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THE ROLE OF DESIGN – IDENTITY IN FORMING THE BRAND OF HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY ENTERPRISES: GLOBAL AND DOMESTIC PERSPECTIVE

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In the often competitive industry, a dynamic design identity is transformed into a strategic tool for forming a Gothic enterprise brand. It determines the aesthetic perception, level of comfort, emotional experience and trust of guests, which directly affects the choice of accommodation and the financial performance of the hotel. The need to integrate physical, visual, and digital identities is growing amid the rapid development of digital technologies, narrative marketing, and experience-oriented service models. The purpose of the study is to theoretically substantiate the role of design identity in the formation of a hotel brand, determine the impact of its aesthetic, ergonomic, and digital components on consumer behavior, and outline approaches to assessing its effectiveness. The work uses analytical, comparative, statistical, and visual communication methods. The information base is modern empirical research on brand experience, interior solutions, and digital marketing in the hospitality industry. Research confirms that aesthetics, physical comfort, spatial ergonomics, and emotional narrative shape a holistic guest brand experience that influences loyalty, WOM communications, and repeat bookings. The visual appeal of the interior has been found to be one of the strongest triggers of positive perception, while the quality of the space and the presence of digital elements enhance the emotional connection with the brand. Investments in identity contribute to the growth of brand equity and performance indicators, provided that the quality of physical infrastructure and social capital is adequate. Hotel design identity is an integrated system that combines aesthetic, functional and digital components, transforming a space into a valuable experience. The novelty of the study lies in the comprehensive approach to assessing its role as a key element of brand strategy. Further research should be directed towards multiple assessments beyond individual identity elements and the development of models of its effectiveness.

Keywords: design identity; hospitality industry enterprises; hotel branding; visual identity; brand; hotel interior; competitiveness.

РОЛЬ ДИЗАЙН – АЙДЕНТИКИ У ФОРМУВАННІ БРЕНДУ ПІДПРИЄМСТВ ІНДУСТРІЇ ГОСТИННОСТІ: СВІТОВИЙ ТА ВІТЧИЗНЯНИЙ ДОСВІД

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У сучасній конкурентній індустрії гостинності дизайн-айдентика перетворюється на стратегічний інструмент формування бренду готельного підприємства. Вона визначає естетичне сприйняття, рівень комфорту, емоційний досвід та довіру гостей, що безпосередньо впливає на вибір засобу розміщення й фінансові показники готелю. Потреба в інтеграції фізичної, візуальної та цифрової айдентики зростає на тлі активного розвитку цифрових технологій, наративного маркетингу та орієнтованих на досвід моделей сервісу. Мета дослідження *— теоретично обґрунтувати роль дизайн-айдентики у формуванні бренду готелю, визначити вплив її естетичних, ергономічних та цифрових складових на поведінку споживачів і окреслити підходи до оцінювання її ефективності. У роботі застосовано аналітичні, порівняльні, статистичні та візуально-комунікаційні методи. Інформаційною базою слугують сучасні емпіричні дослідження бренд-досвіду, інтер'єрних рішень та цифрового маркетингу у сфері гостинності. Дослідження підтверджують, що естетика, фізичний комфорт, ергономіка простору та емоційний наратив формують цілісний бренд-досвід гостя, який впливає на лояльність, WOM-комунікації та повторні бронювання. Візуальна привабливість інтер'єру виявлена одним із найсильніших тригерів позитивного сприйняття, тоді як якість простору та наявність цифрових елементів посилюють емоційний зв'язок із брендом. Інвестиції в айдентику сприяють зростанню бренд-капіталу та показників діяльності за умови належної якості фізичної інфраструктури й соціального капіталу. Дизайн-айдентика готелю є інтегрованою системою, що об'єднує естетичні, функціональні та цифрові компоненти, перетворюючи простір на ціннісний досвід.* Новизна дослідження *полягає у комплексному підході до оцінювання її ролі як ключового елементу бренд-стратегії. Подальші дослідження мають бути спрямовані на кількісну оцінку внеску окремих елементів айдентики та розроблення моделей її ефективності.*

Ключові слова: дизайн-айдентика; підприємства індустрії гостинності, брендинг готелю; візуальна ідентичність; бренд; інтер'єр готелю; конкурентоспроможність.

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Under the current conditions of intense competition in the hotel services market, design identity is becoming one of the key tools for developing a recognizable and attractive brand. Consumers of hotel services increasingly choose accommodation establishments not only based on the level of service or price segment, but also on the emotional experience and uniqueness of their visual identity. Therefore, design identity is evolving from a supporting element of marketing communications into a strategic instrument for creating competitive advantages, strengthening guest loyalty, and ensuring brand recognition across both digital and physical environments.

The growing adoption of digital technologies, the development of social media, and increasing consumer expectations necessitate a comprehensive approach to the visual communication of hotel enterprises. A coherent and well-designed visual identity not only supports the hotel's marketing strategy but also contributes to the formation of a consistent image that reflects the hotel's concept, positioning, and core values.

Despite the growing importance of branding in the hospitality industry, many hotel enterprises do not fully utilize the potential of design identity. An undeveloped or fragmented visual system, a lack of stylistic coherence, and weak or outdated visual symbols can reduce hotel competitiveness and hinder effective communication with target audiences. A mismatch between the visual identity and the concept of the hotel product may create a gap between guest expectations and the actual experience, thereby adversely affecting the hotel's image and market perception.

A significant contribution to the study of the influence of architectural and interior design solutions on consumer behavior was made by Sirirat S., Thampanichwat C., Pongsermpol C., and Moorapun C., who demonstrated that aesthetics, physical and emotional comfort, cleanliness, and safety significantly shape hotel attractiveness as a "consumer destination," based on the example of three-star hotels in Hua Hin. Research on interior design trends and relevant statistics emphasizes the practical importance of design for guest satisfaction, brand differentiation, and increasing RevPAR, thus confirming the applied relevance of design-related issues in the hotel business [1,2].

The study by Gómez-Suárez (2020) demonstrated the importance of brand experience and brand attachment as drivers of word-of-mouth marketing in the hospitality sector, thereby strengthening competitiveness through emotional connections with guests. Fan, Hsu, and Liu investigated the transformation of brand identity into improved hotel performance and identified the mediating role of physical facility quality and social capital in the relationship between brand identity and organizational performance. Recent studies in digital marketing introduce an additional dimension by examining the influence of narrative styles and virtual influencers on communication effectiveness in the hospitality sector, thereby creating opportunities for integrating architectural and design solutions with digital branding [3,4].

Despite the considerable body of research addressing the influence of interior design solutions, brand experience, and contemporary marketing tools on guest loyalty, a number of aspects concerning the role of design identity in the development of a hotel brand remain insufficiently explored. There is a particular need to determine an optimal combination of physical design identity, including interior design, visual style, and the material and spatial environment, with digital identity, including narratives, brand communications, and virtual representations, which can collectively influence brand perception among different guest segments [5-7].

Current practice also lacks scientifically substantiated models that would enable the quantitative assessment of the contribution of design identity to the formation of an emotional connection with a brand and its subsequent impact on hotel competitiveness.

Furthermore, the integration of design identity with other components of branding, including the service model, communication strategy, and innovative digital practices that are rapidly developing in the hospitality sector, remains insufficiently investigated [8,9].

Given the intensification of competition and the rapid transformation of consumer behavior patterns, further development is required of methodologies for assessing the effectiveness of design identity as a tool for enhancing hotel brand profitability, recognition, and trust. The issues of comprehensive modeling and measurement of design identity effectiveness remain open and require further theoretical and applied research [10].

The purpose of this article is to substantiate the theoretical foundations and practical approaches to the formation of a hotel enterprise's design identity as a key component of its brand; to determine the relationship between visual, spatial, and digital identity and guests' perception of the brand; and to develop methodological approaches for assessing its impact on competitiveness, consumer loyalty, and the effectiveness of brand communications under contemporary conditions of hospitality industry development.

The methodological basis of the study is a comprehensive analysis of statistical data and the findings of contemporary scientific research.

The research methods include analytical, comparative, statistical, visual-communication, and marketing methods, which are used to assess the effectiveness of design identity within a hotel enterprise.

The information base of the study comprises scientific publications addressing branding, design identity, and the development of the hotel industry, as well as statistical data presented in these publications.

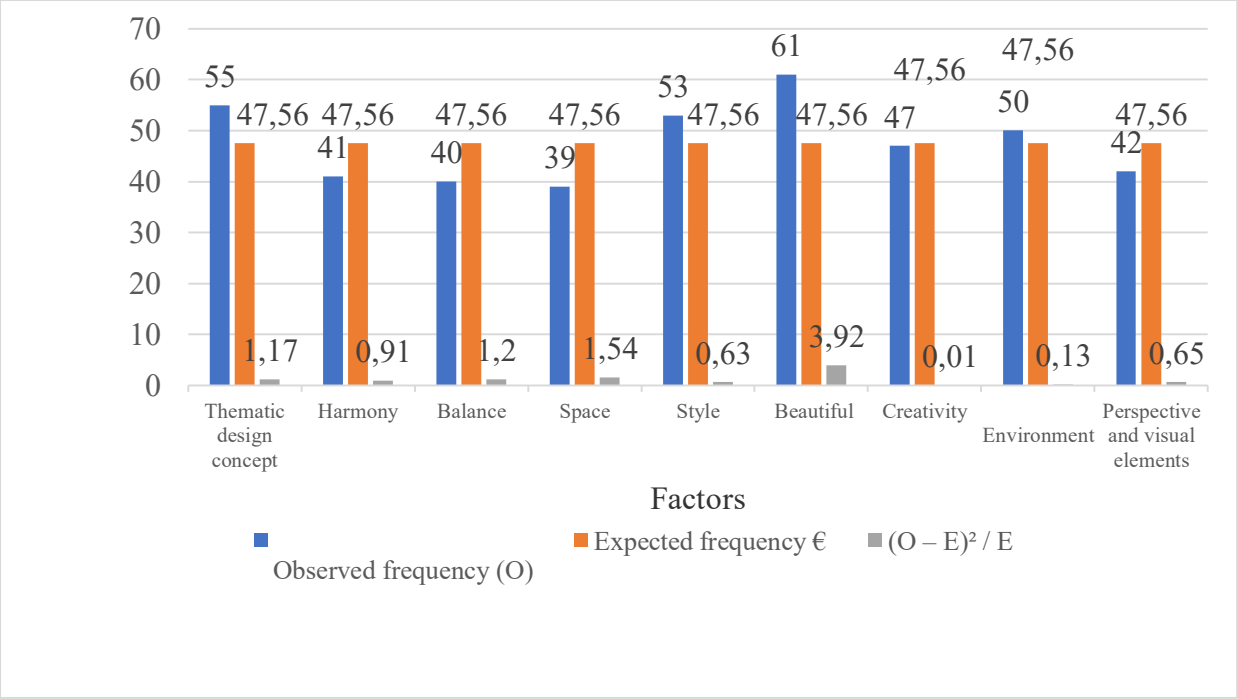
PRESENTATION OF THE MAIN RESEARCH MATERIAL

Research indicates that architectural and design factors, together with communication strategies, substantially influence the choice of a hotel as a "consumer destination." This influence operates at several levels, including aesthetic, physical (comfort), emotional, and safety-related/rational dimensions. This conclusion is consistent with the results of a field study conducted in three-star hotels in Hua Hin, where thematic analysis and χ^2 tests identified four major groups of factors — aesthetics, physical comfort, emotional comfort, and safety/sensitization — which collectively shape consumers' decisions regarding their choice of accommodation [5].

Within the aesthetic dimension, respondents mentioned various elements with relatively similar frequency, indicating that design concept, harmony, balance, spatial qualities, style, creativity, and other characteristics have comparable importance in generating a positive impression. At the same time, the "Beautiful" element demonstrated the highest observed frequency (Observed frequency = 61) and was the only factor in this group to show a statistically significant deviation in the χ^2 test. This finding indicates the strength of the emotional and aesthetic signal perceived by consumers [5].

Aesthetics should therefore not be regarded merely as a decorative component. It functions as a marker of quality and shapes consumer expectations. In the three-star hotel segment, the immediately perceptible attractiveness of an interior or façade may serve as a rapid indicator of trust and appeal for tourists.

Within the "Aesthetic Group," the results demonstrated a relatively even distribution of observed frequencies among most of the factors. However, the "Beautiful" factor showed a statistically significant deviation from the expected values, indicating its pronounced influence on guests' overall impressions. This suggests that, despite the importance of such elements as stylistic coherence, harmony, balance, and creativity, the visual attractiveness of the interior is the key aesthetic factor most frequently identified by guests [5].



Pic. 1. Resultsofthe χ^2 criterionforassessingthecorrespondencebetweenactualandexpectedfrequenciesaccordingtoaestheticfactors.
Resource: https://www.mdpi.com/2075-5309/14/8/2428

Investments in room ergonomics and thoughtful furniture arrangement — that is, an interior designed to effectively meet guests' needs — can have a direct impact on guest satisfaction and repeat bookings. This also provides grounds for suggesting that renovations aimed at improving functionality and comfort may have a positive effect on hotel revenues.

Table 1

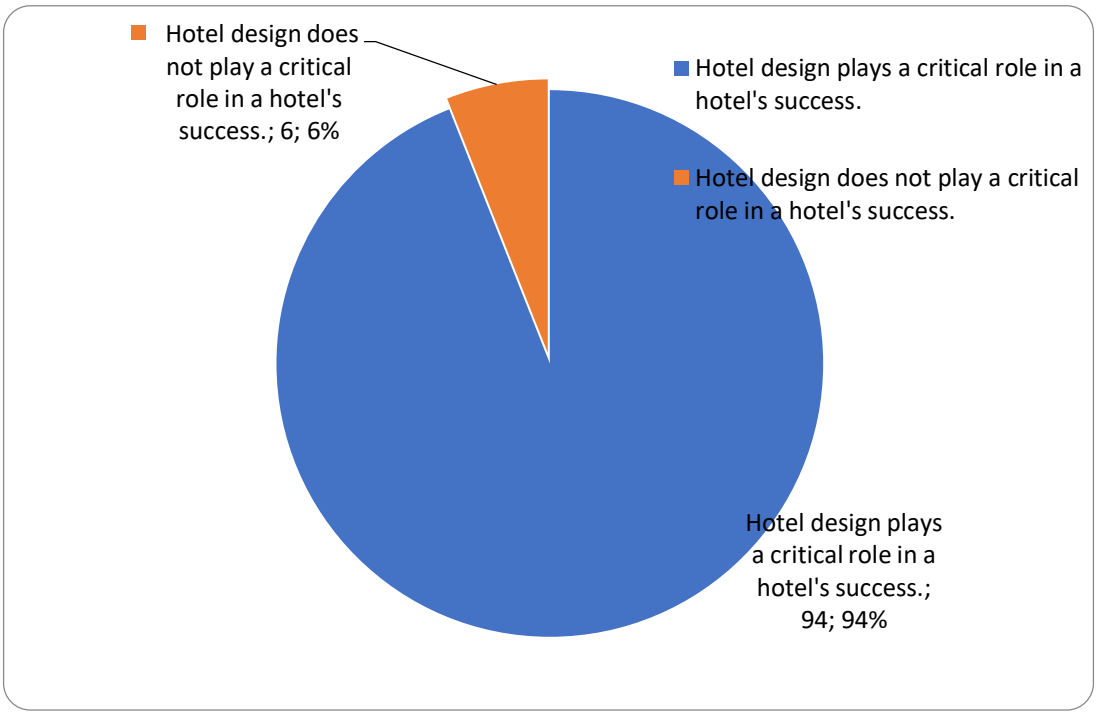
Results of the χ^2 (chi-square) goodness-of-fit test for physical comfort factors

Factor	Observed frequency (O)	Expected frequency (E)	$(O - E)^2 / E$
Function	60	47,56	3,19
Shape	35	47,56	3,38
Proportion&Mass	48	47,56	0
Texture&Material	49	47,56	0,05
HumanScale	38	47,56	1,92
Durability	43	47,56	0,44
Color	50	47,56	0,13
Furniture	45	47,56	0,14
Comfortable	60	47,56	3,19
Facilities	38	47,56	1,92
Circulation	40	47,56	1,2
Together	**466**	**523,16**	**15,56**

Resource: https://www.mdpi.com/2075-5309/14/8/2428

A particularly significant finding concerns the integration of design with contemporary digital narratives. A study by Yide Liu, Tao Ye, and Cheng Yu (2024) demonstrated that virtual influencers can affect hotel engagement and consumer attitudes toward hotels. Of particular interest is the finding that nonlinear narratives have a more pronounced effect when hotels are predominantly characterized by entertainment-oriented attributes, while trust serves as a mediator between narrative content and positive consumer attitudes [3].

A review of statistics on the interior design market highlights several practical considerations. Design has a substantial impact on guest satisfaction and can contribute to higher RevPAR, while sustainable and wellness-oriented design is becoming an increasingly important factor in consumer demand. Industry research indicates that 70–85% of guests consider design an important factor when choosing a hotel, while 70% are willing to pay more for a sustainable approach.



Pic. 2. HospitalityDesignstatisticsontheimportanceofhoteldesign

Resource: https://medium.com/@yaizamartinez/45-surprising-interior-design-statistics-trends-for-the-hospitality-industry-5f366d0f244b

In the hospitality sector, brand-oriented experience and the development of emotional attachment to a brand represent interrelated mechanisms that influence behavioral outcomes in different ways, particularly word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations and hotel financial performance. An empirical study conducted in the hotel sector demonstrated that brand experience comprises distinct dimensions, with location, atmosphere/ambience, personnel, and web channels identified as the principal components in terms of their relative influence. The study also established that brand experience directly increases the likelihood of positive WOM recommendations. At the same time, emotional brand attachment mediates the relationship between brand experience and WOM; however, the direct effect of brand experience on WOM was found to be stronger than its indirect effect through brand attachment [2].

A study involving a large sample of hotel managers identified a consistent transformation pathway: investments in brand identity contribute to higher brand equity when an adequate level of physical facility quality is

ensured, while brand equity, in turn, is positively associated with hotel performance. At the same time, external and internal social resources, including relationships, trust, and network connections collectively referred to as social capital, moderate the effectiveness with which brand equity is transformed into financial and operational outcomes. At higher levels of social capital, the relationship between brand equity and organizational performance becomes stronger. The study was based on a survey of 1,201 hotel managers, including 757 representing international brands and 444 representing national brands, which enabled the proposed model to be tested across different branding contexts and through multilevel analysis.

Design identity should communicate the essence of a brand from the very first visual encounter, highlighting the important role of architecture, stylistic coherence, composition, harmony, and façade design. The hotel environment should not merely be visually attractive but should also function effectively for guests. Ergonomics, functionality, furniture convenience, spatial circulation, and material selection constitute the practical dimension of the brand experience.

Thus, design identity should be understood not merely as a form of visual identity but as an integrated system encompassing environmental design and its alignment with the expectations of the target audience. In this context, the proposition that interior design solutions can contribute to higher RevPAR appears consistent with the broader logic of hospitality management: a thoughtfully designed environment can become an economic asset.

Of particular importance is the way in which design is integrated into the broader brand mechanism. Brand experience creates a foundation for WOM recommendations and may contribute to improved financial performance. Consequently, design identity should not be regarded as a purely aesthetic addition, but rather as an instrument capable of influencing consumer perceptions and behavior.

When design contributes to emotional attachment, it can strengthen brand equity, which, in turn, may translate into economic outcomes when supported by high-quality physical infrastructure. In this sense, design identity can be viewed as a systemic core of the hotel brand. It shapes the initial impression, contributes to the quality of the guest experience, facilitates emotional connections with the brand, influences consumer behavior, strengthens brand equity, and may ultimately contribute to financial performance. Therefore, design identity should be considered a strategic resource that integrates architecture, interior design, graphic identity, behavioral economics, and digital media.

Under contemporary competitive conditions, a hotel can no longer remain visually and conceptually neutral. It needs to communicate a distinctive story, possess a recognizable character, and create memorable experiences for its guests. Design identity is one of the key instruments through which physical space can be transformed into an experience and that experience into a sustainable source of competitive advantage.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE PRESENT STUDY AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH IN THIS FIELD

The design identity of a hotel enterprise represents a comprehensive instrument for brand development that influences the perception of the hotel service at multiple levels.

The findings of previous research confirm that aesthetic factors, particularly the perception of a hotel as “beautiful,” constitute a strong trigger of positive impressions and therefore provide an important foundation for building consumer trust in the brand.

Physical comfort and the functional organization of space form the practical dimension of brand experience by ensuring alignment with guest expectations and contributing to customer loyalty. Ergonomics, spatial circulation, furniture selection, and material choices have been shown to influence guest satisfaction and repeat bookings.

Emotional comfort and the integration of digital elements into design strengthen brand identity and contribute to the development of emotional connections with the brand. The use of virtual influencers and nonlinear narratives can significantly affect consumer engagement and enhance the effectiveness of brand communications.

Design identity can influence the economic performance of a hotel enterprise through the development of brand equity. Investments in design identity, when supported by high-quality physical infrastructure and a high level of social capital, can contribute to improved hotel performance indicators.

The scientific novelty of the obtained results lies in the theoretical generalization of the role of design identity as an integrated system that combines the aesthetic, ergonomic, emotional, and digital components of a hotel brand. The study also substantiates the influence of visual attractiveness and spatial ergonomics on guests' behavioral responses as integral components of a holistic brand experience.

Prospects for further research include the development of quantitative models capable of determining the contribution of individual design identity components to the overall brand equity of a hotel; investigation of the influence of digital identity on guest perceptions and behavior; development of integrated systems for evaluating design identity effectiveness based on a set of economic, behavioral, emotional, and communication indicators; and investigation of the synergies among the service model, architectural design, and marketing identity as an integrated hotel brand system.

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