

The Influence of Corporate Visual Symbols in the Era of Digital Technology

Ivana Perkušić

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek, Croatia

Vanesa Vidačić

University North, Croatia

Ana Globočnik Žunac

University North, Croatia

Abstract

Nonverbal communication through corporate symbols, logos, and slogans is an important part of corporate culture and communication with target audiences. The purpose of visual symbols is to foster corporate recognition and build a business image. Creating corporate visual symbols enables interaction between corporate employees, the public, and end consumers of a particular brand or mark. In the era of new digital technologies and the application of artificial intelligence, the corporate visual identity remains an important aspect of an organization's business communication, preserving its integrity in the market. This paper aims to investigate public attitudes toward the importance of preserving corporate visual identity and how it is recognized through various corporate activities. Furthermore, the research will provide insight into the perception of corporate communication through the use of visual identity colours, and the implementation of marketing communication strategies with the aim of achieving better product sales. This paper hypothesizes that the use of visual symbols during promotional activities contributes to the creation of corporate recognition and its image. Visual symbols represent an important segment of a corporation's image and contribute to the success of corporate communication towards target audiences.

Keywords: communication 1, corporation 2, image 3, target audience 4, visual symbols 5

JEL classification: D83, M31, M37.

Paper type: Research article

Received: 25 March 2025

Accepted: 9 June 2025

DOI: 10.54820/entrenova-2025-0024

Citation: Perkušić, I., Vidačić, V., & Globočnik Žunac, A. (2025). The Influence of Corporate Visual Symbols in the Era of Digital Technology. *ENTRENOVA - ENTerprise REsearch InNOVation*, 11(1), <https://doi.org/10.54820/entrenova-2025-0024>

Introduction

Nonverbal communication is a mechanism that facilitates the existence and development of human relationships and also serves as a mediator, transmitting visual symbols through various means of transmission (Đurić & Trajković, 2016). In visual communication, the elements that shape it and ensure a complete and functional transfer of information are important (Vusić, 2024). Information transmission is carried out through various communication channels, ensuring that messages reach the target audience in the business communication sphere. Business communication contributes to the achievement of a corporation's goals by deliberately exchanging ideas and information and by providing specific instructions to target market groups through symbols, signals, or images (Đurić & Trajković, 2016). Visual symbols support proactive communication strategies that influence the target audience and help build the corporate image. The authors Đurić and Trajković state in their paper that the expected reaction of the public to a return message shows whether wishes, needs, and expectations have been met or not. A specific and measurable level of customer satisfaction is a criterion for the success of established relationships among participants in the business process, primarily in marketing communication with the environment (Đurić & Trajković, 2016). The authors Clemente-Mediavilla and Sebastián-Morillas (2018) discuss the importance of visual communication for target audiences, which influences the perception and assessment of product brands or corporations. Customers' perception of brand value is derived from many sources and is based mainly on rational and emotional ideas, usually acquired through advertising, which can affect perceptions of brand quality and the brand experience (Clemente-Mediavilla & Sebastián-Morillas, 2018). Consistent and effective visual communication ensures brand recognition and encourages consumer loyalty (Travere, 2023). Communication consistency refers to the consistency of visual expressions across elements and over time. In addition to consistency, another important topic is brand authenticity, which refers to how visual expressions align with organizational reality and with everything that constitutes its identity (Johansen & Gregersen, 2024).

This paper aims to investigate public attitudes toward the importance of preserving a corporation's visual identity, with the purpose of recognising it through various corporate activities. Furthermore, the research provides insight into the perception of corporate communication through the use of visual identity colours and the implementation of marketing communication strategies to achieve better product sales. The research questions answer how the use of visual symbols affects brand recognition, what role promotional actions through visual symbols play in creating corporate recognition, and how target audiences perceive visual symbols in the context of corporate image. The above questions lead to the hypothesis that the use of visual symbols during promotional activities contributes to corporate recognition and image. Visual symbols represent an important segment of a corporation's image and contribute to the success of corporate communication towards target audiences.

Adapting Marketing Strategies in the Digitalisation Era

Before the advent of advanced technology, people were limited in their ability to express themselves to the world and could communicate only to a small audience (Islam & Sheikh, 2024). Companies that effectively engage their audiences can build brand loyalty, increase sales, and ultimately achieve their business goals. However, reaching and engaging the right audience is not always easy. It requires a deep understanding of the audience's needs and preferences, as well as the ability to

create content that provides value and resonates with the audience (Chen, 2023). Social media marketing has drastically modified how consumers discover, analyse, and make purchasing decisions. Consumers often learn about new products, services, or their potential strengths and weaknesses through social media. Artificial intelligence algorithms and personalized ads increase brand visibility to their customers (Islam & Sheikh, 2024). A marketing strategy that incorporates social listening is critical, as it reaches the target audience through digital networks and markets its product to all segments of the public. The specificity of social listening is that corporations, i.e., PR departments, evaluate and, by analysing social platforms, receive feedback on product perception, the competition, corporate image, etc. However, it takes time for brands' social networking platforms to develop visibility and consumer interactivity, and the level of consumer engagement with these platforms varies widely across brands (Laradi et al., 2023, p. 2). Therefore, in this segment, an important role is played by marketing experts and public relations departments, who must possess knowledge and continuously monitor all novelties in the era of digitalisation and current cutting-edge marketing approaches through AI tools in order to remain competitive on the market and win over the target audience, i.e., customers, through the establishment of new knowledge and abilities.

Taskiran (2018) states in her paper that marketing strategies have changed because they are shaped depending on the expectations and demands of the target audience. Strategies and efforts are not focused on corporate interests, but rather on the benefits of target groups and social well-being. The fact that corporations change their strategies, practices, and policies in accordance with the expectations and interests of target audiences promotes the concepts of shared power and a mutual process of giving and receiving (Boztepe Taskiran, 2018). It is important to note that a corporation focuses on exercising control through strategic communication and public relations to target audiences, aiming to create demand for its products among as many audiences as possible. A strategy focused on a proactive approach in communicating with consumers influences their attitudes and perceptions, thus creating a shift from traditional evaluation, promotion based on product elements, towards the importance of opinions and recommendations. Therefore, an effective marketing strategy on social networks should provide consumers with relevant and accurate information about products and services, encouraging dialogue that can result in more positive assessments and attitudes (Rosário & Dias, 2023, p. 2). It can be concluded that online platforms and social networks have provided new communication channels for corporations. End consumers are active on social media and share their experiences, thereby directly influencing the corporation's image, its reputation, and the placement of its products on the market. In addition to increased visibility on social media, customer feedback directly affects a corporation's need to improve product quality and create content that is interesting to end consumers.

Specificity of Symbols in the Digitalisation Era

Today's influence of information and communication technologies emphasises the influence of digitalization in the visual corporate communication, which seeks to align development segments with the needs of the market and target audiences. The progress of information technology over the past ten years has radically influenced how companies communicate with different target audiences, and it can be concluded that it has created a platform for the development of the corporate communications paradigm (Pirić, 2008). It is important to note that the increasing use of information technology and the Internet has changed marketing strategies and has guided potential customers to interact with companies. Most customers are focused

and connected to the digital world every day (Sadeqi-Arani & Janavi, 2022). Therefore, it can be concluded that today's corporate strategic communication is aimed at selling and creating product or brand recognition through the utilisation of digital technology.

Patsiaouras et al. state in their paper that companies and global brands adopt and promote creative services and practices to establish long-term relationships with customers, which should ultimately result in repeat purchases and financial profit (Patsiaouras et al., 2022). The demands of target audiences are changing due to the influence of digitalization, informatization, and the development of artificial intelligence, which have undoubtedly contributed to the increasing and faster awareness and availability of various brands, directly affecting the adjustment of communication strategies in the digital era. Social networks have contributed the most to the speed of information flow via the Internet and have provided numerous advantages to both corporations and brand-end consumers. A social network user can obtain various information through direct two-way communication, and a service provider can obtain precise and measurable answers about its offer through interactive communication (Markić, 2018). It is in this era of digitalization that communication relies more on visual symbols, which have become the primary means by which brands interact with target audiences. Hegy (2023) states that in the digital age, we are moving away from words and concepts characteristic of the print age towards the use of images and symbols. Each word has a clear dictionary meaning, while images are subject to an infinite number of symbolic interpretations. The image-oriented culture of the digital age does not replace the concept-oriented world characteristic of the print age; it instead adds a new dimension to it. To move from one mode of understanding to another, readers must transcend the one-dimensional world of rationality and discover the multidimensional universe of symbols (Hegy, 2023). Today, flexible visual identity strategies have significantly expanded their scope of possibilities and forms of expression. The reason for this is the modern development of technology and changes in audience preferences that have expanded the possibilities of visual expression within flexible identity strategies (Garbellini et al., 2021).

Visual identity should reflect consumer preferences to remain authentic; furthermore, it should align with consumer needs, meaning the organization should strive for an identity driven by consumer desires and directed towards aspirations (Johansen & Gregersen, 2024). A review of scientific papers shows that scientists associate the specificity of creating a corporate or brand image with the symbolism of colour. The authors Ribeiro et al. show, in their research, that symbols can develop within a population of sensory-motor organisms equipped with classical associative learning, provided that the stimuli are generated independently, arbitrarily, and socially effective (Ribeiro et al., 2007, p. 267). Vusić states in his paper that colour is a powerful communication tool that can draw attention, calm or encourage the consumer, and send a positive or negative message (Vusić, 2024). Considering that the era of digitalization has imposed adaptation to change, changes are also necessary in the visualization of symbols to maintain consistency in preserving corporate identity and authenticity. A brand's visual identity contributes to the corporation's recognition; however, informatization requires getting closer to consumers or target audiences through channels that are now more fluid and readily available. Advertising can increase brand appeal, which in turn increases intention to provision and purchase, and also contributes to brand positioning. Nowadays, the main advertising content and formats used by are diverse and depend on the sector and the message being spread (Clemente-Mediavilla and Sebastián-Morillas, 2018). In this process of exchanging information on a product or brand, the media, both in

the past and in the present, play a special role. The media are a powerful tool aimed at the public. It allows manipulation of the amount of information transmitted through the media space, as well as attempts to control and limit its flow (Anić, 2012). Akrap (2009) claims in his paper that media and media content control are necessary for successfully imposing will on target audiences and shaping public opinion in accordance with one's own needs and interests. Public relations and marketing departments in the era of digitalization are focused on social media to reach a wider audience. With this approach, they contribute to branding, reputation preservation, and corporate image sustainability. For end consumers, the role and presence of symbols become more interactive mediators between a corporation, a brand, and the target audience.

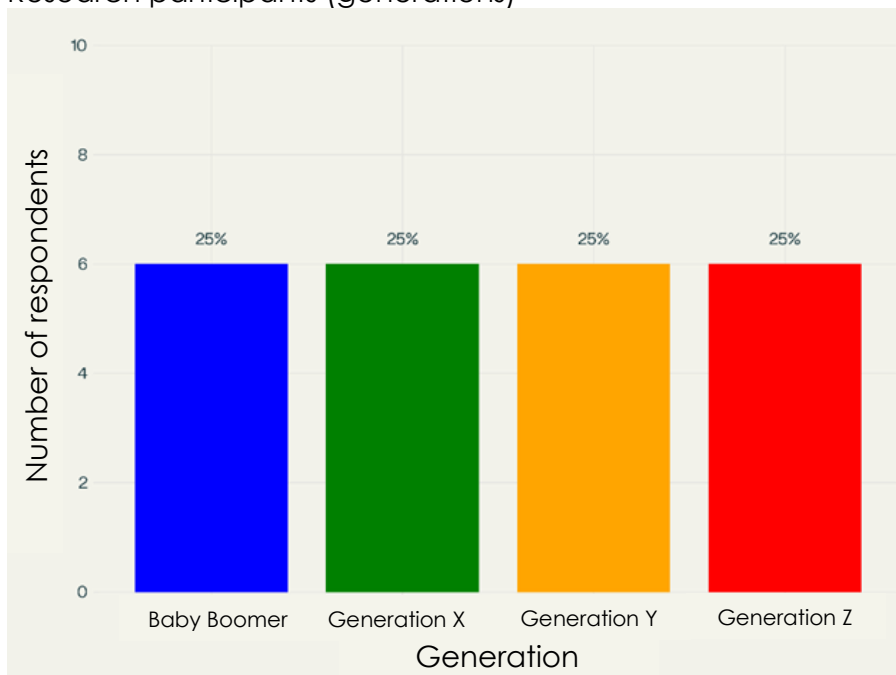
Methodology

The research employed a qualitative approach and used thematic analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first part contained questions on the role of visual symbols in brand creation, the influence of visual elements on purchasing decisions, the emotional and psychological aspects of visual language, and the use of visual symbols in marketing campaigns. The second part of the interview focused on collecting sociodemographic data, including gender, age, and employment status. The research was conducted from February to May 2025. The sample consisted of 24 participants taking part in the interview survey. The sample is representative and purposive, aiming to include participants from different generations. The data processing method for this research is thematic analysis by applying inductive data coding (Joffe & Yardley, 2004)

Results and discussion

Descriptive analysis of sociodemographic indicators showed that 24 respondents participated in the study, of whom 8 (33%) were men, and 16 (67%) were women. The participants were representatives of different generations, of which 6 (25%) participants were members of the baby boomer generation, 6 (25%) participants were members of generation X, 6 (25%) participants were members of generation Y, and 6 (25%) participants were members of generation Z. (Figure 1.) Analysis of the results showed that out of the total sample, 5 (21%) participants were unemployed, while 19 (79%) participants were employed.

Figure 1
Research participants (generations)



Source: Authors' work

Based on the research questions on how the use of visual symbols affects brand recognition, as well as the role of promotional campaigns using visual symbols in creating corporate recognition, and how target audiences perceive visual symbols in the context of corporate image, the answers obtained were used to identify four thematic units that contribute to a better understanding of corporate visual symbols and the creation of corporate image towards target audiences.

The first thematic unit, titled "The role of visual symbols in image creation," is described using three identification codes. The importance of visual symbols is confirmed in the responses of 24 (100%) participants (*S2: I consider visual elements (logo, colour, slogan) to be important for the brand itself. They are the ones that will highlight the importance of the product or corporation. S5: Regarding visual symbols, I consider it extremely important to work on elements of recognition, such as the company logo, colour, striking slogan, and typography.* Furthermore, the code consumer perceptions regarding the visual appearance of a product, 22 (92%) participants confirmed the following in their responses (*S3: Beautifully designed packaging further contributes to the choice of a brand, S19: The visual appearance of a particular brand can attract or repel me*) and the code The first impression of a product brand, 22 (92%) participants confirmed the following (*S17: It can be important if it is a new product that I have not tried yet; S1: If the product is unknown to me or I do not have any recommendations/additional information about it, the design will be decisive in that case. An attractive, unique design "exudes" professionalism and trust, while a poor design can make me doubt a product's quality, especially if I see it for the first time.*

The result analysis confirms the role of visual symbols in creating an image. Developing an attitude towards a brand also conveys the overall perception of what the brand represents to existing and potential customers, in addition to satisfying consumer needs (Alharhi et al., 2023). The participants link the role of visual appearance in branding to visual elements, the brand's personal impressions when

the product is still unknown to the consumer, and the consumer's perception of the product's visual appearance. To preserve or build a product image, it is necessary to build trust with end customers, especially with a new product. Social networks open new communication channels that contribute to corporate image and also provide insight into a corporation's or a particular product's reputation. Therefore, the importance of strategic communication is emphasized through marketing campaigns. Communicating strategically actually means to thoroughly and precisely determine and define the role of all communication mechanisms used by a company, integrating them in order to avoid fragmented communication and achieve a synergistic effect, i.e., so that a company effectively achieves its strategic goals, which in the case of corporate communications relate to company image and competitiveness (Pirić, 2008).

The second thematic unit, titled "The influence of visual elements on purchasing decisions," is described using four identification codes. The first code, Product's visual design, is confirmed in the responses of 20 (83%) participants (S4: Packaging design is essential to me; S11: *Product design is attractive to me*). The importance of colour and symbols on products is confirmed in the answers given by 15 (63%) participants (S3: *Eye-catching colour and packaging often influences the purchasing decision. I believe that colours have an impact on our mood and emotions. S12: I often associate the colour red with discounts*). The third code, Product's visual presentation, is confirmed in the answers provided by 19 (79%) participants (S5: To be distinguishable in a sea of products; S10: *The product seems more attractive to me. I remember it because of the advertising content*). The fourth code, Special product sale, is confirmed in the responses of 24 (100%) participants (S6: *I often buy products on sale; S14: I look for promotional sales when I plan to buy a particular product*). The results show that visual elements influence purchasing decisions, especially during promotional sales.

The third thematic unit, titled The emotional and psychological aspects of visual language, is described through three identification codes. The first code The association of emotion with colours and symbols in marketing campaigns was confirmed in the answers provided by 21 (88%) participants (S7: *A reminder that I might need it, S15: I will react to colours more often than to shapes. Warm colours like red, orange, and yellow have a more substantial influence on my attention*). The second code, the emotional reaction to a marketing campaign, was confirmed in the answers provided by 15 (63%) participants (S8: *Current advertisement and various advertisements for female perfumes by a retailer DM have evoked in me the feelings of longing. S17: The advertisement by T-Com for Christmas causes a powerful emotion in me at the moment when the glass separates the two girls, and they break the glass to hang out*). The third code, Remembering a product or brand based on visual symbols, was confirmed in the answers provided by 23 (96%) participants (S4: *I often remember a product based on its logo, I immediately relate it to product quality; S16: Product's visual appearance, perfumes in particular, immediately reminds me of the brand*).

The results of the research show that the emotional experience of a product is influenced by the marketing campaign used to sell it. In addition, emotional reactions are observed, especially in marketing campaigns utilising audiovisual content. The importance of visual communication through logos and slogans helps reinforce a product's brand.

The fourth thematic unit, titled "The use of visual symbols in marketing campaigns," is described using two identification codes. The first code The effectiveness of visuals in marketing campaigns is confirmed in the answers provided by 17 (71%) participants

(S11: *Less is more; simplicity is the most complex category when utilising visuals.*; S6: *I am interested in simple and memorable visuals that will be etched in the consumer's memory easily*). While the second code, the perception of promotional symbols when purchasing, is confirmed in the answers provided by 22 (92%) participants (S1: *Yes, I regularly follow such promotions. Buy one, get one free*; S12: *I pay attention to such promotional campaigns and I always buy two products in order to get the third one for free*).

The above results confirm that the use of visual symbols is related to the visuals of a marketing campaign and to participants' perceptions of the visual symbols used in promotional sales when purchasing the product. The research results provide answers to the research questions and confirm the basic hypothesis that the use of visual symbols during the implementation of promotional activities contributes to the creation of corporate recognition and corporate image. Research and the market show that, in recent years, marketing campaigns have shifted their discourse on social media to target audiences. However, the use of visual symbols is still important, especially in promotional sales, as confirmed by the research results. Its effectiveness is particularly evident in marketing campaigns and requires clear communication to the ultimate target audiences. Visual communication must be truthful and clear, as the use of misleading representations can seriously jeopardize credibility and reduce audience trust (Travere, 2023).

Conclusion

The qualitative research, based on the analysis and processing of the obtained results, confirms the basic hypothesis of this paper, namely that the use of visual symbols during the implementation of promotional activities contributes to the creation of corporate recognition and corporate image. Possible limitations of this research include the inability to generalize the results to the entire population due to the qualitative nature and sample size. Possible subjectivity in the interpretation of data was reduced by two researchers utilising a transparent coding process and analysis, which ensures the scientific contribution of the research. This approach in this research ensures the credibility and relevance of the collected data for the set research objectives.

This research can serve as a starting point for future quantitative research on differences between generations regarding the influence of visual symbols in marketing campaigns and the reactions of different generations to certain visual communications on social media.

References

1. Akrap, G. (2009). Informacijske strategije i oblikovanje javnoga znanja. *National Security and the Future*, 10(2), 77-151. <https://hrcak-srce-hr.ezproxy.nsk.hr/80639>
2. Alharthi, R. H., Hashem, E., Md Salleh, N. Z., Abdullah, M., Ali, A., Faisal, F., & Mohd Nor, R. (2023). Research trends, developments, and future perspectives in brand attitude: A bibliometric analysis utilizing the Scopus database (1944–2021). *Heliyon*, 9(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e12765>
3. Anić, N. (2012). Odnosi s javnošću-bitan dio političkog marketinga. *National Security and the Future*, 13(3), 72-83. <https://hrcak-srce-hr.ezproxy.nsk.hr/clanak/148452>
4. Boztepe Taskiran, H. (2018). Key issues in Turkish public relations practitioners' perception of the profession: Relational paradigm, dialogic public relations, symmetrical public relations, corporate social responsibility, and corporate sustainability. *Connectist-Istanbul University Journal of Communication Sciences*, 55, 37–59. <https://doi.org/10.26650/CONNECTIST2018-0023>

5. Chen, L. (2023). Effective strategies for attracting and engaging target audiences in today's competitive market. *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 16, 141–147. <https://doi.org/10.31674/eais.2023.16.02.014>
6. Clemente-Mediavilla, J., & Sebastián-Morillas, A. (2018). New discourses in brand communication in Spain: Adaptation vs. renewal of target audience. *Communication & Society*, 31(2), 25–38. <https://doi.org/10.15581/003.31.35707>
7. Đurić, S., & Trajković, S. (2016). Communicating with target market environment. *Journal of Process Management – New Technologies, International*, 4(3), 30-38. <https://www.japmnt.com>
8. Garbellini, A.B., Polo Serrano, D., & Martin Ramallal, P. (2021). Fake brand gamification, Gamification of visual brands as an advertainment strategy, 22, 163-187. <https://doi.org/10.6035/2174-0992.2021.22.9>
9. Hegy, PM. (2023). Symbol Preaching in the Digital Age: From Symbol Recognition to Symbol Interpretation in Facebook Ads. *Department of Sociology, Adelphi University, Garden City, NY 11530-0701, USA*, 14(2), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020229>
10. Islam, M., & Sheikh, S. A. (2024). Are social media-based marketing strategies the new mechanisms for attracting consumers? A quantitative method-based approach. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, 19(4), 3571–3583. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer19040173>
11. Johansen, TS., Gregersen, MK. (2024). The Authenticity of Organizational-Level Visual Identity in the Context of Strategic Communication. *International journal of strategic communication*, 18(5), 404-423. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2024.2352114>
12. Joffe, H., & Yardley, L. (2004). Content and Thematic Analysis. U: Marks, D.F., & Yardley, L. (ur.). *Research Methods for Clinical and Health Psychology*. London: SAGE Publications, 56- 68.
13. Laradi, S., Berber, N., Rehman, H. M., Hossain, M. B., Hiew, L.-C., & Illés, C. B. (2023). Unlocking the power of social media marketing: Investigating the role of posting, interaction, and monitoring capabilities in building brand equity. *Cogent Business & Management*, 10(3), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2023.2273601>
14. Markić, B., Bijakšić, S., & Bevanda, A. (2018). Komunikacija na društvenim mrežama i razvoj imidža o brendu turističke destinacije. *Hum: časopis Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Mostaru*, 13(19), 233–248. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/212446>
15. Patsiaouras, G., Veneti, A., Green, W. (2022). The Hong Kong Umbrella Movement as a non-profit organization: An empirical study on the use of visual branding practices for social change. *Journal of Philanthropy and Marketing*, 27(2), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.1717>
16. Pirić, V. (2008). Utjecaj korporacijskih komunikacija na imidž i konkurentnost poduzeća. *Market-Tržište*, 20(2), 149–162. <https://hrcak-srce-hr.ezproxy.nsk.hr/clanak/80966>
17. Rosário, A. M., & Dias, J. (2023). Marketinške strategije na platformama društvenih medija. *Međunarodni časopis za istraživanje e-poslovanja*, 19(1), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJEER.31696>
18. Ribeiro S., Loula A., de Araujo I., Gudwin R., Queiroz J. (2007). Symbols are not uniquely human, *Biosystems*, 90(1), 263-72. DOI:10.1016/j.biosystems.2006.09.030
19. Sadeqi-Arani, Z., & Janavi, E. (2022). Content Marketing Scientific Articles in the WOS: A Bibliometric Analysis. *International Journal of Digital Content Management*, 3(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.22054/dcm.2022.69131.1133>
20. Travere, A. (2023). The interplay of signs and visuals: Unveiling the symbiotic relationship between semiotics and visual communication. *Journal of Language and Communication Studies*, 2(3), 1–9. <https://www.pioneerpublisher.com/JLCS/article/view/417>
21. Vusić, D. (2024). Snaga boja u vizualnom komuniciranju. *Politehnika i dizajn*, 12(2), 87-94. <https://doi.org/10.19279/TVZ.PD.2024-12-2-02>

About the authors

Ivana Perkušić is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. She graduated from the Doctoral School of the University J.J. Strossmayer in Osijek. Her research interests are communication, interpersonal communication, business communication, management and media. The author can be contacted at: iperkusic@ffos.hr

Vanesa Vidačić is a first-year PhD student in Media and Communication at the University of North. She graduated from the Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek. Her interests include art, culture, visual culture, new media, communication, and visual communication. The author can be contacted at: vavidacic@unin.hr

Ana Globočnik Žunac holds a PhD in Information Communication Science from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. She is employed as an associate professor at University North, Department of Business and Management. Her research focus is organizational communication and interpersonal relationships within business processes. She teaches business communication and human resource management courses and is a scientific associate in the interdisciplinary field of economics and information communication sciences. She has worked on developing international academic cooperation and is a member of international scientific editorial boards. She received several awards for her scientific work and a prize for her contributions to communication sciences. The author can be contacted at: ana.globocnik.zunac@unin.hr.