's cultural characteristics, inclusivity, and vibrancy, the branding strategy employs real architectural forms simplified into lively line drawings. These sketches capture the city's welcoming spirit with the slogan «Open to the world».

While both cities utilize figurative design methods in their brand identities to showcase their cultural essence, they differ in their execution. Arlon's direct photographic images offer a more serene and gentle portrayal, whereas Lviv's casual stroke lines convey a more lively and bustling city face.

The use of figurative graphic design extends beyond merely representing a city's natural landscapes or architectural features; it can also encompass city cultural activities, historical events, and even the everyday lives of its residents, thereby creating a more comprehensive and in-depth city brand image. For example, city festivals or specific cultural symbols can be artistically expressed through figurative graphic design. This enhances the visual appeal of the city brand and deepens the emotional resonance between the brand and residents and visitors.

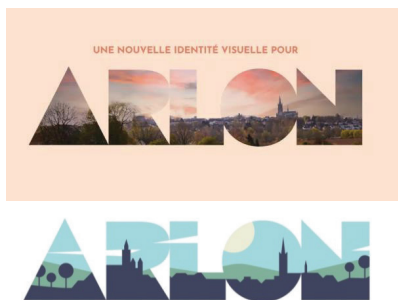
Therefore, the application of figurative graphic design in city branding is multifaceted and multidimensional. By artistically refining and emotionally processing real elements, it not only crafts a unique visual identity for the city but also strengthens its cultural expression and international image. Consequently, the city brand acts as a crucial bridge connecting the past with the future and the local with the international.

On the other hand, abstract graphic design has endowed modern art and digital media with a new visual language. This design style breaks away from traditional forms of artistic expression, no longer relying on direct depictions of the real world. It engages audiences' imaginations and emotional responses through the use of vivid colors, unique shapes, and creative

City Brand Design

The Real World Design Picture

a)



b)

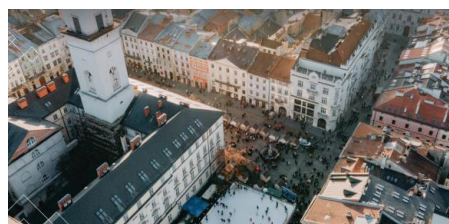


Fig. 1. City logo and city landscape of: a) Ehlron, Belgium [13]; b) Lviv, Ukraine [14]

compositions [19]. The power of this style lies in its ability to convey complex concepts and emotions while leaving a lasting visual impact on the viewer.

In the process of shaping city brand images, designers must not only understand the cultural background and spirit of the city but also reinterpret these cultural traits through innovative visual languages and positioning of the brand concept based on the city's cultural identity [15]. Abstract graphic design plays a crucial role in this process, allowing designers to create iconic and symbolic city images through abstract summarization and element reconfiguration.

In exploring the visual expression of Parisian city culture, the Eiffel Tower is undeniably a prominent symbol of modern Paris. When designing the official typeface, the Tourist

Office of Paris used the shape of this cultural heritage in combination with the letter «A» (fig. 2). However, other iconic elements of the city include sailboats and Notre Dame Cathedral. These elements showcase Paris's geographical and historical characteristics and carry profound cultural symbolic meanings.

Despite Paris not being a coastal city nor a major port, the sailboat motif in the city's emblem deeply roots itself in the city's history, reflecting the emblem's historical background (fig. 3). This design element embodies the resolute philosophy of «fluctuat nec mergitur» (tossed by the waves but does not sink), which is also the official motto of Paris. This symbolism has been reinterpreted and manifested in city brand image design. Designers modernize the sailboat shape using coherent lines, depicting



Fig. 2. A typographic composition that evokes a Parisian skyline, the drawing of the «A» directly referring to the Eiffel Tower [9]

a sailing vessel that symbolizes the fluidity of Parisian history and the city's continual progress.

As a quintessential example of medieval Gothic architecture in Europe, Notre Dame Cathedral transcends its physical form to become a significant symbol of Parisian cultural heritage. Its centuries-long construction history and Gothic architectural style have made it a symbol of Parisian history, akin to a historical vessel navigating through the river of time. In the latest city brand image design for Paris, designers have retained the ship motif as a historical symbol and employed simplified and abstract graphical languages to give the new emblem a more modern and dynamic visual effect. The update in typography (fig. 4), from «Mairie de Paris» to «VILLE DE PARIS» or simply «PARIS», further enhances the city brand's visual recognition, making it more prominent and cohesive (fig. 4). This change reflects a city-centric image promotion strategy.

It is important to note that the new visual strategy involves more than just graphical updates; it also reflects significant changes at the

city management level. This transformation mirrors the administrative strategies following the merger of Paris with its various departments, where the generalization and simplification of graphics visually symbolize this administrative consolidation. The new design, with its simplified abstract graphics and streamlined aesthetics, not only elevates the modernity of the emblem but also enhances its dynamism. This design approach is particularly evident in the city's event posters (fig. 5), which showcase the city's renewed vitality and pursuit of modern aesthetics. These posters emphasize Paris as a global city that continually progresses and adapts to modern challenges and reflects strategic thinking and creative expression in city emblem design.

In summary, the visual expression of Paris masterfully integrates historical and modern elements through abstract summarization. This approach preserves the city's cultural traditions and showcases its dynamism in transitioning toward modernization. Such a design strategy enhances Paris's international image and deepens the public's understanding and emotional



Fig. 3. Paris city logo history display [17]



Fig. 4. The contrast between the new font and the old font [17]

connection to its cultural heritage. Through these symbols' visual representation, Paris has successfully blended its rich history with contemporary vitality, presenting itself as a vibrant and dynamic world-class city.

From these examples, it is evident that abstract graphics in city brand design are not merely visual decorations; they are deeply rooted in the cultural soil of each city, narrating the city's stories through modern visual language.



Fig. 5. The city's event posters [17]

This design strategy not only enhances the city's recognisability but also deepens the public's understanding of and emotional connection to city cultural characteristics, demonstrating the significant potential and value of abstract graphic design in contemporary city brand building.

In practice, graphic designers often utilize the interaction between these two styles by blending figurative and abstract elements to create visual works that are both deep and broad. These works are particularly influential in cultural exhibitions and commercial advertising. Increasingly, designers are applying this effective design method to shape city brand designs. By studying the application and impact of these designs, we can better understand how visual language conveys complex messages and emotions across different cultural and social contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

In exploring a city's cultural visual expression, graphics play a crucial role as a fundamental design element, holding a significant position in shaping the overall aesthetic. Graphics

are not only used as independent visual tools but also interwoven with other design elements to forge a city's visual identity and cultural ambiance collectively. Analyzing the application of graphic elements deepens our understanding of how they function in conveying and preserving a city's cultural heritage.

Graphic design influences a city's cultural expression through its direct and intuitive communication of images. The transition from figurative to abstract not only mirrors the evolution of artistic styles but also reflects historical shifts in cultural values. Through a detailed exploration and application of graphic elements in city brand design, designers are not just able to create visually striking works but also maintain and transmit the unique cultural identity and values of a city amidst globalization. This ability holds immeasurable advantages for city branding and cultural promotion.

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Лю Ц., Шмельова-Нестеренко О. Графічні техніки візуалізації та міська культура в дизайні бренду міста

Мета. У даній статті розглянуто використання графічних методів візуалізації в дизайні брендів міст для ефективної інтеграції та репрезентації міської культури. Стаття підкреслює значення культурної спадщини у створенні унікальної ідентичності міста та підвищенні його конкурентоспроможності на глобальному рівні.

Методологія. Дослідження поєднує огляд літератури з порівняльним аналізом реальних прикладів брендів міст. Техніки візуальної репрезентації розглядаються на конкретних випадках, таких як Арлон, Бельгія, та Львів, Україна, де характерні графічні стилі відображають регіональні особливості. Аналіз охоплює як фігуративний, так і абстрактний підходи до дизайну, щоб виявити, як кожен метод підтримує міську культуру в процесі створення бренду.

Результати. Дослідження показує, що інтеграція міської культури в дизайн бренду за допомогою графічної візуалізації зміцнює ідентичність бренду та емоційний зв'язок із мешканцями та відвідувачами. Фігуративні елементи, такі як пам'ятки та символи, підкреслюють історичні та культурні риси, тоді як абстрактні дизайни використовують спрощені форми для створення сучасної, але культурно обґрунтованої ідентичності.

Наукова новизна. У статті пропонується новий підхід до брендингу міст, який показує як реалістичні і абстрактні візуальні техніки можуть втілювати сутність міської культури у дизайні міської айдентики. Дане дослідження також забезпечує теоретичну основу для розуміння візуальної мови, що передає культурну спадщину та сучасну привабливість міста.

Практична значущість. Результати дослідження пропонують цінні рекомендації для міських планувальників, дизайнерів та політиків, які прагнуть

інтегрувати культурну спадщину у стратегії брендингу. Завдяки використанню обох стилів дизайну міста можуть просувати свою унікальність та посилювати глобальне визнання, підтримуючи туризм та інвестиції.

Ключові слова: культура міста, візуалізація, культурна спадщина, бренд міста, візуальна ідентичність, образ міста, ідентичність міста, графічний дизайн, дизайн логотипу, корпоративна ідентичність.

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