Corvinus University of Budapest
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and Management

THESIS SUMMARY

Balázs FEKETE

DYNAMIC TURN IN VISUAL IDENTITY

Design Communication-based Development
of Participative Dynamic Visual Identities

Supervisors:

Dr. Dóra HORVÁTH, PhD
Associate professor
Dr. Attila Róbert COSOVAN, DLA
Full professor

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Department of Marketing and Design Communications

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1. Introduction and Theoretical Background

1.1. Greetings from the Postlogo Era

Looking around nowadays, we see that every surface intends to communicate something. Something balancing in the uncertainty between the universally valid and the vastly invalid. This is the era of visual essentialism, when images oblige us more ruthlessly than ever to their pervasive presence. The hyper-modern, where the visuality of the man-made, tactile and virtual environment ultimately determines the quality of social communication. The commercialisation of information and the related phenomena of technological change in the 21st century are inevitably manifesting themselves in the operation of economic life. The specificities of turbulent global market conditions and societal changes are also leaving their mark on communication modes and processes. Business communication is increasingly visual in nature. The ever-changing economic context, competitors, target groups, trends and techniques are creating new challenges for the management and designers of companies and brands. The noise created by consumers' growing exposure to brands is forcing companies to stand out in the sea of available offers, to provide fresh and up-to-date alternatives. Dynamic visual identities, crafted through strategies of variability, are increasingly emerging at the turn of the millennium, challenging the dominance of corporate visual identities that, despite periodic adjustments, remain fundamentally monolithic[1].

Brands that understand the changing times and reflect the dynamic nature of business organisations are taking a new approach. As brand managers seek new ways to connect authentically with their audiences in contemporary social and communication contexts, cutting-edge design studios with a broader vision are aiming to develop new visual languages. The emergence of more flexible visual identities can create more varied, diverse and rich expressions, both in form and content, and wider visual worlds. The ability to employ a distinct visual vocabulary tailored to different stakeholders and to reflect the values of a dynamic environment through diverse content is now achievable (Felsing, 2009). Dynamic visual identities are capable of continuous change, controlled by variation mechanisms (Martins et al., 2019). One or more of the elements that make up a visual identity system are subject to variability driven by either external or internal factors (Fekete & Boros, 2022).

The new dynamic approach to visual identity in economic studies is still largely absent from the literature. My dissertation makes up for this by exploring these linkages in detail and in a scope commensurate with the extent of this gap. It traces the evolution of corporate and brand theories underlying dynamic visual identities and provides a bridging theoretical novelty to the areas affected by this phenomenon. Drawing on these, the empirical research focuses on a narrow field of DVIs. Based on the framework of design communication (DIS:CO) (Cosovan, 2009; Cosovan et al., 2018; Cosovan & Horváth, 2016a), participatory DVI design workshops explore the phenomenon and the outcomes of the development processes.

Relevance of this research is illustrated by the fact that in the late capitalism era we can already talk about a meaning economy, in which consumers seek creative control over the story of their lives, a sense of belonging and meaning (Neumeier, 2015). It is in response to this need that the effective strategic tool of dialogic branding (Crăciun, 2019) is developing, able to integrate consumers' desires

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[1] Dynamic Visual Identity (DVI)

and wants as part of a multifaceted corporate identity. The new model of effective corporate communication opens up the symbolic space of the brand and invites its stakeholders to reinterpret and complement it in a highly participatory and interactive way, through various forms of involvement (Crăciun, 2019). This also takes shape in the form of dynamic visual identities, as change creates opportunities for reinterpretation. Different groups of stakeholders in a company may encounter unique signs that provide them with different information, stories or ways of responding. And participatory dynamic visual identities give their audiences the freedom to influence not only the meaning but also the visual sign itself. The brand is thus better equipped to engage with its audience in a more personalised and multi-faceted way. In brand identity, partial control over visuality becomes associated with the possibility of external or internal stakeholders as partners in dialogic branding, and with it the possibility of meaning-making.

In DVIs, the usual visual brand elements are dynamically changing, with the focus shifting to systems rather than components. In this context, Nes (2012, p. 5) introduces the term holo instead of logo, suggesting the end of an era marked by the prominence of logos. This is not to say that a critical element of brand visuality is disappearing, but merely to describe a phenomenon in which brand visuality is being redefined as a holistic, functioning system of interrelated interdependencies rather than a set of static components. Accordingly, the era of changeable, non-linear, performative, new visual expressions of corporate and brand identity can also be called the postlogo era (Hyland & King, 2006; Felsing, 2009; Fekete, 2022).

The qualitative approach presented here offers a more nuanced understanding of the essence and characteristics of the DVI phenomenon. A multi- and interdisciplinary, in-depth exploration of DVIs and participatory visual systems design is needed. As demonstrated in this dissertation, by linking relevant academic theories, new bridges between the fields of corporate identity, branding and visual design can be formed. It can thus also help the practice of marketing communication and design.

1.2. Research Overview

In the research of visual identities, the focus on form is replaced by a curiosity regarding the characteristics of dynamism. In newer and more complex, sophisticated visual systems, the relations between their constituent elements and the characteristics of their operation become more pronounced. Operation is a specific characteristic of DVIs that can be described as a set of rules that govern the application of visual identity. In the development of a corporate or brand identity, it is no longer only the consistency of the elements that is critical, but also the design of operation, as this has a significant impact on the meaning of the resulting signs and the viewers' experience. Through strategies of stakeholder engagement, the visual representation of brands is no longer just about recognition and differentiation, it is about enhanced emotional attachment and increased elaboration on the brand as well (Fekete & Boros, 2022). The topic of participatory DVIs can therefore offer significant new insights for disciplines interested in this topic.

Fetscherin and Usunier (2012, p. 745), based on a systematic literature review on corporate branding, argue that there is a lack of linkage between the business approach and the visual design literature on corporate branding and visual identity. Since knowledge and perspectives from both fields are necessary for successful visual identity design, it is of paramount importance to combine these aspects. In my thesis, this research gap is bridged on the level of theory and practice. The analysis of the corporate and marketing literature relevant to DVIs is presented in parallel with the visual identity design

literature. Participatory design workshops presented here are framed by the creative methodology of design communication (DIS:CO). This inquiry based on both cooperative research and researcher participation, will provide an opportunity for insights in the creative process, in addition to the scientific exploration of the phenomenon under study. My work thus enlivens the approach of design communication, as it not only tells a story about design, but also applies it through creation-based methods. Developmentally integrated communication is achieved to complement ways of cognition with other forms of knowledge production and dissemination beyond those traditionally accepted as scientific.

Following in the tradition of Mitev and Horváth (2008), Cosovan (2009), Cosovan and Horváth (2016a), the thesis consciously echoes to Brown's (2012) observation that characterless writing is unattractive to the reader. Since it is frequently unreadable, it often remains unread. The subject of visual identities, which are an integral part of marketing communication, implies an implicit commitment to images (both mental and visual). As a result, the text here offers the possibility of primary interpretation and provides additional layers for those who want to embrace complexity and experience it more deeply. In the dissertation, the academic routine becomes a creative ritual, with the intellectual commitment to leave more than just the usual scars on the papers of economics. All this is not an arbitrary action, but a response to the fact that our age is dominated by Baudrillard's (1994) *hyper-reality*, and attempts to comprehend it in Hungarian marketing studies have remained typically neglected. Research that is faithful to its subject recognises that to build its credibility, it necessarily has to embody the spirit of its context. In this instance, the means of doing so will be through images, dynamic approaches, the creation of an identity of its own, playfulness, and reflexivity. These are the theoretical and practical perspectives of the thesis. Paths leading to insights and branching interpretations with their own reality linked to dynamic visuality.

1.3. Theoretical Foundations

As a first step in the presentation of the dissertation, I will discuss design communication (DIS:CO), which is the key to the whole research process. It is defined as *"communication integrated into development (or evolution)"* and can also be interpreted as *"the ability to create connection as designing"* (Cosovan, 2009). It is a creative approach, a philosophy and a method. DIS:CO is also a multi-disciplinary know-how that aims to combine design, economics and strategic communication with an accompanying style (Cosovan & Horváth, 2016a). It combines aspects of product development and scientific research. DIS:CO simultaneously reflects the scientific need and the desire to improve society and stimulate the economy (Cosovan & Horváth, 2016b).

In my thesis, DIS:CO provides a perspective for comparing static and dynamic visual identities. On the other hand, it is a framework for empirical research. Its third form of manifestation can also be seen as a reflection. As the research has developed, it has become evident that further elaboration of the theory of design communication is necessary in order to understand the multifaceted scientific connections of this school of thought. In this way, the creative response to communication integrated into development also manifests itself as development integrated into (scientific) communication. The extension of design communication theory will be reflected in (1) a summary of the past and present of this discipline at the intersection of design, economics, and social science, (2) a characterisation of its design theory, (3) an analysis of its postmodern features, (4) a positioning of DIS:CO in the philosophy

of science, (5) a demonstration of its relationship with social science research schools, and (6) a discussion of its connections with the participatory worldview in scientific inquiry.

Although DIS:CO is mainly a potential avenue for the research and interpretation of DVIs, the texts in my thesis, which complement its theory, can contribute to a comprehensive worldview that considers creative connection making as central to the human condition and cosmic status.

Another theoretical novelty I present hereby is a meta-analysis of the literature, using 558 sources[2] selected through a systematic search to provide a theoretical foundation for the research on DVIs. Drawing on academic theories and research findings in the three fields relevant to DVIs (corporate identity[3], branding, brand equity and brand identity[4], visual identity[5]), the patterns of significant change observed in these domains are discussed.

In the theoretical web of identity of business organisations, I demonstrate the transformation of closed concepts towards more open ones, and in the case of brands, I illustrate the differences between vertical and horizontal conceptualisations. In the field of visual identities, a third, parallel tendency can be observed, as the fetish of static formal characteristics seems to be fading and the emphasis is shifting towards dynamism. In these three microcosms of economic theory, too, there are glimmers of consciousness: coincidence converges behind the scenes, the zeitgeist weaving a law from the threads of the invisible and the visible[6].
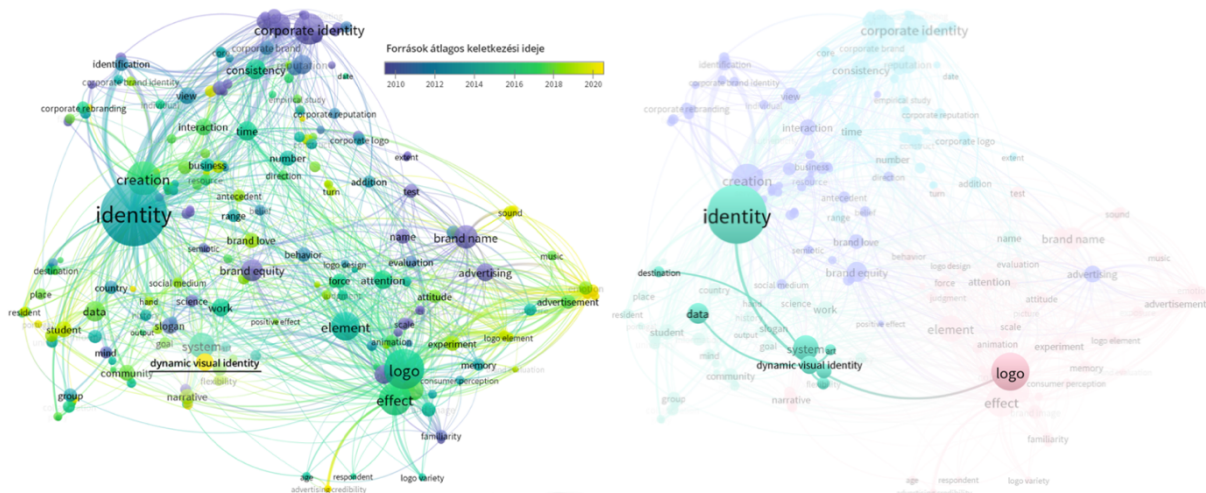

Figure 1. Visualisation of the addressed literature clusters
(Author's edit)

In addition to the analysis of the sources, I also created a bibliometric visualisation of the themes found in them, using text mining methods (Figure 1.). This showed that, although the links between the

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identified clusters of themes (identity, creation, corporate identity, visual brand identity) are generally dense, the literature on dynamic visual identities, as the most recent field, still has very little overlap with the other domains. In addition to mitigating the theoretical gaps resulting from the research gap that thus becomes apparent, my dissertation has addressed another major problem in the discussion of DVIs.

As classical identity theories of marketing did not provide sufficient basis to underpin the phenomenon, the theoretical embeddedness of participatory DVI in this area was also anecdotal. Visual design literature has so far been characterised more by poetics than by the search for cross-disciplinary argumentation. This is also due to the fact that theories of corporate identity have only recently acquired collaborative and dynamic conceptions (Iglesias et al., 2022). The situation is similar considering brand theories. Early models of brand identity (Aaker, 1991, 1996a; Keller, 1993; Kapferer, 2008), even if these assess the physical factors of brand in identity, do not discuss issues of visuality in depth. The theoretical approach was further complicated by the fact that recent developments in DVI research (Lélis, 2019; Lélis & Kreutz, 2022) have revealed alternative results that override previous marketing theories that were familiar with static visual identities.

The organic linking of DVIs to marketing literature can be done by clustering brand theories from a new perspective, comparing vertical and horizontal approaches to theories of brand identity and brand equity (Figure 2.). This analysis has revealed that more contemporary dynamic conceptualisations of brand identity (e.g. Silveira et al, 2013; Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018; Hollebeek et al., 2021) ensure the most appropriate connections for DVIs to be embedded in marketing.

VERTICAL	ORIENTATION	HORIZONTAL
Brand → (ID) → Consumers		Brand →(ID)→ ←(ID)← Stakeholders — Individuals / Groups
Asynchronous changes when the input changes	SEQUENTIAL LOGIC	**Synchronous** in a periodic sequence, constantly changing
Emissive unilateral	NATURE AND DIRECTION OF IDENTITY	**Reciprocal (emissive and receptive)** multilateral
• Keller, 2001 • Kapferer, 1992, 2008	BRAND IDENTITY THEORIES	• Alsem és Kostelijk, 2008 • da Silveira et al., 2013 • Black & Veloutsou, 2007
• Aaker, 1991 • Keller, 1993	BRAND EQUITY THEORIES	• Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016 • Vollero et al., 2016

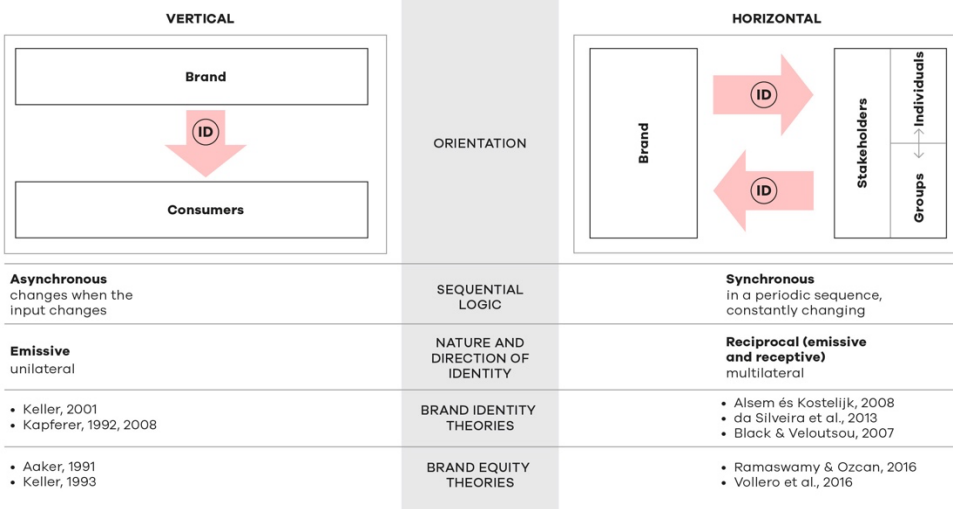*Figure 2. The vertical and horizontal approaches of brand identity*
(Author's edit)

After the subjects of corporate identity, branding, brand equity and brand identity, I reviewed the results of previous marketing studies on visual identities and defined the phenomenon of DVIs. Referring to the ideas put forth by Mitchell (1995) and Kapitány & Kapitány (2010), I also introduced the notion of dynamic turn in visual identity.

Starting with the denomination of the DVI phenomenon, I have discussed its definitions, its delimitations, its levels of analysis, and the existing DVI models and analysis frameworks. There were illustrative examples available to accompany the phenomenon's spatial and temporal evolution. Drawing on the results of the most relevant research[7], I have provided a comprehensive comparison, drawing on the cornerstones of design communication, to highlight the considerable contrast between static and dynamic visual identities (Appendix 1.).

Based on a multi-perspective and comprehensive theoretical discussion, I defined the phenomenon under study as follows: dynamic visual identities are visual communication systems that result in a plural, heterogeneous, inconsistent representation of the represented organization or brand (Fekete, 2022, p. 45). They can be considered as flexible visual representations of non-conventional or mutant brands. This flexibility allows them to adapt to the functional requirements of the application while maintaining their overall style (Gerstner, 2007). DVIs use multiple variations due to changes in one or more elements of their visual identity system (Martins et al, 2019, p. 10). In addition to flexibility and variability, they are characterised by diversity in form, usually due to a genetic code, a set of basic rules (Lélis, 2021). One or more of the components that make up a DVI are shaped by external or internal variables (Fekete, 2022). They can be described as organic, living, if they are able to adapt to the environment, constantly changing along with the entity for which they are made (Nes, 2012, p. 7). In many cases, the dynamism integrated into the DVI system goes beyond the goal of inducing visual heterogeneity. The dynamism and the creative strategy leading to it are closely linked to an important characteristic of the entity represented or to the contextual attribute associated with it (Fekete & Boros, 2022, p. 4). DVIs allow the construction of visual narratives that are capable of narrating many aspects of the personality of the entity represented. In doing so, they also provide the possibility to create static, dynamic and interactive visual narratives (Lélis & Kreutz, 2019, 2022). DVIs thus create a visual language that can be used adequately in different contexts, audiences and media without loss of recognisability.

2. Research Questions and Methodology

2.1. Philosophical Positioning and Research Theory

In terms of science-philosophical positioning, this research can be described as non-positivist or anti-positivist. Its epistemological assumptions are based on subjectivist views, heavily relying on participants' perspectives, thus it is also interpretivist. The research defines reality as local, specific, and constructed, qualifying its ontology as relativist. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of DIS:CO, which employs a concept-driven design approach, it can also be associated with some features of postmodern and communicative-collaborative design. The study views reality as a construction of the shared human cognitive apparatus, thus it can also be characterized by constructivism. It adopts a nominalist ontological label, as it does not assume an external structured reality independent of the individual. Regarding human nature, it takes a voluntarist stance, and its methodology is idiographic. Based on Gelei (2002), it perceives organizations as intersubjective aggregates of meanings, with their reality

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[7] Some examples are Kreutz, 2001, 2005; Felsing, 2009; Lélis & Mealha, 2010; Nes, 2012; Martins et al., 2019; Lélis, 2019; Lélis et al., 2020; Lélis & Kreutz, 2021, 2022; Fekete, 2022.

formed transactionally from the identities, cognitive and affective processes, intentions, and interests of the stakeholders who construct them.

Adopting intellectual polyphony, the chapter on the philosophical characteristics explores how this research and design communication-based studies links to research paradigms, and scientific discourses. This section acknowledges the necessity of developing a path towards the research objectives and, in the spirit of open problem-solving, aims to outline potential future pathways leading to design communication. It intentionally strives towards a superordinate goal of opening new perspectives at the intersection of design and marketing, thereby supporting DIS:CO-oriented research and qualitative marketing science studies in general. This approach seeks to broaden and deepen the narrow stream of humane approaches in marketing. Based on the presented material, dynamic interpretations can be developed from static epistemological and ontological assumptions through different scientific perspectives. Thus, this work – and similar DIS:CO research – can be identified with interpretivist (Burell & Morgan, 1979) and constructivist (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) approaches, or as a multiparadigmatic (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Primecz, 2008) study. According to Deetz (1996), it intersects interpretive and dialogic discourse and based on Feyerabend (1970) can partially be seen as a work inspired by postmodernism.

Given that participatory aspects appear in various forms in the design communication practice of participatory DVI design, the research theoretically prepares by detailing three modes of participation. It addresses participation in DVI, the observational research method, and compares DIS:CO with the participatory worldview (Reason & Heron, 1995) and research methods related to the action turn. Through these discussions, the path to the research objectives becomes clearly and multifacetedly defined, and the scientific theory of design communication is enriched with novel insights.

2.2. Research Questions

The formulation of the research questions was preceded by the development of the research objectives. Primary and secondary scientific goals were established, along with the intellectual, social, organizational, managerial, pragmatic aims, and personal aspirations of the research.

Following the spirit of free qualitative research and embracing theoretical openness – by rejecting the establishment of preliminary hypotheses – I formulated open-ended questions that allow for the exploration of the design communication practices of participatory DVI design, and the artefacts created through this process. The general research question is articulated as follows:

RQ: How do participatory DVIs create connections between the company or organisation and its stakeholders within the context of design communication workshops?

The associated sub-questions aim to shed light on this phenomenon from several angles. Both its process and results are taken into account:

RQ$_1$: How can the DVI concepts created in the participatory design process be characterized?

RQ$_2$: How can the design communication practice of participatory DVI design be characterized?

2.3. Research Strategy and Triangulation Model

To achieve the objectives of the exploratory research and to answer the questions, I employed a qualitative research strategy, as such an approach helps in understanding phenomena based on situational and detailed data. It is suitable for yielding useful results even when dealing with unstructured problems (Horváth & Mitev, 2015).

In the hybrid research created by combining qualitative methods, I applied the procedures of theoretical, methodological, researcher, and data triangulation to mitigate methodological risks and enhance the quality of the research. Consequently, based on Denzin (1989), both the secondary and primary research can be described using a triangulation research model (Figure 3.).
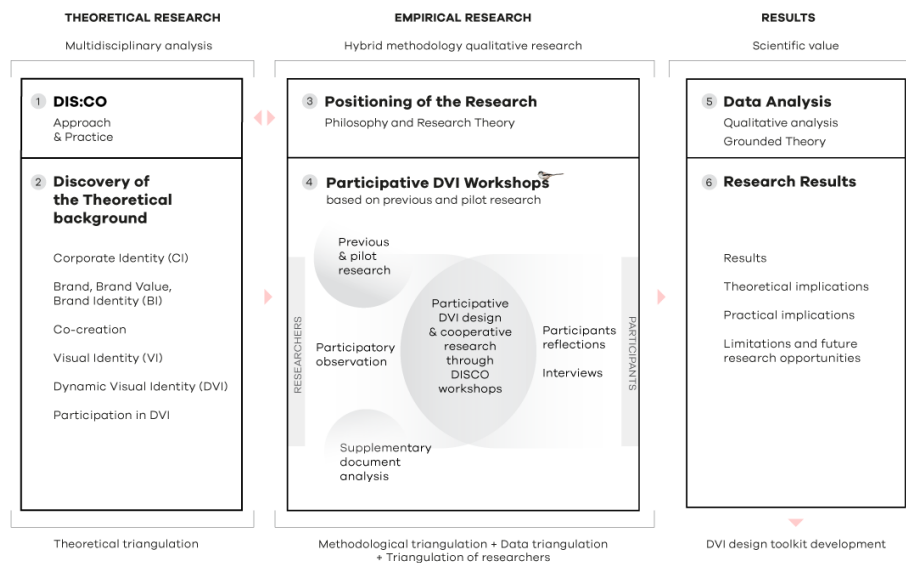

Figure 3. Research model
(Author's edit)

2.4. Participatory DVI Design Workshops

The development of the content and structure of the participatory DVI design workshops, which form the backbone of the empirical research, was aided by over ten years of professional experience in design strategy, marketing, and design communication consultancy. Furthermore, preparation included 30 distinct scientific and professional accomplishments, that can be organised into eight categories. The accomplishments (including 11 of them being international) covered the facilitation of master's level university courses conducted over a span of several years, as well as multiple workshops. Prior to the organisation of the empirical research sessions, two pilot workshops were held to test the practices of DIS:CO-based participatory DVI design. All of these factors significantly contributed to both the theoretical and practical dimensions of my research. In addition, the preparation for fieldwork was made possible by the archaeological collection of relevant visual artefacts. Since 2018, I have documented and recorded 707 DVI case studies, which serve as the foundation for my previous and upcoming publications.

The primary research detailed in the dissertation relied on a non-probability, purposive, information-oriented, theoretical sampling procedure, as the central phenomenon cannot be accessed otherwise. The sampling aimed to involve members of companies and organizations capable of

providing information-rich, diverse perspectives on extending the theories related to participatory DVI design. In pursuit of ensuring the intensity of data through heterogeneity, workshop participants included employees from various organizational units of different-sized organizations across diverse industries. The profiles, products and services, and target groups of the five invited organizations significantly differ, yet all are characterized by a cultivated organizational culture, openness, and commitment towards social responsibility.

Organisation A, as a subsidiary of one of Europe's largest insurance groups, offers digital services in the segment of innovative international insurance solutions. Organisation B is a privately-owned corporation with over 25 years of history, representing one of the largest entities in its industry in Hungary, offering financial services to individual and corporate clients. The remaining three organisations are connected to a global innovation network ecosystem. Organisation C evolved from an initiative in the early 2010s into a public benefit foundation dealing with sustainable food consumption and the social issues of eco-friendly nutrition. Organisation D, as a small business, offers creative workshops and art therapy services for children, adults, and families. Organisation E, consisting of young civilians, is a social enterprise helping local communities by advocating the cause of eliminating period poverty. During the three workshops, 26 representatives from the five organisations collaborated in mixed groups and with members of other organisations to create their own DVI concepts. Employees, including operational, middle, and senior managers, founders, and owners, participated without distinguished roles, working alongside researchers.

Data collection was ensured by mixed techniques (Table 1.) to eliminate the biases associated with individual methods and to leverage the advantages of different data collection procedures. The generation of mixed-type data from various sources was also supported by a cooperative research approach involving participants and researcher participant observation, thereby reducing the blind spots in understanding.

Data	Data Sources	Type	Place of Collection	Time of Collection
Research and field journals	Researchers	Textual, visual	Remote and research field	During the whole research
Observations	Researchers	Textual	Research field	During workshops
Audio recordings	All participants	Audio	Research field	During workshops
Photos	All participants	Visual	Research field	During workshops
Products and evaluations of creative practices (visual concepts and sculptures shaping personal and organisational identity)	All participants	Textual, visual, other	Research field	During workshops
Products created during design – DVI concepts, visual and other artefacts and their interpretations	All participants	Visual, textual	Research field	During workshops
Reflections from participants	Research participants	Textual	Online	After workshops
Interviews	Research participants	Textual	Online	Before and after workshops
Complementary documentary analysis (corporate documents on official mission, vision, values, culture, communication)	Organisations	Textual, visual	Remote	After workshops

Table 1. Details of data collection

(Author's edit)

During research based on DIS:CO methodology, the practices of participatory DVI design and the phases of knowledge construction followed each other in a structure characteristic of cooperative research. The development of DVI applied an unstructured problem-solving method. The goal was to create authentic DVI concepts suitable for representing the organisation and harmonising with its identity. During the workshops, my two co-researchers, who are qualified and experienced in creative and visual design, and I worked alongside the participants. The attendees' thorough development, presentation, and evaluation of each concept brought the workshops to a close. Participants later provided written feedback, and I conducted additional interviews when necessary.

The results emerged through iterative data analysis, interpretative evaluation processes with participants, and the visual and textual analysis of all outcomes. In this process, I employed qualitative content analysis (QCA) method based on the principles and guidelines of constructivist grounded theory (CGT). Unlike classic and interpretive strands of GT (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the theory formation process of the constructivist grounded theory developed by Charmaz (2000, 2006) is characterised by a shift towards postmodern, relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology. It represents a more flexible, heuristic strategy rather than a formalised positivist or pragmatist process. CGT pays particular attention to the active role of participants, neither distancing nor alienating them from the research process or results and, emphasises the subjective interactions between the researcher and participants, and the meaning-making that occurs in this way (Schwandt, 1994).

According to Charmaz (2000, 2006), a priori theoretical knowledge is unavoidably present even in data-driven inductive and abductive theory formation; however, its role is not for the researcher to apply it deductively but to recognise its impact on their activity through conscious awareness. Since comparing data with previous theories can be beneficial, this allows for a form of theoretical dialogue. To facilitate this, during the inductive analysis, I considered not only the emergent patterns but also the theoretical frameworks of collaborative and dynamic brand identity and brand equity (Silveira et al., 2013; Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2021; Siano et al., 2022), the anthropological approach to design communication (Cosovan et al., 2018), and the relevant theories from DVI literature (Nes, 2012; Martins et al., 2019; Lélis & Kreutz, 2019, 2022; Fekete, 2021; Lélis & Kreutz, 2021; Fekete, 2022).

3. Research Results

3.1. Answering the Research Questions

RQ: How do participatory DVIs create connections between the company or organisation and its stakeholders within the context of design communication workshops?

Participatively designed dynamic visual identities can establish connections within the visible and invisible registers of corporate, organisational, and brand identity. Specific answers that help deepen the understanding of these connections can be obtained by addressing the following sub-questions:

RQ_1: How can the DVI concepts created in the participatory design process be characterised?

The ten concepts developed by the seven groups from five organisations during the three workshops became intelligible through the participants' perspectives in both the design and research and through the researchers' interpretations. The workshops yielded visual identities that authentically aligned with the participants' personal values and their organisations' corporate and brand identities, performatively expressing and simultaneously constructing them.

Via the design communication (DIS:CO) workshops, the stakeholders from international and large companies, as well as from the innovation ecosystem, created original visual identities that significantly differed from one another. The invisible layers of identity were integrated into the creative concepts of dynamic systems, their essential features, visual elements, or modes of operation during the development process.

The dissertation features six theoretical frameworks that can be used to compare the DVIs that utilise various creative strategies (Nes, 2012; Martins et al., 2019; Lélis & Kreutz, 2019, 2022; Fekete, 2021; Lélis & Kreutz, 2021; Fekete, 2022). This comparison shows that the DIS:CO-based participatory design employed in the research does not limit the properties of dynamic visual identities that can be revealed by examining the dimensions of the aforementioned analytical frameworks. Based on the results, this design approach is thus suitable for creating concepts with diverse characteristics, different focuses, varied logic, and diverse narrative features (Appendix 2.).

This research offers a seventh, new approach to evaluating dynamic visual identities in terms of corporate, organisational, and brand identity (Appendix 3.). The seven new aspects of DVI analysis, formulated inductively and abductively based on emergent patterns from the field, shed light on dimensions that allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the individuals and the companies or organisations creating the visual identities.

The ten cases detailed in the dissertation serve as illustrative examples of how dynamism can manifest: *1. the image of the organisation and the individual, 2. the relationship between the organisation and the individual, 3. the intended range of meaning of dynamic elements, 4. the intended degree of freedom of interpretation, 5. the focus (or basis) of connection, 6. whether the organisation's activities are represented in the DVI, and 7. the continuity of a previous visual identity.*

Different types of relationships are identified regarding the organisation and the individual (2.): *whole and part, coordinate, creator, helper, interpreter, and supporter.* The intended degree of freedom of interpretation (4.) resulted in *free, partially free, and constrained* categories. As the focus (or basis) of connection (5.), *individual (cognitive, affective, and conative) and social* factors were identified. The visual signs of the organisation's activities (6.) were determined as *absent or present in indexical, iconic, and symbolic* forms. Results indicate that visual continuity (7.) can appear in components such as the *logo, typography, colours, linguistic elements, other graphic elements, and images,* if present. The listed categories can be expanded in the future, and the unspecified aspects (1, 3) can freely evolve based on the designers' intentions. These seven facets crystallised from the data can be discovered through the questions formulated in the dissertation.

RQ2: How can the design communication practice of participatory DVI design be characterized?

While the answer to the first sub-research question provides insights into the results of design communication done by the company or organisation and its stakeholders through the visually manifest, visible results of designing DVI systems, the second sub-question allows us to explore the non-visual characteristics that emerge during the design process.

Observations made at workshops, cooperatively derived conclusions with those involved in the design, and individual interpretations of the participants can create more detailed knowledge about the design process (phenomenon), the circumstances of the activity (situation), and the participating organisations and individuals (context). By entering the rhizomatic map of the results, one can navigate the network of manifoldly interconnected areas of importance.

In the data analysis following constructivist grounded theory (CGT) principles, prominent categories associated with the central phenomenon of participatory DVI design became Identity, Process, Design, Participation, DVI, and Outputs. Being immersed in these categories allows for an understanding of their roles and significance, characterising the DIS:CO-based practice of DVI design.

Identity

In the design process, the various conceptions of identity (corporate, organisational, personal, or – as mentioned by the participants – community identity) did not appear as factors to be depicted or as topics of dialogue. Identity was manifested in the attitudes and actions of the participants, forming the hidden foundation of collaboration. Its manifestations in the process can be captured through the *Behaviour* and *Culture* dimensions of corporate identity constructs (See Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Tourky et al., 2020). The characteristics that could be grouped around identity were present not as elements of creation but as modes of creation. The performative activation of these by the participants significantly impacted the quality of ideas. Meanings associated with identity functioned as control factors, not determined top-down or suggested externally, but stemming from the participants' internal experiences. The research made it clear that due to the human condition elaborated by Heron (1996, p. 201) in the participatory worldview, the stakeholders involved in design processes are the most authentic knowers of their own and their organisation's identity, and they access it through all four forms of knowing. They can experience, relate, and construct it in participatory DVI design.

Process

Based on the acquired results, the process can also be defined as developmental training, in which the opportunity for creation and invention arises through the participants' activities and mutual influence. The participatory DVI design process is a framework where equal actors create signs, meanings, knowledge, objects, and communities according to the foci aligned with their goals. Among the characteristics of the workshops, the non-normative and non-conventional nature emerged as defining. The trajectory of the sessions moved from individual contributions towards communal, cooperative creative activities. The process proved to be effective in supporting collaboration between homogeneous or heterogeneous units of individuals and organisational departments, depending on the composition of the groups. The inter-organisational form of the workshops also holds significant potential.

Design

Based on the experiences within the DIS:CO-oriented procedure, the role of design can be understood in multiple ways. It can be described as a *symbolic and interactive space* where subjects evoke content relevant to them through interaction, content which exists as symbols expressing specific values within their community and would remain dormant without design processes based on communication. Interpreting design as a *creative space*, it embodies visual thinking, divergent problem-solving, and a site for intuitive, imaginative, and inspirational new ideas, offering participants a unique form of collective existence. Design can also manifest in the process as a *management space*, providing opportunities that facilitate the development of organisational characteristics beyond visual identity and support self-management.

Participation

Participatory DVI design fosters brand citizenship behaviour, temporarily dissolving the usual division of roles within organisations. This kind of participation can be categorised as formal volunteering, as it occurs within institutional frameworks but is based on individual discretion. Through participation, deviations from existing practices and cooperation schemes resulted in novel creations previously uncharacteristic of their environment, thereby earning the label of innovative creativity. The empowerment to actively shape layers of identity fostered increased motivation, identification, and commitment. Social interactions in participation were characterised by sharing, reciprocity, and mutual communication. Consequently, co-created brand value was established for the internal prosumers of corporate and organisational brands. Experiences and associations realised within the community, supported by elaboration, became attached to the organisations' image. Another significant benefit of participation was that due to the high level of trust characteristic of the collaborating organisations, the design sessions also served as venues for self-reflection and social learning.

DVI

Surpassing prior theories, new functions of dynamic visual identities were identified within this research. Participatory DVI was interpreted as a *cooperative system, a connection interface, a communication mechanism, and a tool for generating knowledge.* Accordingly, it is a system of actions oriented towards shared goals, a platform for nurturing relationships among the brand's audience members, a mechanism supporting multilateral communication, and a tool for mapping associative fields related to the identity of the participants. Participatory DVI design's functions as a cooperative system, connection interface, communication mechanism, and tool for generating knowledge reveal a common thread: the outlined possibilities far exceed shallow observations and definitional attempts that merely capture the role of dynamism integrated into visual identity as an expression of some heterogeneity or variability.

This inquiry also uncovered theoretical innovations related to the development of DVIs. Based on the results, the participatory DVI design process is a dialogic and democratic phenomenon, where the interwoven processes of individual and collaborative sign and meaning-making transform DVI concepts through *mechanisms of individualisation and collectivisation* (Figure 4.). Depending on the acceptance level of the generated ideas and concepts, these mechanisms can be categorised as *acceptance, customisation, modification, challenge,* or *rejection*. The experiences indicated interrelations between these mechanisms and the quantity and diversity of new ideas.
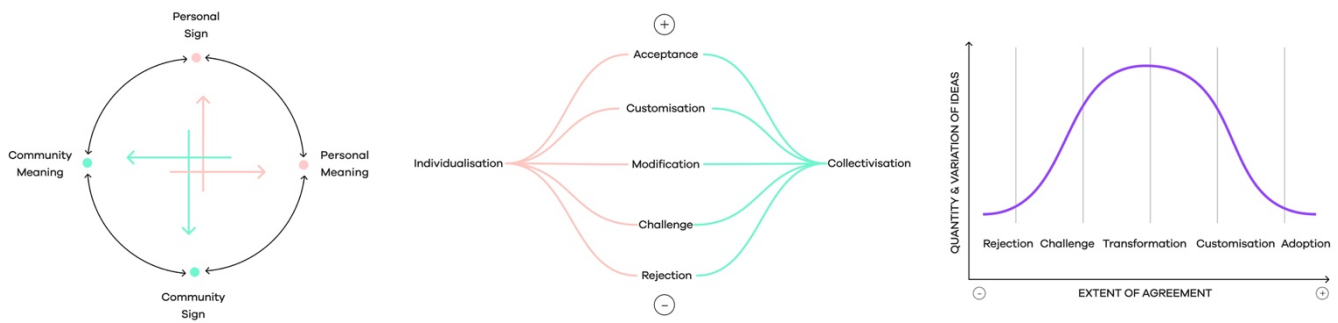
Figure 4. The mechanisms of sign and meaning making during participatory DVI design
(Author's edit)

Outcomes

Beyond the DVI concepts created, the workshops also produced non-visual outputs that may be relevant for assessing the process's impacts at both organizational and individual levels.

From a corporate or organisational perspective, essential findings suggest that design communication-based participatory DVI design is a suitable procedure for entities with different attributes, organisational structures, resources, goals, and identities across various business scenarios. It is appropriate for shaping corporate, organisational, or community identity and realising authentic marketing communication.

Additionally, participants validated it as a tool for community building, organisational and operational development. Some companies found it useful for increasing efficiency, improving collaboration between organisational units, enhancing internal trust, and improving the quality of communication.

Due to the multidisciplinary nature of DIS:CO-based development, its advantages include increased proficiency in the fields of marketing, visual communication, graphics, and design. The knowledge acquired in participation and visual co-creation can expand leadership toolkits, providing benefits in organisational, process, or operation management areas.

Participants invited to the design process also reported individual-level outcomes, such as the desirable impact of designing dynamic visual systems on divergent problem-solving skills and creativity, a positive interrelation with design-oriented thinking and visual literacy, or opportunities for self-development through creation. Experiences involving stepping out of the comfort zone and raising awareness of identity were integral to the workshops, and transgressive creativity opened new doors of opportunity for the creators.

3.2. Brand Theory Perspectives

Following the analysis of the DVI concepts and design processes implemented during the research, paramount insights can be formulated regarding the links between brand theories and the findings related to dynamic visual identities. This study directly associates the design communication development procedure and the phenomenon of participatory DVI with the vertical and horizontal approaches of brand theories (Figure 2.).

In Aaker's (1991) brand equity model, brand *associations* form the most defining relation basis. Through positive attitudes and emotions emerging in the design process, the brand's value can be increased within the corporate brand's internal market. Empowering internal stakeholders to shape the brand expanded its functional benefits, enabling visual brand elements to be used as internal communication tools or conveying information related to the served cause. Brand *personality*, one of the brand associations, is also a significant connection point. Participatory DVI allows stakeholders to express their actual or ideal selves, as discussed in the context of brand personality by Aaker (1997). Another brand equity factor includes the range of *associations related to the organisation*, which is a notable link between the phenomenon of participatory DVI and Aaker's (1991) model. The research demonstrated that the visual concepts generated during the DVI development process can represent the company or organisation as a whole and the individuals and external stakeholders in various ways. Thus, the spectrum of associations related to the organisation expands, potentially leading to higher brand equity.

Brand-related associations hold a prominent role in Keller's (1993) consumer-based brand equity model. The results observed in participatory DVI design can be linked to the brand image dimension, which defines brand knowledge. The workshops' DIS:CO-based development process contributed to increasing brand knowledge by expanding the functional, experiential, and symbolic benefits associated with brands.

These elements form the foundation of Keller's (2001) later brand resonance pyramid, allowing for the direct influence on *Identity*. DVI design impacted both the *emotional* and *rational* ways of brand equity enhancement. Strong, favourable, and unique brand associations – represented at the *Meaning* level in the pyramid model – and positive emotions and judgements – at the *Response* level – were also supported. Thus, it can be stated that this format of DVI design is suitable for creating intense brand resonance – at the level of *Connection*. Active involvement theoretically influences brand attachment and loyalty; however, verifying this would require different sorts of further investigations.

We find almost complete overlap when comparing the process and outcomes of participatory DVI design with Kapferer's (2008) brand identity prism. The devised products and the process encompassed the *Physical attributes, Reflection, Relationship, Personality, Culture, and Self-image* assigned to the prism's facets. According to Kapferer (2008, p. 182), the brand's character and belief system can also support consumers in discovering their own identities. In the case of participatory DVIs, we observed the reverse, as internal consumers of the brand transitioned from passive roles to active shapers in discovering the brand's identity. Consequently, surpassing Kapferer's (2008) model, identity is transacted *horizontally*, not *vertically*, *receptively and emissively*, between the parties (brand and stakeholders).

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According to the research findings, the theoretical overlap between participatory DVI design and contemporary brand theories is complete (Silveira et al., 2013; Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2021; Siano et al., 2022). Such DVI design can be interpreted within the *framework of dynamic brand identity* (Silveira et al., 2013), where participatory DVI may be positioned as an element connecting the brand's face with stakeholders' face. Black and Veloutsou's (2017) model of *co-creation of brand identity* is also suitable for describing participatory DVI design, as the results obtained here fit within the interactions of individuals, brand community, and brand. Particularly interesting parallels emerge with the mechanisms of sign and meaning-making that accompany the development of creative concepts. Additionally, Hollebeek et al.'s (2021) *co-created brand value model* (CCBV), which is based on the service-dominant (S-D) logic, helps understand the creation of brand value through visual collaboration and is among the well-fitting theories. During this research, the acts of *resource integration, engagement, and sharing* were observed as elaborated in their model. When examining the DVI concepts in the context of the collaboration-based branding configurations created by Siano et al. (2022), these visual systems qualify as parts of *negotiated* or *open-source* brands based on their propensity for empowerment and openness.

3.3. Implications

Participatory DVI design communication practice arose as a community activity in which participants brought creative self- and community-defining processes to life through visual and verbal interactions. The layers of a corporation's or organisation's identity emerged through the individual interpretations of those involved in the design and in interaction with their self-identity and were integrated into the dynamic visual identities through acts of participative interactions. Via design engagement, participants contributed to shaping the identity of their community through visual design. Thus, the activity can also be considered as the cooperative construction of corporate, organisational, and brand identity.

Analysis of the visible outputs developed during the research sessions, namely the designed DVI concepts, resulted in seven new aspects that support the exploration of identity layers. Taking these aspects into account, it is possible to gather information from the perspective of those involved in the design about the image of the organisation and the individuals as represented in the DVI, the relationships between them, the meanings expressed by dynamism coded into the system, the intended degree of freedom of interpretation. Additionally, the focus (or basis) of the connection fostered by the DVI, the activities of the organisation, and the possible continuity related to a previous visual representation of the brand can also be understood.

The study underscored that just as in the case of dynamic visual identities, not only are the visible elements significant, but the concept defining the operation of the visual system is also a substantial part of the DVI. Similarly, the design process's significance is essential and just as accentuated as the visual outputs.

Participatory design workshops were presented through rhizomatic networks of meanings, co-constructed with the participants to eliminate the blind spots of the researchers' perspectives. Due to the limitations of scientific understanding, the rational differentiation of the dense interconnections of the themes and patterns describing these processes can only be an artificial distinguishment. Although the investigation of DIS:CO-based DVI development yields intellectually satisfying results, it should be noted that such processes, enriched by experiences in collective activities, offer a far richer experience in their own realities than can be conveyed through text-based representation.

A key thesis of the research follows a similar trajectory, as empiricism plays a significant role in the process of cooperative design. *In participatory DVI design, the quality of participation qualitatively determines the creative concepts.* The ideas forming the visual system develop through creative interactions and multilateral communication, ensuring the integration of the community's identity into creative products, thus realising design communication by definition. Based on the analysis of the design processes, the individualisation and collectivisation mechanisms of sign and meaning-making can be identified, where individuals share (internalise or externalise) the visual or conceptual content (signs and meanings) they create. The acts of acceptance, customisation, modification, challenge, or rejection form according to the degree of agreement, closely linked to identity.

The research also suggests, new claims can be formulated regarding the dynamism appearing in DVIs. Dynamism far surpasses the associations commonly associated with it (e.g., change, variability, diversity, and heterogeneity). *Thus, dynamism itself behaves as a signifier, standing in for something else and referring to other factors.* It does not appear as a message or a goal but as an instrument that leads to something else according to the creators' intentions. The application of dynamism expands the semantic content of DVIs. It connects the stakeholders of organisations with a common thread and provides the opportunity to integrate different layers of identity into the visual system.

Similarly, corporate or organisational identity[8] *is not an object or element of design. It is a factor influencing the creative process and a mode of collaboration.* It manifested (and was created) in participant interactions and the resulting products, ultimately becoming organically integrated into the DVI concepts and indirectly expressed.

Based on all these, the design communication-oriented participatory DVI studied in the research can be experienced in visible and invisible registers, defined by the following four propositions. In such a visual system:

1. *The participatory nature of DVI design qualitatively determines the creative concepts. Sign and meaning-making occur through individualisation and collectivisation mechanisms, leading to authentic and unique results.*

2. *Dynamism isn't employed just for the sake of it; it possesses an intended set of meanings far exceeding the associations of variability and diversity.*

3. *The identity manifested and constructed in the DVI is not an object or component of the design process and outputs but a characteristic.*

4. *The rules that unfold from the creative concept of the visual system interact with the visual elements to define the way DVI works. Together, these are capable of embodying identity.*

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[8] Organisational identity mentioned here does not refer to constructs used in the domain of organisational theory but is an alternative name for corporate and brand identity in a non-enterprise context. The term "community identity" also came up during the fieldwork, and it was mostly used by participants to denote their community's identity instead of corporate or organisational identity.

3.4. Theoretical Relevance

Due to the lack of comprehensive literature reviews on dynamic visual identities and the bibliometric visualisation presented in the dissertation, which shows a significant theoretical and research gap between marketing and DVI studies, one of the dissertation's tasks was to bridge these gaps.

A key novelty is that the theoretical chapters establish connections between corporate, brand, and visual identity theories by embedding the DVI phenomenon within economic sciences, showcasing the converging parallels within these fields. This way, the dissertation provides the first comprehensive theoretical gateway to this special sub-topic of visual identity design and its related economic science contexts. Alongside expanding the DVI literature, it thus establishes the fundamental theoretical bases for the economic discussion and multidisciplinary research of the phenomenon.

By applying the cornerstones of design communication, the study conducts a multi-faceted analysis comparing the main dissimilarities between static and dynamic visual identities, clearly differentiating and defining the phenomenon. Another theoretical novelty is the interpretation of dynamic turn in visual identity, which, by drawing parallels with the pictorial turn, provides points of reference for higher-level socio-humanistic discussions of the phenomenon. In addition to identifying DVI as a turn in visual identity, it is also interpreted as a paradigm shift by switching to a different philosophical perspective of science. In this way, the phenomenon becomes more accessible to followers of different understandings of science.

The theoretical relevance of the dissertation is enhanced by the fact that, as a preliminary to empirical research, it also expands the theory of design communication, the represented research approach and method. In addition to discussing the available literature on the proposed approach, it extends it in terms of design theory, philosophy of science and research theory. It identifies the communicative-collaborative design theory and postmodern features of DIS:CO, highlighting the essential points of its divergence from these.

By positioning design communication research in a polyphonic science-philosophical context, in accordance with the dynamic nature of visual identities, the paper presents a variety of perspectives on the possibilities of classifying such research according to multi-paradigmatic AND/OR scientific discourses. These philosophical and methodological contributions, in addition to outlining the foundations of the present research, gain significance as extensions of design communication, providing reference points for future inquiries in this discipline. They outline an alternative to scientific enquiry through creation, i.e. design-based research.

The primary research added further theoretical contributions to the significance of the dissertation. Through the concepts generated during the DIS:CO workshops, seven new aspects of participatory DVIs were revealed, which can be used to discover the relevant characteristics of visual identity for corporate, organisational and brand identity. This theoretical framework, among the first in the study of the participative DVI phenomenon, provides a starting point for both the development and analysis of dynamic visual identities drawing on empirical data from the perspective participants. Its significance lies, among other things, in its ability to reveal how corporate and brand identity is embodied in visuality, whereas previous analytical frameworks have mostly only investigated the properties of DVIs only.

By navigating through the rhizomatic webs of meanings describing the design communication processes of participatory DVI design, we were able to obtain a detailed, fragmented and sometimes

contradictory, but always interconnected map of the contexts and situations of DVI construction. In the results thus generated, the co-creation of dynamic visual identities was defined as *developmental training, symbolic and interactive space, creative space, management space, democratic branding behaviour, and visual identities as a cooperative system, a connection interface, a communication mechanism, a means of knowledge acquisition.* Through these interpretations, the phenomenon can be understood from many new angles, from perspectives of diverse academic domains. Complementing these with conceptualisations of the sign and meaning-making experienced at research workshops, the dissertation has arrived at a new four-item conceptualisation of DIS:CO-based participatory DVI design.

3.5. Practical Relevance

Participative DVI development based on design communication is a form of design-led social collaboration that builds on systematic trust to allow transparent and direct democratic influence in the construction and formation of corporate, organisational and brand identity. Participatory nature of this activity can have a positive impact on identification and attachment to the outputs, as it allows the production of brand associations and emotions based on lived experience. Empowering the design of a visual identity can also encourage the development of a sense of ownership and active involvement among participants.

The process presented in this research allows the creation of diverse types of dynamic visual identities. The practices and design communication methodology provide a modern and effective tool for a wide spectrum of organisations. The results, implications and theses discussed offer guidance for the implementation of a successful design process, enhancing the pragmatic utility of the dissertation's developments. The lessons learnt from the workshops suggest that it is feasible to develop DVI concepts with an external or internal focus, to create a new visual identity or to renew an existing visual set, dynamizing it according to specific target functions. In collaborative design, the end result is not a systematic deductive definition of static and dynamic elements and visual system properties, but a process of collaborative creativity based on visual dialogues, openness and empathy, which is informed by the identity of the organisation. Ideally, the practices of the workshops are complemented by subjective and intersubjective social rites of passage for meaning-making. In relation to the outputs of the workshops, it should also be noted that the introduction of professional graphic design after the creation of the concepts is essential for the practical application of DVIs. The visual elements of participatory design are not signs that have been created by means of visual expertise combined with a comprehensive knowledge of design culture, and it is therefore appropriate to involve graphic designers in the concept development process in order to finalise them.

Participatory DVI design can also be applied to create other visual and symbolic assets desired by the organisation, in addition to marketing communication tools. Promoting internal communication and collaboration practices within organisations and shaping the intangible aspects of corporate identity and corporate culture are prominent among the research findings. Participants highlighted the community-building character of the workshops and their constructive role in fostering and strengthening personal relationships.

The dynamic nature of visual identities makes the design process suitable for use in organisational research and development. DVI can be used as a projective research technique to explore brand identities. In collaborative design processes, people from different areas and levels of the organisation can produce and combine latent content in the form of equal creative contributions, which

can be used to gain an awareness of the organisation. According to DIS:CO's method – recalling the epistemological notion of a participatory worldview –, as designers immerse themselves in the act of creation, they establish experiential, presentational, propositional and practical forms of knowledge regarding their identity. It is this active participation in cognition that provides the authentic basis for effective design interaction and the core of the original, creative concepts that unfold. The possibility of shaping visual identity through such immersive experiences calls into question the validity of grotesque industry practices whereby a privileged group of corporate members distort their simplified views of corporate identity into a written brief, for the purpose of having it converted into visual signs by external agents who are unfamiliar with the organisation. This outmoded practice is rightly reminiscent of the predecessors of branding, where signification was more a tool of power and ownership than a credible basis for engagement with stakeholders. By contrast, brand identity concepts, born in cooperative creative activity, in open and reciprocal human interactions, in a self-reflexive and empathic process, offer a higher degree of awareness and self-identity. These can create visual systems that, when coupled with the right intentions, serve as a means for more honest communication between humans and humans.

In a supportive environment and in a corporate culture nurtured with care, the design process orchestrated by a community working together of their own free will creates value beyond the organisational level. It can also be beneficial for the participants at the level of the individual. An effective and efficient methodology involves developing the skills and abilities of those invited to participate in the design process, fostering visual literacy. During the self-reflection phases, self-awareness exercises can be carried out. And the dynamism of visual identities can open the door to self-expression, making DVI ideal for experience-based fulfilment of more sophisticated, growth-based needs.

3.6. Limitations and Further Research

In line with the research objectives and methods, DIS:CO workshops have been extended to concept formulation, so that DVI can be explored in situations of participatory design sessions. The visual materials were therefore not further refined. Validation of the ideas with a wider stakeholder group and their external (market) or internal (organisational) implementation following final graphic design implementation may add further valuable information to the range of results presented.

Present work paints a cross-sectional picture in accordance with the research design. Therefore, there is potential for further scientific investigation in DVI research with a longitudinal approach. Beyond the extension over time, broadening and changing the range of contributors shows similarly promising research directions. Beneficiaries, consumers or other segments of the brand community may also prove to be motivated and accessible research partners in shaping brands of companies, products or services. This way, the social objectives of research could be extended. Without changing the structure and parameters of the research, it would be possible to bring other dimensions of perception into the processes of workshops by introducing new creative techniques and exercises. DVI development using more arts-based practices might provide a richer experience for participants and this would presumably influence the outputs of the research.

Since the antecedents of the co-created brand value (CCBV) model (Hollebeek et al., 2021) have emerged in the participatory design sessions, this DVI development procedure can be defined as a service according to the framework of service-dominant (S-D) theory. Research using such an approach would allow for a deeper embeddedness of the findings explored here in marketing theory, but this would now have caused a blurring of the orientation of the thesis, contrary to the theory-building logic of constructivist grounded theory (CGT).

The outcomes reflect the democratic nature of participation aided by dynamism in visuality, the equality of creative contributions, yet the factors of power and control were only evident in the design situations. These matters were discussed to an extent commensurate with the prominence of the emergence and their relevance experienced on the ground. The study of DVI design could be approached from a differently positioned basis by adopting an approach typical of the sociology of radical change from a humanist or structuralist perspective, and following the ontology of historical realism, from within the paradigm of critical theory. The range of organisational and social issues that can be grouped around this phenomenon promises to be an exciting arena for critical studies discourse.

3.7. Closing Image

This doctoral thesis is a comprehensive and multifaceted exploration of the dynamic turn of visual identities. The research offers new perspectives for the dialogue between the relevant academic and professional domains. Through these, inter-, trans- and multidisciplinary bridges can be built that, *despite all the explosions*[9], connect the fields of marketing, design and design communication. Transcending the culture of BUT / OR, these pages carry the synthesizing power of AND and further shed light on conceptual networks that are closed yet open-ended entities concealing the possibilities of finitude and infinity.

Over the 70 months of the entire PhD process, hundreds of participants have contributed to the picture of visual identities that has been presented here. During participative DIS:CO workshops, cooperative studies were conducted to explore the characteristics of visual cooperation and the visible and invisible facets of identity. Implications of the research can be applied to identity-driven brand management, design-based leadership and design-led organisational development. Drafting the dissertation text took 1895.3 working hours, excluding the organisation and implementation of research sessions, literature review and data analysis.

The conclusions suggest that participatory DVI development can be a kind of design therapy for companies trapped in disappointing marketing communication practices, where the largest loss may be the illusion that hides the true identity of the organisation from the stakeholders. Indeed, the development of DVIs serves as a mirror for those involved in the design process, in which they can learn not only about themselves and each other, but also about the characteristics of the organisation they have created, as they build elements of their brand.

Through the observation of performatively constructed identities by means of dynamism and creative design processes, the research allowed us to experience with the participants what it is like to be *"born to light"* or to experience catharsis in an act of collective creation. For me, this also provided opportunities for existential meaning-making and hopeful shared experiences. To temporarily calm the restlessness that pervades the world and, along with the object of understanding, to bring about personal change.

And why visual identity matters in all of this? Because it is both a manifesto and an ars poetica. It can be understood as a conscious and preconscious public self-confession. A visual attempt by an entity to shape itself and the world around it. For the scholar it is a phenomenon, for the organisation it is a tool, for the designer it is creation, for the artist it is love. The vehicle of cognition, the surface of matter. In it, colours are the death of light.

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[9] German (In: Cosovan, 2009, p. 23) continues: „*[...] Sublimation, distinguishment, comma, dot, finiteness, humility, pulsation. The words left out.*" Now, a decade and a half later – playing with the notion of closure – these appear in my thesis on pages 154, 273, 48, 235, 112, 135, 117.
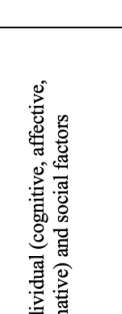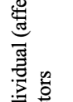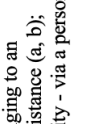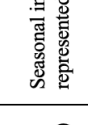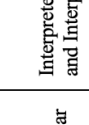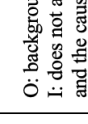
4. Appendices

Static Visual Identity		Dynamic Visual Identity (participative)
Comparison using DIS:CO cornerstones Triple relation system based on Cosovan, 2009; Cosovan & Horváth, 2016		
Search for the perfect form (material properties)	Material — Immaterial	Intangible factors come to the forefont, with a focus on dynamism and operation
The ideal of consistency	Constant — Variable	Striving for static and dynamic balance
Ensured by the representational function	Survival — Subsistence — Development	Ensured by constitutive function
Comparison based on theoretical background Sources: Meyer et al., 2013; Gregersen & Johansen, 2018, 2022; Crăciun, 2019; Gregersen, 2019		
Passive, relying on rigid rules	Management style	Active, relying on flexible rules construed in context
Routine of total control	Control	Shared control, a ritual between management and stakeholders (or environment)
Unidirectional (stimulus/response)	Direction of communication	Multidirectional (dialogical) and interactive
Transmissive	Meaning making	Interpretative
On the organisation	Focus	On the organisation and the stakeholders
Low trust, stakeholders in subordinate role	Level of trust	High level of trust, stakeholders in complementary role
Semiotic comparison Comparison factors based on Horányi & Szépe, 1975; Ogden & Richards, 1923		
Prescribed, strictly regulated, consistent, form-oriented	Symbol	Partly controlled, flexible, dynamically changing, operation-oriented
Seeks objective meaning, unilaterally constructed	Reference	Pursuing subjective or intersubjective meaning, collaboratively constructed
Corporate or brand identity (CI, BI) defined vertically (top-down / unidirectional) by managers	Referent	Corporate or brand identity constructed collaboratively by managers and stakeholders in horizontal (bilateral) relationships (CI, BI)
Comparison by philosophical characteristics Sources: Barabás & Bárány, 1990; Ambrus et al., 2016; *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, n.d.		
Metaphysical		Dialectical
Autonomous, independent elements; quantity is not dependent on quality; the new does not follow from the old, there is no development, only repetition; movement is only created by external forces; one-sided static world view.	Characteristics	Continuous dynamic change; interrelated phenomena and interconnected elements; interactions; recognition of contrasts and contradictions; the possibility of progress; the transition from quantitative to qualitative.

Appendix 1. Comparison of static and dynamic visual identities

(Author's edit)

DVI	DVI category Nes (2012)	DVI Features Martins et al. (2019)	Narrative Dimensions Lélis & Kreutz (2019, 2022)	Actors and Domain of Participation Fekete (2021)	Realm of Participation Lélis & Kreutz (2021)	DVI Features Fekete (2022)
A1	Generative	Generated, Informative, Participatory, Reactive	Hierarchy (H): Peripheral, Linearity (Li): Non-linear, Longevity (Lo): Permanent, Predictability (P): Anticipated, Interactivity (I): Interpretative, Synchronicity (S): Asynchronous	Internal stakeholders: Design, Operation	Engaged	Input variable (V): Internal, Operation Autonomy (A): Heteronomous, Degree of Control (C): High
A2	Customised	Informative, Participatory, Unlimited	H: Peripheral, Li: Non-linear, Lo: Transitory P: Open-ended, I: Appropriative, S: Asynchronous	Internal stakeholders: Design, Operation	Engaged	V: Internal, A: Heteronomous, C: Low
B1	Customised	Unlimited	H: Peripheral, Li: Non-linear, Lo: Permanent, P: Open-ended, I: Appropriative, S: Synchronous	Internal stakeholders: Design	Engaged	V: Internal, A: Heteronomous, C: Low
B2	Generative (a), Customised (b)	Fluid (a), Generated (a), Informative (a, b), Unlimited (b)	H: Peripheral, Li: Linear (a), Non-linear (b), Lo: Permanent, P: Anticipated, I: Interpretative, S: szinkron	Internal stakeholders: Design	Engaged	V: Internal, A: Autonomous (a), Heteronomous (b) C: high
C	DNA	Informative, Unlimited	H: Peripheral, Li: Non-linear, Lo: Transistory, P: Open-ended, I: Interpretative, S: Asynchronous	Internal stakeholders: Design, External stakeholders: Operation	Interested	V: External, A: Heteronomous, C: High
D	Container (a), Customised (a, b)	Participatory, Unlimited	H: Peripheral, Li: Non-linear, Lo: Transistory, P: Open-ended, I: Appropriative, S: Asynchronous	Internal stakeholders: Design, Beneficiaries: Operation	Engaged	V: External, A: Heteronomous, C: Low
E	Container (a), Formula (b, c)	Fluid (b), Informative (a), Reactive (a)	H: Nuclear, Li: Non-linear (a), Sequential (b), Li: Permanent, P: Anticipated, I: Interpretative, S: Synchronous	Internal stakeholders: Design, External stakeholders: Operation (a)	Interested (a), Informed (b)	V: External (a), Internal (b, c), A: Autonomous, C: High

Appendix 2. Analysis of visual results based on six DVI frameworks

(Author's edit)

DVI	Image of Organisation (O) and Individual (I)	Relation of Org. (O) and Individual (I)	Intended Range of Meaning of Dynamic Elements	Intended Degree of Freedom of Interpretation	Focus of Connection	Appearance of Org. Activities	Visual continuity
A1	O: two-dimensional space (coordinate system), I: point in the coordinate system	Whole (O) and Part (I)	Individual condition – based on emotional, rational, introverted, extroverted dimensions	Tied	Individual (cognitive, affective, conative and social factors	No	No
A2	O: cell, I: component of the cell	Whole (O) and Part (I)	Individual experiences and status – through visual storytelling	Partially free	Individual (affective, conative) factors	No	No
B1	O: axis, I: planet	Parataxis (O, I)	Name, personality and personal identity – using personalised initials	Free	Individual (affective, cognitive) factors	No	No
B2	O: bright space, I: space-creating actor	Creation (O) and Creator (I)	Expression of belonging to an organisation – via distance (a, b); Expression of identity – via a personal symbol (b)	Tied (a); Partially free (b)	Social (a); Individual (affective, cognitive) and social (b) factors	No	No
C	O: the hero's helper, I: the hero / does not appear and the cause is in the spotlight	Helper (O) and Beneficiary (I)	Seasonal information about the cause represented – using hero characters	Tied	Individual (cognitive) factors	Yes – Iconic	Yes (Modified logo)
D	O: Frame, I: Creator filling the frame / does not appear and the cause is in the spotlight	Interpreter (I) and Interpreted (O)	Beneficiaries' perceptions of the organisation – through their own creations (a); Embodiment of the organisation – through a mascot (b)	Free	Individual (affective, cognitive, conative) factors	Yes - Symbolic (a), Iconic (b)	Yes (Constituents of logo)
E	O: background, I: does not appear and the cause is in the spotlight	Supporter (I) and Supported (O)	Current period of operation of the organisation (a); periodicity (b); call for donations (c)	Tied	Individual (cognitive, conative) (a), Individual (cognitive) (b), Individual (conative) (c)	Yes - symbolic (a), iconic (b)	Yes (Name)

Appendix 3. Seven aspects of participatory DVIs

(Author's edit)

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