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## URBAN BRAND DESIGN THROUGH THE TRANSFORMATION OF HISTORICAL HERITAGE: A TYPOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

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*This paper examines the integration of historical heritage into urban brand design using a typological approach. Through qualitative analysis and diverse case studies, the research identifies distinct ways for applying heritage to key visual elements, such as logos, color palettes, and auxiliary graphics. The study reveals that, when effectively leveraged, historical sites can be transformed into strategic brand assets that enhance local identity and global competitiveness. The findings offer a comprehensive framework for understanding heritage-driven design strategies, providing valuable insights for urban planners and designers to create more resonant and sustainable city brand identities.*

**Key words:** urban brand visual design, historical sites, cultural heritage, visual identity design, graphic design, colors, typography, logo design.

### INTRODUCTION

Globalization has accelerated the homogenization of urban spaces, prompting cities to differentiate themselves through local branding that leverages historical sites as strategic assets. In recent decades, integrating cultural heritage into urban brand visual identity design has become essential, as historical sites are reimagined from mere relics into strategic "brand capital" for competitive distinction. Urban brand design transforms these sites into communicable cultural imagery through symbolic reinterpretation, technological innovation, and cultural narratives, thereby revitalizing local identity, strengthening residents' place attachment, and attracting global investment [1]. This process activates cultural memory, reshapes technological approaches, and mitigates cultural biases [2]. Thus, understanding how to integrate historical sites as design inspiration into urban branding is therefore crucial.

### PURPOSE

This paper explores contemporary design strategies and technologies for visualizing historical sites within city branding. It proposes pathways that balance innovation and tradition, providing a theoretical framework for urban brand development.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical sites, such as heritage buildings, monuments, street names, and cemeteries etc., (e.g., heritage buildings, street names, monuments, cemeteries etc.) serve as material carriers of "urban memory". They act as "witnesses" to past events and cultures, directly or indirectly conveying historical information to residents. People living in areas rich in historical sites often exhibit stronger emotional attachment to their localities [3]. Through their physical presence and cultural symbolism, historical sites influence residents' cognition and memory of urban history. Two contrasting trends are evident in current research on the branding of historical sites:

- **Technological Optimism:** Digital tools (e.g., AR, generative AI) enable dynamic, interactive designs that revitalize heritage beyond static imagery.
- **Critical Skepticism:** Excessive reliance on technology may reduce heritage to superficial visuals, undermining historical context and social significance.

This tension underscores a fundamental challenge: how to creatively transform historical sites from static "spatial monuments" into dynamic "cultural media" amid technological evolution while preserving their authenticity. Urban stakeholders bolster regional cultural identity through strategic visual branding. The following case studies exemplify design solutions that address these challenges.

### **Case 1: Bangkok City Brand Identity, Thailand**

Bangkok's branding (fig. 1a), developed by Wide & Narrow Agency as part of UNESCO's Creative Cities Network, demonstrates how historical heritage can be transformed into a dynamic visual identity. Iconic structures like Wat Phra Si Sanphet (fig. 1b) and Wat Phra Singh (fig. 1c) are abstracted into vibrant, vector-based symbols. Traditional motifs, such as temple spires and Buddha statues, are integrated with a dynamic color palette that emphasizes gold and green to reflect both cultural depth and natural landscapes and create a brand identity that is both locally resonant and globally appealing. This approach not only condenses complex heritage into clear, communicable symbols but also reinforces Bangkok's image as a creative hub.



a)



b)



c)

**Fig. 1.** Bangkok logo design and inspiration, Bangkok, Thailand:

- (a) – "Unesco : Bangkok city of design" logo; (b) – photo of Wat Phra Si Sanphet;  
(c) – photo of Wat Phra Singh



### **Case 2: Huzhou City Brand Identity, China**

Huzhou rebrands its traditional aesthetics using minimalist ink-wash line art (fig. 2a). Key elements, such as the Moon Hotel (fig. 2b), Feiying Pagoda (fig. 2c), and Taihu Lake, are depicted with gradient blue lines and asymmetrical compositions, evoking the city's distinctive Jiangnan identity. The color scheme, dominated by azure and lake blue, mirrors the natural scenery and adds a visual dynamism. This approach emphasizes symbolic representation over literal replication, effectively balancing regional specificity with contemporary design trends.



**Fig. 2.** Huzhou logo design and inspiration, Huzhou, China:

(a) – Huzhou logo; (b) – photo of Moon Hotel on Taihu Lake shore; (c) – photo of Feiying Pagoda

### **Case 3: Bucharest City Brand Identity, Romania**

Bucharest's city logo (fig. 3a), designed by Alexandru Nenciu, fuses simplified representations of iconic landmarks, such as the Triumph Arch, CEC Palace, the Romanian Atheneum, and the National Arena Stadium (fig. 3b), with typography featuring the letter "B" and multilingual elements (Romanian, English, French, and German) to reflect its multicultural character. This cohesive visual identity encapsulates the city's historical complexity while ensuring scalability and adaptability across media. However, merging diverse architectural elements may risk diminishing the unique distinctiveness of each landmark, underscoring the need for a careful balance in the design process.



**Fig. 3.** Bucharest logo design and inspiration, Bucharest, Romania:

(a) – Bucharest logo; (b) – photo of iconic landmarks used in the logo design



## CONCLUSIONS

This paper examined how historical sites can be integrated into urban brand visual design, as illustrated through three diverse case studies from Bangkok, Huzhou, and Bucharest. The cases demonstrate that regardless of differing approaches, ranging from vector-based abstraction (Bangkok) and minimalist ink-wash abstraction (Huzhou) to landmark fusion with typography (Bucharest), successful urban branding ultimately depends on transforming static historical monuments into dynamic cultural media.

While each case highlights unique strategies and challenges, a common theme emerges: balancing modern digital innovations with the authentic, culturally rich identity of historical sites.

Overall, these findings provide a comprehensive typological framework that enhances our understanding of heritage-driven design and offers valuable insights for developing visually compelling and culturally resonant urban brand identities.

## REFERENCES

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**ЛЮ Цін., ШМЕЛЬОВА-НЕСТЕРЕНКО О.**

## **ДИЗАЙН МІСЬКОГО БРЕНДУ ЧЕРЕЗ ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЮ ІСТОРИЧНОЇ СПАДЩИНИ: ТИПОЛОГІЧНА ОСНОВА**

У цій статті розглядається інтеграція елементів історичної спадщини в дизайн міського бренду за допомогою типологічного підходу. Якісний аналіз та тематичні дослідження визначають різні способи застосування елементів спадщини у ключових візуальних елементах, таких як логотипи, кольорні палітри та допоміжна графіка. Дослідження показує, що за умови ефективного використання історичні місця можна перетворити на стратегічні активи бренду, що підвищують місцеву ідентичність та глобальну конкурентоспроможність. Результати пропонують комплексну основу для розуміння стратегій дизайну, орієнтованих на історичну спадщину, надаючи містобудівникам та дизайнерам цінні знання для створення більш резонансних та стійких брендів міста.

**Ключові слова:** візуальний дизайн міського бренду, історичні місця, культурна спадщина, візуальна ідентичність, графічний дизайн, кольори, типографіка, дизайн логотипу.