

WHAT IS THE COLOUR OF PREŠOV? AN ANALYSIS OF COLOUR ASSOCIATIONS IN THE POPULATION EVOKED BY A GEOGRAPHICAL AREA AS THE FUNDAMENT FOR CREATING AN ACCEPTABLE CITY BRAND

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Abstract: *Focusing on visual components, such as creating a new logotype, is the most frequently used method of city branding applied. One of the six criteria recommended to be followed in the selection of brand components is rememberability that can be further supported by, inter alia, the choice of a suitable colour. In the process of selecting it, a rewarding approach may consist in knowing the population's existing colour associations tied to a particular place, which can contribute to a more rapid acceptance of a new brand, while, at the same time, it can decrease, to a certain degree, the risk of rejection. This paper analyzes the possible colour associations related to the area of the City of Prešov present among the city's residents. The aim is to determine one attribute for the creation of a new city brand.*

Keywords: *city branding, logotype, European Capital of Culture*

INTRODUCTION

The commencement of the era of so-called „entrepreneurial cities“ brought the beginning of applying a whole variety of business companies' practices to cities to a far greater extent than ever before. One such practice is the process of creation and shaping the city's brand and logotype, i.e. the process of branding. It was the success achieved by some business trademarks that got some cities trying to imitate them and launch a new stage in their own development. Today, there is no doubt that geographical locations (places) can be a subject of branding, even though the names of such places are no longer changing (e.g. K. Keller, 2007, p. 59).

In Slovakia, recent years have seen an increased level of interest displayed by cities in presenting themselves through logos or symbols. The most vital interest could be seen in connection with the contest to win the title of European Capital of Culture (ECOC). The project has been running since 1985, during which period it went through many changes (the last change took place in 2007). The recently completed (September 2008) selection of the 2013 candidate proved that the project, as reflected in its current shape, appears to be an extremely useful tool in stimulating interest in place-marketing or place-branding techniques. This is even true for such European regions where the serviceability of such techniques' application to places has not yet been fully realized.

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The concept of place branding alone should be understood, in a broader context, as a general branding process based on a place strategy. Its main goal is to distinguish a city by laying emphasis on those elements or components that make the city unique. This, however, is nothing new. From time immemorial, towns and cities have been brands in the most profound sense of that word. In the past, their unparalleled natures would be depicted in their coats of arms – the things that are now perceived as reflections of cities' or towns' glorious (more or less) history and fate. A current brand, however, should primarily reflect a promising future, i.e. "what the city is and what it wants to be". It is a reverberation of reality as it is perceived.

The most frequently used tool of branding applied to such places is focusing on its visual components, such as the creation of a new logotype, the incorporation of a new slogan, and the development of an advertising campaign related to said visual components.

A logotype itself – which forms, besides official heraldic symbols, the fundament of a city's uniform visual style – cannot be viewed as place branding as it is handled by marketing theory since it forms a very important part of brand components supporting a brand's easier rememberability and embedding it into people's subconscious minds. Then, through the brand, qualitative aspects of a place are perceived. It is exactly the subconsciously induced associations connected to a brand that make up the essential elements in the assessment of a brand's quality.

One of the six criteria recommended to be followed in the selection of brand components is rememberability² that can be further supported by, inter alia, the choice of a suitable colour. The way in which colours make people react and feel has been explored since the times of Pythagoras in ancient Greece (560 - 496 B.C.). Numerous attempts to obtain scientific or holistic evidence of colours' effects upon man can be found in archives (Kašová, 2007). We are therefore of opinion that the knowledge of the existing locality-related colour associations in population may, in a way, contribute to a more rapid acceptance of a new brand, while, at the same time, it can also decrease, to a certain degree, the risk of such brand's subsequent rejection.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In November 2007, taking into account Prešov City local government's aspiration to develop the city's brand strategy, we conducted a survey among the city's residents aimed at identifying the most powerful colour association evoked in Prešov's inhabitants' subconscious minds by the geographical area of their place of residence.

Due to the absence of an appropriate selection support for simple random selection (i.e., in this particular case, complete population databases), we had to choose the quota sampling method with three fixed quotas (gender, age³, and the place of residence⁴). The sample of 1,004 respondents that we had made up was sufficiently, in its structure, identical to the

2 Brand component selection criteria: 1. rememberability, 2. meaningfulness, 3. popularity, 4. transferability, 5. adaptability, 6. protectability (Keller 2007, p. 204-210).

3 The target group was composed of residents of Prešov older than 19 years

4 According to urbanistic districts

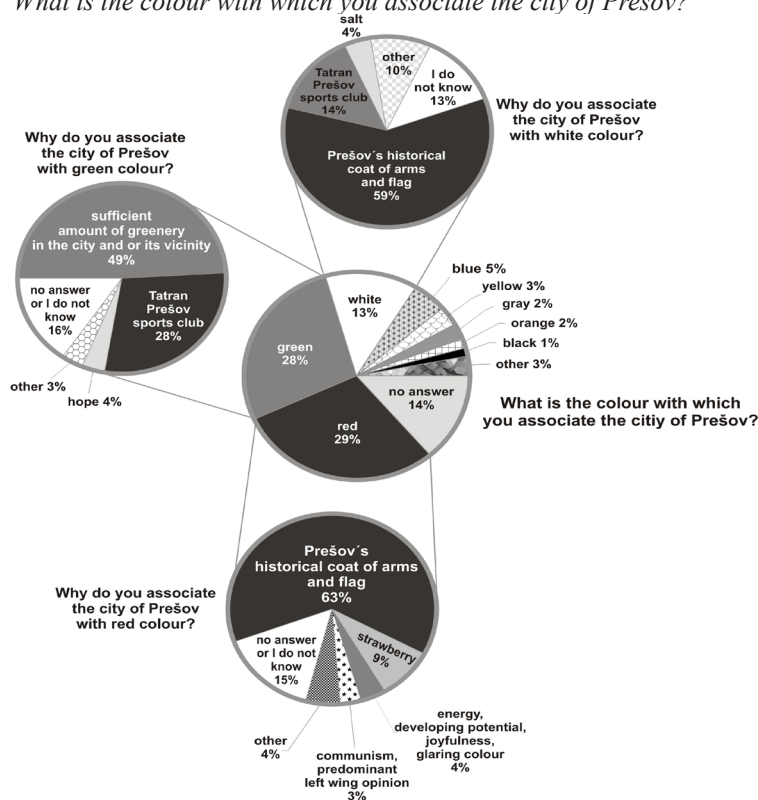
structure of the target population's distribution by gender, age and place of residence; therefore, the sample can be considered to be a statistically valid survey sample⁵.

Our empirical research was solely carried out in the city of Prešov, within the city limits, and has not included the view of external environment (which, in many aspects, could certainly have been more interesting). Therefore, the results of our research only provide a partial picture of the phenomenon examined.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of our research have proven that the respondents show a strong association between the city and the red (29%) and green (28%) colours; and they also, to a certain degree, associate the city with the white colour (13%) (Chart1).

Chart 1: *What is the colour with which you associate the city of Prešov?*



Source: Proprietary empirical research

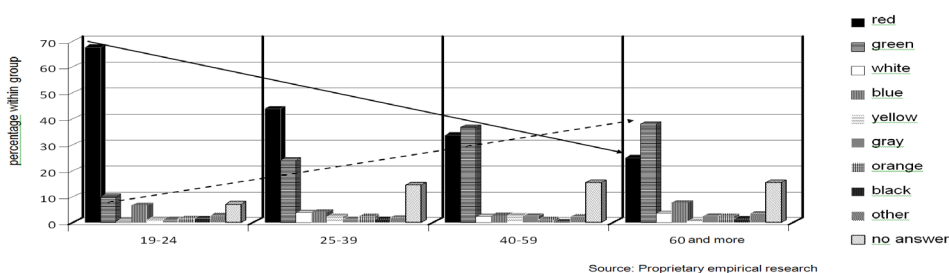
- 5 In the field of sociological research methodology, and in particular in the field of public opinion surveys, there is a lot of discussion revolving around the reliability of extending applicable findings to the entire target population using the method of quota selection. However, the results of numerous surveys they, had applied both methods do not significantly differ from each other; therefore, it can be stated that “... *not a single application of probability-based selection schemes does not guarantee that estimates will not diverge and that both of the approaches have similar attributes in their practical applications.* (Šubrt et al.) (1998, p. 110).

For many, the red colour is the colour of their city (Prešov), which primarily arises from the fact that the red colour prevails in the city's historical coats of arms as well as its flag, and the city has virtually adopted it on historical principles. The general acceptance of the said colour as Prešov's official colour has also been reflected in the creating of various institutions' emblems that are shaded in red (e.g. University of Prešov's official colour is purple and the University's emblem contains as constituents three heraldic roses borrowed from the city coats of arms). In the city coats of arms, the purple colour is mixed with the white or silver colour⁶, which was one of the reasons why the respondents connected Prešov with these particular colours.

The other colour stated by almost the same number of respondents was green. As their reason for preferring that colour, nearly one-half of the respondents indicated a sufficient amount of greenery in the city or its vicinity; and more than one-fourth of them chose the green colour because they had it firmly planted in their minds in connection with the official colours of Tatran Prešov (the city's soccer team).

Chart 2 below shows that the connection between Prešov and the red colour dramatically decreases with increasing age. While the group ranging from 19 to 24 years of age indicated the red colour in over 70 percent of cases, for those over 60 years of age that proportion was only 25 percent. The associations connected with the green colour showed an inverse tendency, in terms of age distribution. Older respondents (over 40 years of age) preferred the green colour. Among the youngest age group, this preference was much weaker (barely 10 percent of the respondents). Thus, older respondents prefer the combination of their city with the green colour while those younger (primarily the age group from 19 to 24 years) unambiguously prefer the red colour.

Chart 2: Which colour do you think best represents the city of Prešov? Answers evaluated by age categories.

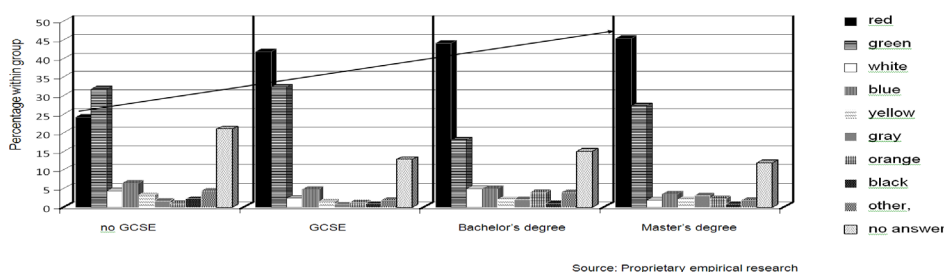


The association of Prešov with the red colour is most frequently reported by respondents with higher education levels (bachelor's degree and higher) and it exhibits a slightly increasing trend from 22 percent for the respondents with lower education (elementary or junior high school completed) to 45 percent for respondents with a bachelor's degree or an advanced degree (Chart 3). Contrary to that, the proportion of the "green association"

6 In real life, the silver colour originally included in a coat of arms is ordinarily replaced by the white colour; this is why the white and red version became common rather than the silver and red version of a coats of arms. In the answers provided by our respondents, the group stating the silver colour as the colour of the city of Prešov represented mere 2 percent.

shows a rather decreasing tendency, i.e. it is more markedly the case with respondents with lower levels of education than with those with a university degree (including the respondents with a bachelor's degree). In this particular case, the inverse proportion is disturbed by the group of "bachelors" where the proportion of "green associations" is lower by almost 10 percent than for respondents with a master's degree. The analysis of answers in relation to education showed that the respondents with a lower level of education (elementary or junior high school, at the most) form the only group in which the proportion of answers preferring the "green association" prevails over association the city of Prešov with the red colour. At the same time, this is a group that showed the greatest proportion of those giving no answer (did not know what to answer or failed to indicate any colour). We have detected an unambiguous dominance of the "red association" in the respondents with a Bachelor's degree (43%) and the respondents with a Master's degree (45%).

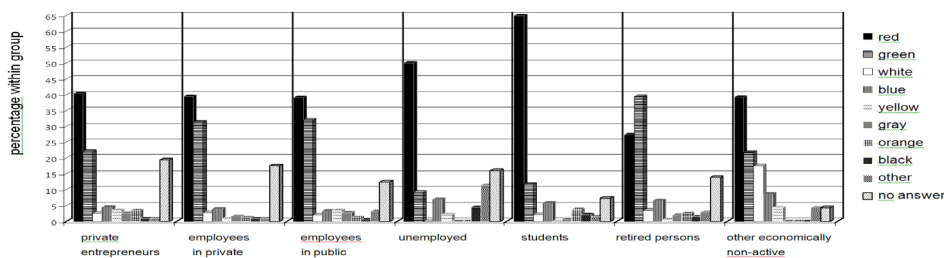
Chart 3: „What is the colour with which you associate the city of Prešov?“ Answers evaluated by education levels.



For the group of "students", the evaluation of the colour associated with the city by respondents' occupation (Chart 4) is, to quite a high degree, identical with the results obtained from the age group ranging from 19 to 24 years (since most respondents of that age group are students); similarly, the group of retired persons gives results identical with the results obtained from the age group over 60 years (for the same reasons as the first mentioned). More than 40 percent of entrepreneurs perceive Prešov in connection with the red colour (only approximately half of that proportion, 21 percent, reported the green colour as their association). Prešov is felt as a "red city" among the unemployed (by 50 percent of them). The distribution of the "red" and "green" associations is relatively equal for employees of privately run companies vs. public sector employees, with the red colour slightly predominating. As for the rest of the colours that were indicated in the answers, one group denominated as "other economically active persons" composed mostly by mothers on maternity leave (75 percent) was particularly interesting. In this group, the proportion of "white population" (which is usually 1 to 2 percent in other respondent groups) represents as much as 18 percent, and the blue colour and its connection to Prešov was recalled by no more 9 percent (for the jobless and retired persons, this proportion was 7 and for students 6 percent). With respect to occupation, two contrasting groups have emerged: the group of pensioners who associate the city of Prešov with the green

colour (39 percent of the respondents) and the group of students⁷ for whom Prešov is unequivocally linked to the red colour (65 percent of the respondents).

Chart 4: “What is the colour with which you associate the city of Prešov?”
Answers evaluated by occupation.



Source: Proprietary empirical research

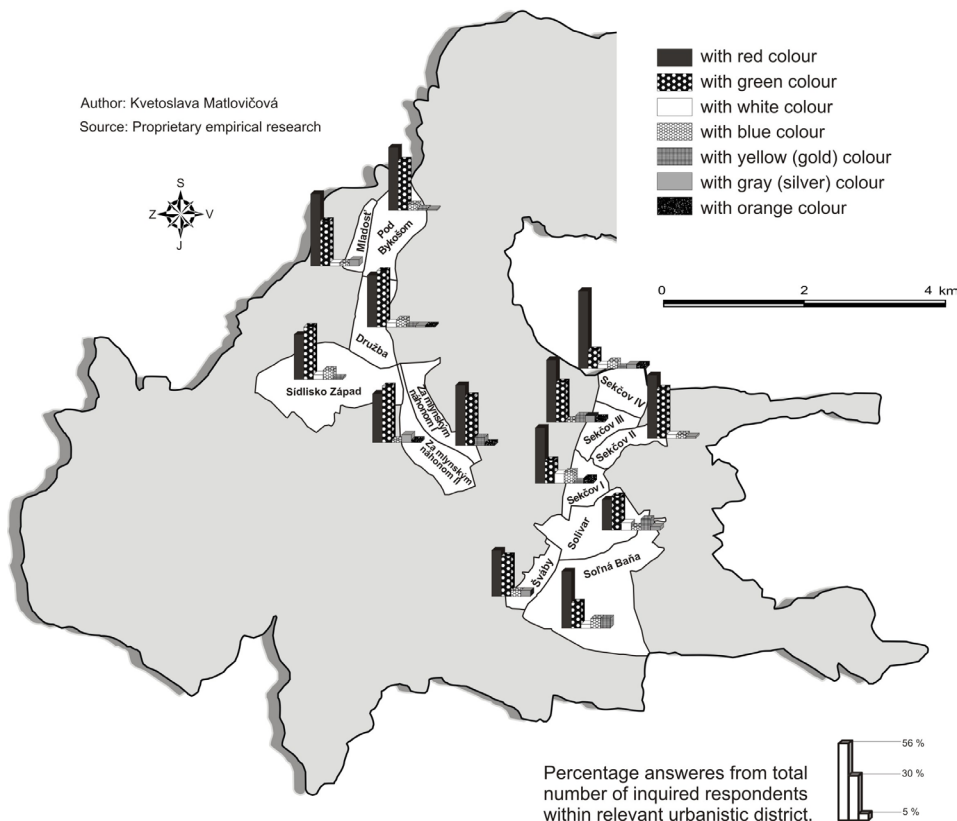
One precondition for the development of a colour association is a visual interpretation of a sensory experience of an environment. In our case, respondents were mostly influenced by the environment of their particular neighbourhoods, i.e. the part of the city with which they are in everyday contact and by the centre of the city, too. For those respondents living in urbanistic districts (hereinafter referred to as “UO”) with the densest greenery, the “green association” predominates (Map 1). This is true for the following UOs: Družba, Sídliisko II (west), the northern portion of the UO Za mlynským náhonom II, and the south-western quarter of Solivar. For the two latter districts, reasons such as “the green vicinity of Prešov” and “the green downtown” were stated. In Za mlynským náhonom I (a UO close to the centre of the city), the yellow colour is mentioned quite often. As stated by many, this colour is linked with the predominant colour of buildings located in downtown Prešov. Respondents living at the housing projects Sekčov and Šváby often indicated the gray colour as their colour association reasoning that they feel that colour due to the dismalness and drabness of their neighbourhood; often they also complained about dirtiness and the lack of greenery.

⁷ Similarly, there is a very significant proportion of the red association among the jobless (50 %). The proportion of the second, in terms of the number of answers, colour – green – was only 8 percent.

Map 1

What is the colour with which you associate the city of Prešov?

according to selected urbanistic districts



A deeper qualitative analysis of answers given to the question “What is the colour with which you associate the city of Prešov?” also enables us to better comprehend the process of developing the city residents’ attitude to their city. It can also be understood as a certain type of projection through which to obtain information of the city’s dominant constituent(s). Provided that it is sufficiently intense and distinct, it becomes a sort of vehicle for subconscious information and the trigger for specific associations linked to a place. It therefore becomes part of a city’s brand.

To illustrate and allow better comprehension of the construct of an answer given to the above-stated question, we list exact transcriptions of selected answers provided by our respondents (see Frame 1, Chart 1). We specifically selected answers other than those that had stated the red colour association with a brief reference to the “city coats of arms” or the green colour association with a brief reference to “Tatran⁸”, “nature”; nor did we select the answers saying “don’t know”.

8 „Tatran“ is the name of Prešov’s soccer and handball teams (sporting club).

The content analysis of the rationalizations attached to answers given to the question “What is the colour with which you associate the city of Prešov?” showed that the residents of Prešov mostly link their city with the red colour which they consider to be the city’s “proprietary” colour. Even those answers that did not exactly state the city’s official symbols did indirectly refer to their portions such as strawberries, roses etc. Another group of respondents, much smaller in terms of their number, referred quite frequently to the Communist history that still, in their opinion, lingers in the minds of some city residents.

For the followers of the “green association”, Prešov is a city with a sufficient amount of greenery, situated amidst the beauties of nature. Also those residents of Prešov link the city with the green colour who derive that colour from the local sporting club’s official colours that has a long tradition in the city and has long participated in the promoting of the city’s public image.

There were also different colour associations: let’s mention the black colour where there was associations linked to negative perception of the present time due to social behaviour of culturally inassimilable Romany groups.

Other colours that appeared in the answers resulted from some elaborated marketing campaigns – such as the orange colour (the hue once chosen by the current city’s Mayor for the colour scheme of his election campaign) and the blue colour (which resulted from the city’s strong group of the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union’s (SDKU) sympathizers as the SDKU, in 2002 parliamentary election campaign, had used a simple yet vacuous slogan saying that “blue is good” receiving much media attention. As is quite clear now, the discussion in the media was successful as, even after the passage of seven years, the linkage between the political party and the blue colour is still alive.).

Frame 1: *What is the colour with which you associate the city of Prešov?*

(A selection of respondents’ answers)

- *Red – a strawberry town*
- *Red – the city’s colour*
- *Red – the red tulips at the pedestrian zone*
- *Red – vigour, go-ahead – the typical traits of the Eastern Slovaks*
- *Red – just crossed my mind*
- *Red – a roofing tile, coats of arms, strawberries*
- *Red – it is present in the city’s emblem, I just can’t imagine any other colour*
- *Red – the colours prevailing on the city’s Web page*
- *Red – the colour of blood, Caraffa, the colour of strawberries - Eperjes*
- *Red – strawberries used to be grown in the area*
- *Red – the Communists – members of the City Magistrate*
- *Red – the city is full of unused energy*
- *Red – because we have red buses*
- *Red – the city has it in its arms. It’s a repugnant colour.*
- *Red – many left-leaning people*
- *Red – I don’t know, just recalled the coat of arms*
- *Red – the city’s arms and the Web page*
- *Black and White – the white colour: represents every nice thing we have and every nice thing that I hope awaits us*

- *Red and Black – just walk past post around the 20th day of a month, you'll see*
- *Red and Green – Communism, the nature around here*
- *Red and Green – the colour of roofs, greenery*
- *Purple – prevails in the University of Prešov's Web pages*
- *Green – since time immemorial it's the colour for this city*
- *Green – we have a lot of greenery (trees, green areas)*
- *Green – we had a lot of greenery here*
- *Green - FC Tatran, the handball team, they have the green colour it in their emblem, and entire city lies in the bosom of nature*
- *Green – because there is a lot of greenery in downtown Prešov*
- *Green – there is a lot of green around here, and I hope it will remain so*
- *Green – I don't know of any greener neighbourhood than the "Housing Estate No. III"*
- *Green – a traditional colour - soccer, handball, nature*
- *Green – a city of greenery*
- *Green – forests, parks, sportswear*
- *Green – a lot of greenery in the city, but NOT in Sekčov, much to my sorrow*
- *Green – the soccer and handball players' strips*
- *Green – hope, soccer, nature*
- *Green – I don't know of any other neighbourhood greener than the "Housing Estate No. III"*
- *Green and White – because of the sportsmen who build a good reputation for the city*
- *Green – hope for a brand new start personified by the City Mayor*
- *Red, Green and White – don't know why, perhaps it came to me subconsciously; the red and white from the coats of arms, the green and white from Tatran*
- *Green and Yellow - Tatran, parsons*
- *Green and Yellow – enough greenery, a lot of space*
- *Blue ... associations ...*
- *Blue – Christian*
- *Blue – the blue sky above Prešov*
- *Blue – Torysa River*
- *Blue – the city is blue at sunset*
- *Blue – cleanliness, stillness*
- *Blue and Yellow – the typical colour of Prešov's street light posts*
- *Blue – don't know, just crossed my mind*
- *Blue – the reason probably was because my native town Košice is red and it is colder in Prešov than in Košice*
- *Blue – because blue is a cold colour and the city of Prešov gives the impression of being a cold place.*
- *Blue – among all other colours, the blue colour provides the greatest satisfaction, it is the most favourite colour around the world. The life in the city of Prešov gives me a sense of peace and spiritual satisfaction, safety.*
- *Blue-Violet - Prešov is like a beautiful gemstone – quite cold for the time being, raw and waiting for skilled hands to cut it into a perfect jewel and show off its full beauty and brightness*

- *Dark blue – the city seems to have fallen asleep (development)*
- *Gray – because it is gray, too little green colour all around here, and it looks like it will be losing more and more greenery in the future...*
- *Gray – nondescript, dull and monotonous neighbourhoods*
- *Gray – the infrastructure is in a disastrous condition, there is shortage of cultural facilities, clubs and sports facilities*
- *Gray – Sekčov – just come to our place and you'll see*
- *Gray – this is a pretty dirty city*
- *Gray – too many automobiles, too much mess*
- *Gray – stagnation, a very high unemployment rate, traffic problems*
- *Gray – sleeping city*
- *Gray – low wages, no joy in life, just existing from day to day!*
- *Gray – dullness, people display little interest in local events, the city has been in the doldrums*
- *Gray – getting a bad feeling from the city*
- *Gray – a concrete jungle*
- *Gray – a dismal town - there is nothing here*
- *Gray and Green – one-half of the city consists of concrete, the other consists of greenery*
- *Brown, Gray – heaps of dirt and garbage*
- *White – the smoke from Kronospan*
- *White – white is a indefinite colour, virtually no colour just like the city itself*
- *White – we have a salt cavern here*
- *White and Blue – the colour of salt, the colour of water (the old hydro-electric power station)*
- *White – to me, the city gives an impression of a clean place, I still like to be at home (in Prešov)*
- *White and Red, also White and Green – these are present in the city's coats of arms and historically proven, also they are in our soccer and handball teams' visual identity*
- *Pink – the colour of the pavement in the pedestrian zone*
- *Pink – the cherry trees that blossom in November 17 Street in May*
- *Pink – the trees blossoming in November 17 Street – super*
- *Orange – a varicoloured city, full of students, pretty vital*
- *Orange – changes after the election*
- *Orange – the colour of the city's Mayor*
- *Yellow – the centre of town shines with these colours*
- *Yellow – this crossed my mind first*
- *Yellow – there are many yellow buildings at Main Street*
- *Yellow – hope – I believe there will be some place to go, in addition to beauty*
- *Golden and White – the gold mine the salt works*
- *Golden and Blue – the colours once used by our hockey team*
- *Snuff-coloured – such an autumn town*
- *Black – the colour of sorrow: it represents all the negative things that we do not manage to solve in the long run: primarily the huge resettlement and the neigh-*

bourhoods that offer virtually nothing but satisfying the very basic needs to their inhabitants. ...

- *Brown - dirt, lack of culture, buildings sprayed with graffiti, unfinished projects*
- *None – dumb question*
- *None – it makes no sense to me to associate cities with any colours*
- *Rainbow – the housing projects – varicoloured blocks, the pedestrian zone, colourful buildings*
- *The colours of rainbow – for to me this city has so many faces*
- *Various colours, primarily those cheerful – downtown, Main Street*
- *Varicoloured – because there are small houses in many colours in the centre of town*
- *Violet – sorrow, haughtiness, immodesty*
- *Black – just for the hell of it, for Prešov is so boring.*

Source: Proprietary empirical research

Thus, the residents of Prešov perceive their city as a city of green surrounded by beautiful nature that “*gives them a sense of peace, harmony and safety*” (quoted from one respondent’s answer). This type of assessment evokes a feeling of satisfaction among most respondents falling into the middle-age and senior age categories. For younger respondents, this sounds more like criticism as they widely perceive the phrase “*peace in Prešov*” as existing standstill or idleness, viewing their city as a place where nothing goes on.

CONCLUSION

The development of a new uniform visual identity for the city, and particularly the creation of Prešov’s new logotype, the natural associations existing in people’s minds should be taken into account, which can eventually contribute to increasing the probability of the visual identity’s acceptance. In this connection, the results of the survey show that a useful approach might be to determine one of the required attributes of a new logo and construct it in hues of green. The green colour association does not generate any negative associations in respondents. It represents a suitable alternative to the other frequently cited colour – the red that is well-connected to the city through the city’s historical attributes (the coats of arms and the flag). In that way, the green-colour orientation would appropriately follow up with the vision of the city’s future development as an “environmental city”, which was presented as part of the upcoming project for the city’s candidacy for the 2013 ECC (European Capital of Culture) and which is also connected with the city’s newly-born ambition to build its further development on “clean technologies” (such as an initiative begun by University of Prešov, the City of Prešov and a number of private companies towards the establishment of Biotechnology Park).

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AKEJ FARBY JE PREŠOV?

ANALÝZA FAREBNÝCH ASOCIÁCIÍ OBYVATEĽOV VYVOLANÝCH ÚZEMÍM,
AKO ZÁKLAD PRE VYTVORENIE AKCEPTOVATEĽNEJ
ZNAČKY MESTA

Zhrnutie

Pri vytváraní nového jednotného vizuálneho štýlu a najmä loga mesta Prešov by sa malo aj prihliadať na už existujúce prirodzené asociácie, ktoré vyvoláva u jeho obyvateľov, čo v konečnom dôsledku môže prispieť k zvýšeniu pravdepodobnosti jeho akceptácie. V tomto smere sa na základe výsledkov prieskumu ukazuje ako prospešné stanoviť jeden z požadovaných atribútov nového loga, jeho koncipovanie v odtieňoch zelenej farby. Zelená farebná asociácia nevyvoláva u respondentov negatívne konotácie. Predstavuje vhodnú alternatívu k inej často uvádzanej farbe – červenej, ktorá je dobre spojená s mestom na historickom princípe, prostredníctvom jeho symbolov (erb, zástava). Orientácia na zelenú farbu by tak veľmi dobre nadviazala na víziu ďalšieho rozvoja mesta ako „Eko-mesta“, ktorá sa objavila aj v pripravovanom projekte kandidatúry mesta na titul EHMK 2013

a ktorá súvisí aj s novou ambíciou ďalšieho rozvoja mesta založeného na „čistých technológiách“ (ako napr. iniciatíva Prešovskej univerzity v Prešove, mesta Prešov a ďalších súkromných firiem smerom k vytvoreniu Biotechnologického parku).

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