

Analysing Visual Trends in Malaysian Women's Athletics: A Content Analysis of Brand Identity for Women Sepak Takraw

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ABSTRACT

Despite the increasing participation and achievements of female athletes, stereotypes and biases surrounding women in sports remain prevalent. As women's sports continue to grow, visual branding plays an important role in shaping identity and promoting recognition. Therefore, this study aims to identify the visual trends used in the branding of Malaysian women athletes. Using a quantitative research framework, this study employed content analysis on sixty (60) samples collected from YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Google. The analysis focused on visual elements and brand identity components across attire, logos, posters, banners, and social media content. The occurrence of each element was recorded and presented as percentages. The findings revealed that Facebook was the most commonly used platform. Typography emerged as the dominant brand identity element, while pastel and cool colors were frequently used to convey professionalism and approachability. Geometric shapes were also found to be the most prevalent design element, reflecting a preference for modern and structured aesthetics. In conclusion, Malaysian women's sports branding is characterized by typography, pastel and cool colors, and geometric shapes, creating a contemporary identity distinct from traditional men's sports branding.

Keywords: women's athletics, brand identity, sport brand, visual trends



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1 INTRODUCTION

Stereotypes and biases about women's and girls' physical capabilities remain deeply entrenched in the sporting domain (Glazbrook et al., 2025). Although women's participation in traditionally male-dominated sports, especially at the professional level, has increased, dominant gender constructions continue to perpetuate and legitimize perceptions of male superiority (Glazbrook et al., 2025). From local playgrounds to international sporting arenas, women athletes have consistently challenged boundaries, disrupted stereotypes, and demonstrated that success in sport is defined by talent, perseverance, and dedication (Amin et al., 2023). The growing participation and influence of women in sports represent not only athletic achievement but also a significant advancement in the pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment (Amin et al., 2023).

1.1 Research Objective

This project objective is to analyze current visual trends in Malaysian women's athletics. This project also had the goal to examine the use of visual elements such as color, typography, imagery, and compositing in existing sport-related content.

1.2 Problem Statement

Women's activewear producers are making a mistake in how their clothes and marketing do not match the reality of women's physical activity. This misalignment results in brands failing to connect with most female consumers, reducing the effectiveness in meeting user needs (O'Sullivan et al., 2017). While women's sports are on the rise around the world (Bruce, 2025), women's sports brands struggle to have a strong and consistent brand identity (Schmid & Fox, 2026). Consequently, there is a limited availability of women's sport brand analyses on visual trend, which is partly due to the fact that the design and marketing do not match the actual pattern of women's physical activity (O'Sullivan et al., 2017). It is therefore unsurprising that women remain underrepresented, excluded, and marginalized within sport-focused research agendas. There is a notable lack of sport and exercise medical research involving women, with such studies often being undertaken primarily by female academics (Sherry et al., 2024).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review discusses previous studies on women's athletic brand identity, sport brand, and visual trend in the sports field. The review aims to explore how women are being portrayed visually and how this representation contributes to the development of women's sport identity, particularly women's sepak takraw.

2.1 Women in Sport Representation

The rise of social media platforms has fundamentally transformed global consumer engagement with digital marketing strategies. Furthermore, this shift highlights the significant impact that social media marketing and strategic management have on the perceived reputation of products and services (Raja Sharuddin & Baharom, 2024). Glazbrook et al., 2025, state that stereotypes and biases regarding the physical capabilities of women and girls remain deeply embedded within the sporting environment. Despite the growing participation of women in traditionally male-dominated sports, particularly at the professional level, prevailing gender norms continue to reinforce perceptions of male superiority in this domain. These assumptions are rooted in gender essentialism, which suggests that differences in athletic ability between men and women are biologically determined, consequently portraying women as inherently less capable athletes (Glazbrook et al., 2025).

2.2 Brand Identity Component

Brand identity plays a fundamental role in brand management by communicating the core values and messages associated with a brand. It is conveyed through various identity elements that help establish recognition and differentiation among audiences. The main components of brand identity include brand name, logo, typography, symbols, colour palette, shapes, taglines, mascots, and distinctive product or benefit descriptions (Lee, 2024; Zaichkowsky, 2010). These visual and verbal elements work together to create a consistent and recognizable brand image. While (Liu et al., 2025) stated a brand's visual identity is fundamentally anchored by its logo, which serves as a critical component of its image. Beyond acting as a mere symbol for recognition, the logo operates as a strategic medium to convey the brand's core values, distinct personality, and market positioning.

2.3 Sport Brand Identity

Sports brand identity is an important aspect of brand development that shapes both the competitive image and marketing success of a sports team. It encompasses several key elements, including team name, logo, team colours, rituals, associated individuals, and the city or community connected to the team. These components collectively contribute to the creation of a distinctive and recognizable identity, influencing how the team is perceived by audiences and strengthening its overall brand image (Pritchard

& Stinson, 2013). (Abdul Jamil & Abu Bakar, 2025) stated that, brand extension, which is also referred to as brand stretching, occurs when a company utilizes an established brand name to introduce a new product or enter a different product category. The primary objective of this strategy is to facilitate the launch of a new offering by leveraging the corporation's existing brand equity.

2.4 Visual Trend Among Women Athletics

Despite the absence of an explicitly differentiated context based on gender, media representations often portray female athletes within traditionally gender-appropriate sports and in more passive roles. Furthermore, media coverage frequently reflects gender biases and stereotypes through the sexualization of female athletes, emphasis on beauty standards, degrading portrayals, and increased focus on emotions, motherhood, and family life. Such representations can negatively influence audience perception, reinforcing the belief that women's sports are less significant and less valuable than men's sports (Muñoz-Muñoz & Salido-Fernández, 2022).

2.5 Visual Trend Among Malaysian Women Athletics

While existing research has extensively analysed gender disparity and the stereotypical portrayal of female athletes in sports media, there remains a significant gap concerning the Malaysian context. Specifically, direct evidence regarding visual trends and representations within sports branding, digital platforms, and visual communication design is notably sparse. Consequently, this research seeks to investigate the contemporary visual representation of women athletes in Malaysia.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Utilizing a quantitative research framework, this study performs a content analysis to distinguish visual patterns in how Malaysian female athletes are represented. Content analysis serves as a systematic technique for evaluating communicative media, encompassing written texts, imagery, and audio-visual recordings, as well as various cultural artifacts. This methodological approach can be implemented through either qualitative or quantitative lenses (West, 2017). A sample of sixty (60) sport branding items was collected from selected social media platforms, which are YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Google. Selected samples are focusing on the application of visual elements through the component of brand identity in Malaysian women athletes. To determine the most prevalent visual traits, the occurrence of each element is documented and reported as a percentage. Across numerous areas of study, ranging from professional correspondence to the examination of literature and language pedagogy, frequency lists have been developed for various linguistic components to investigate a wide array of research problems (Miller, 2020). The study focuses on the specific application of visual elements in the branding of Malaysian women athletes, examining components such as attire, logo, poster, banner, and social media content.

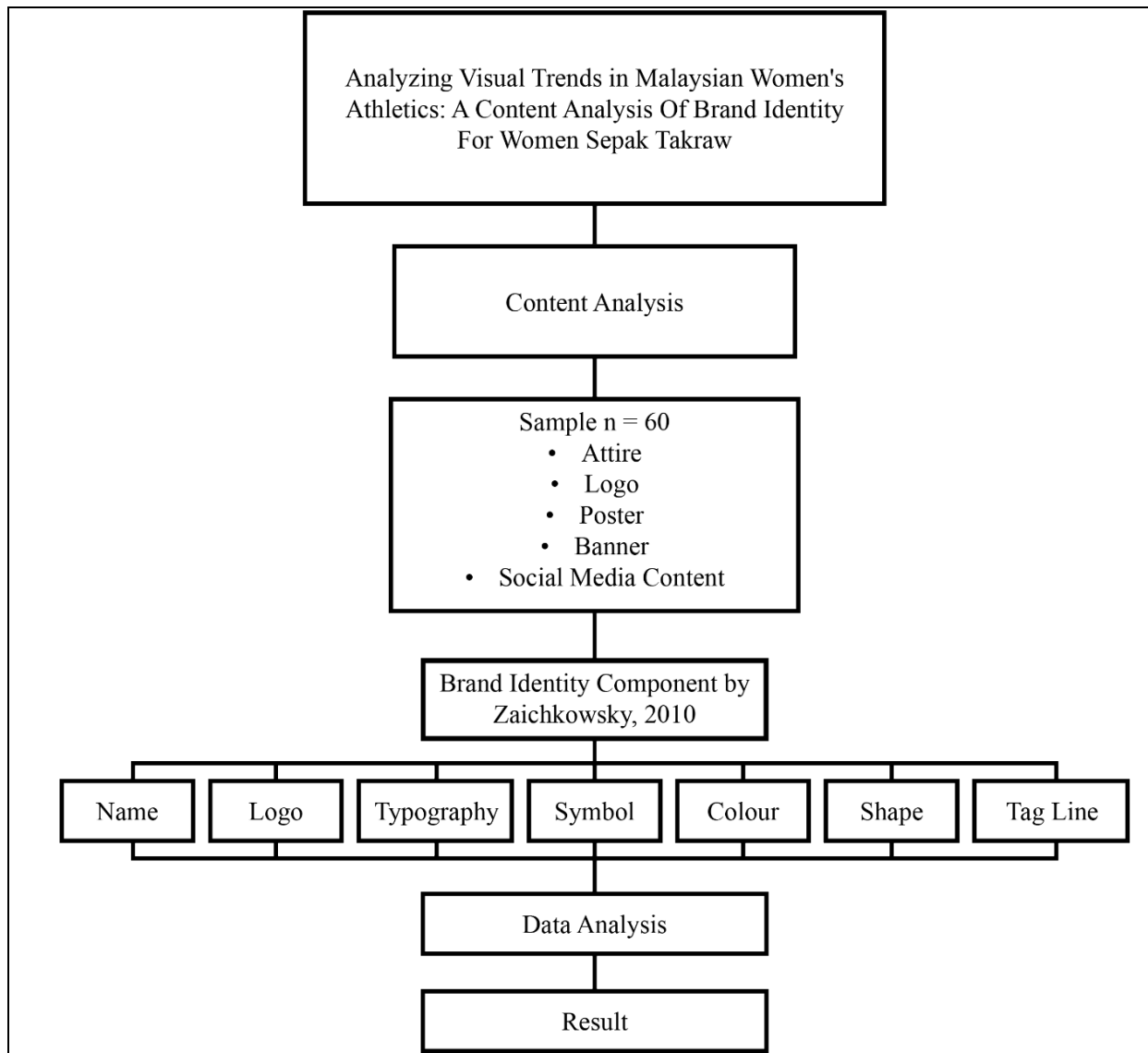


Figure 1 Research framework

4 SELECTION OF SAMPLE

To conduct this content analysis, visual materials were selected through a purposive sampling method. A total of 60 visual items were gathered from public online sources, such as Google, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. These samples, which featured Malaysian women athletes across a variety of sports, were specifically chosen for their clear representation of brand identity markers, particularly in terms of logo (10), attire design (20), poster (10), banner (10), and social media post (10).

Table 1 Sample of Visual Material that Represent Brand Identity

Number of Sample	Example	Platform
60 Sample		Google, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube

The selection criteria prioritized contemporary imagery that prominently showcased organizational or team logos alongside athletic uniforms. This ensured that the collected data provided sufficient visual detail to analyze brand identity trends within the context of Malaysian women's athletics.

5 DATA ANALYSIS

Table 2 Data Analysis of Brand Identity Component in Attire Design

Sample	Platform	Name	Logo	Typography	Symbol	Colour	Shape	Tag Line
1	Google	/	/	/	/	Monochrome	Geometry, Linear	X
2	Google	/	/	/	/	Warm, Neutral	Organic, Linear	X
3	Google	/	/	/	/	Neutral, Warm	Linear	X
4	Youtube	/	/	/	/	Neutral, Pastel	Organic, Abstract	X
5	Youtube	/	/	/	/	Cool	Organic	X
6	Youtube	/	/	/	/	Cool	Geometric	X
7	Youtube	/	/	/	/	Cool	Geometric	X
8	Youtube	/	/	/	/	Neutral, Warm	Organic, Floral Motive	X
9	Youtube	/	/	/	/	Cool, Pastel	Curvilinear	X
10	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Cool, Dark Tone, Neutral	Geometric, Linear	X
11	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Warm, Cool	Geometric	X
12	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Warm	Organic	X
13	Google	/	/	/	/	Cool, Dark Tone, Neutral	Angular	X
14	Google	/	/	/	/	Vibrant	Geometric	X
15	Google	/	/	/	/	Vibrant, Neutral	Curvilinear	X
16	Google	/	/	/	/	Cool, Dark Tone, Warm	Angular	X
17	Instagram	/	/	/	/	Neutral, Vibrant	Geometric, Abstract	X
18	Instagram	/	/	/	/	Cool, Neutral, Natural	Geometric, Abstract	X
19	Google	/	/	/	/	Cool	Curvilinear	X
20	Google	/	/	/	/	Vibrant	Curvilinear	X

Table 3 Data Analysis of Brand Identity Component in Logo Design

Sample	Platform	Name	Logo	Typo	Symbol	Colour	Shape	Tag Line
1	Google	/	-	/	/	Pastel	Geometric	X
2	Google	/	-	/	/	Warm	Organic, Geometric, Angular	/
3	Google	/	-	/	/	Vibrant	Organic, Geometric	X
4	Google	/	-	/	/	Cool, Dark tone	Geometric, Curvilinear	X
5	Google	X	-	/	/	Cool, Warm	Geometric, Angular	X
6	Youtube	/	-	/	/	Monochrome, Vibrant	Geometric, Angular	X
7	Youtube	/	-	/	/	Warm, Vibrant	Organic, Curvilinear	X
8	Youtube	/	-	/	/	Vibrant, Neutral	Curvilinear, Angular	X
9	Youtube	/	-	/	/	Monochrome	Organic, Curvilinear	X
10	Youtube	/	-	/	/	Vibrant, Pastel	Organic, Geometric	X

Table 4 Data Analysis of Brand Identity Component in Poster Design

Sample	Platform	Name	Logo	Typo	Symbol	Colour	Shape	Tag Line
1	Facebook	/	X	/	/	Dark Tone, Pastel	Abstract	X
2	Facebook	/	/	/	X	Neutral, Pastel	Linear	/
3	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Neutral, Pastel	Geometric, Linear	/
4	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Cool, Pastel	Geometric, Curvilinear	X
5	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Pastel, Cool	Geometric	/
6	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Warm, Cool, Dark Tone	Organic	X
7	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Warm, Pastel	Organic	X
8	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Warm	Organic	X
9	Facebook	/	X	/	/	Darktone, Vibrant	Geometric	X
10	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Warm	Geometric, Linear	X

Table 5 Data Analysis of Brand Identity Component in Banner Design

Sample	Platform	Name	Logo	Typo	Symbol	Colour	Shape	Tag Line
1	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Pastel, Warm	Curvilinear, Organic	/
2	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Neutral, Warm	Geometric	X
3	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Neutral, Cool	Curvilinear, Geometric	/
4	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Neutral, Pastel	Geometric	/
5	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Dark Tone, Cool	Organic, Linear	X
6	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Dark Tone, Pastel	Angular	/
7	Facebook	/	X	/	/	Dark Tone, Cool, Pastel	Angular	/
8	Google	/	/	/	/	Warm, Dark Tone	Linear, Geometric	/
9	Google	/	/	/	/	Earth Tone, Cool, Pastel	Geometric	X
10	Google	/	/	/	/	Warm, Cool, Dark Tone	Geometric, Linear, Abstract	X

Table 6 Data Analysis of Brand Identity Component in Social Media Content Design

Sample	Platform	Name	Logo	Typo	Symbol	Colour	Shape	Tag Line
1	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Pastel	Geometry, Curvilinear, Linear	X
2	Facebook	X	X	/	X	Pastel	Geometry, Linear	X
3	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Dark Tone, Cool, Pastel	Geometry	/
4	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Pastel	Geometry	X
5	Facebook	/	/	/	/	Neutral, Warm	Geometry, Angular	X
6	Instagram	/	/	/	/	Pastel, Cool	Geometry, Curvilinear	X
7	Instagram	/	/	/	/	Warm	Geometry, Abstract	X
8	Facebook	/	X	/	X	Cool	Abstract	X
9	Instagram	X	/	/	/	Pastel	Angular, Abstract	X
10	Instagram	/	/	/	/	Neutral	Geometric, Abstract	X

6 RESULTS

Table 7 Summary of Findings for Attire Design Analysis

Category	Most Common Element	Frequency	Percentage
Platform	Google	8	42.1
Brand Identity	Name, Logo, Typography, Symbol	20	100%
Colour	Cool	10	27.8%
Shape	Geometric	8	29.6 %

Table 8 Summary of Findings for Logo Design Analysis

Category	Most Common Element	Frequency	Percentage
Platform	Google, YouTube	5	50%
Brand Identity	Typography, Symbol	10	100%
Colour	Vibrant	5	31.3%
Shape	Geometric	7	35%

Table 9 Summary of Findings for Poster Design Analysis

Category	Most Common Element	Frequency	Percentage
Platform	Facebook	10	100%
Brand Identity	Name, Typography	10	100%
Colour	Pastel	6	31.6%
Shape	Geometric	5	38.5%

Table 10 Summary of Findings for Banner Design Analysis

Category	Most Common Element	Frequency	Percentage
Platform	Facebook	7	70%
Brand Identity	Name, Typography, Symbol	10	100%
Colour	Dark Tone, Pastel, Cool	4	21.7%
Shape	Geometric	6	37.5%

Table 11 Summary of Findings for Social Media Content Design

Category	Most Common Element	Frequency	Percentage
Platform	Facebook	6	60%
Brand Identity	Typography	10	100%
Colour	Pastel	7	46.7%
Shape	Geometric	8	44.4%

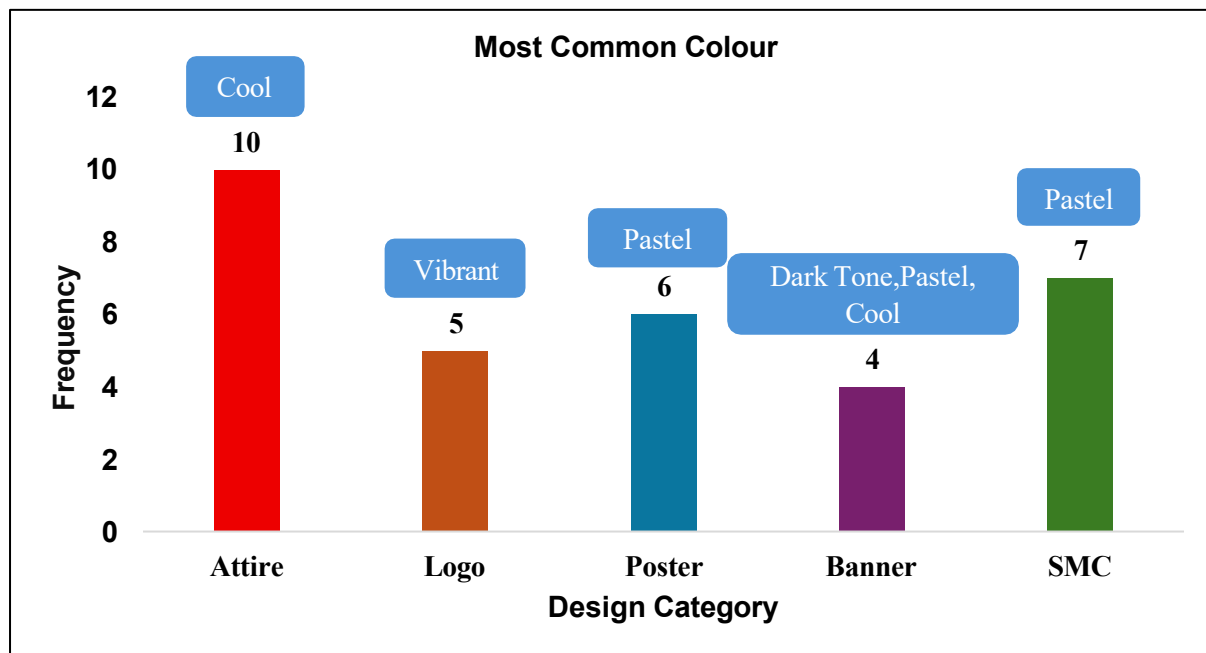


Figure 1 Dominant Colour Frequency Across Design Category

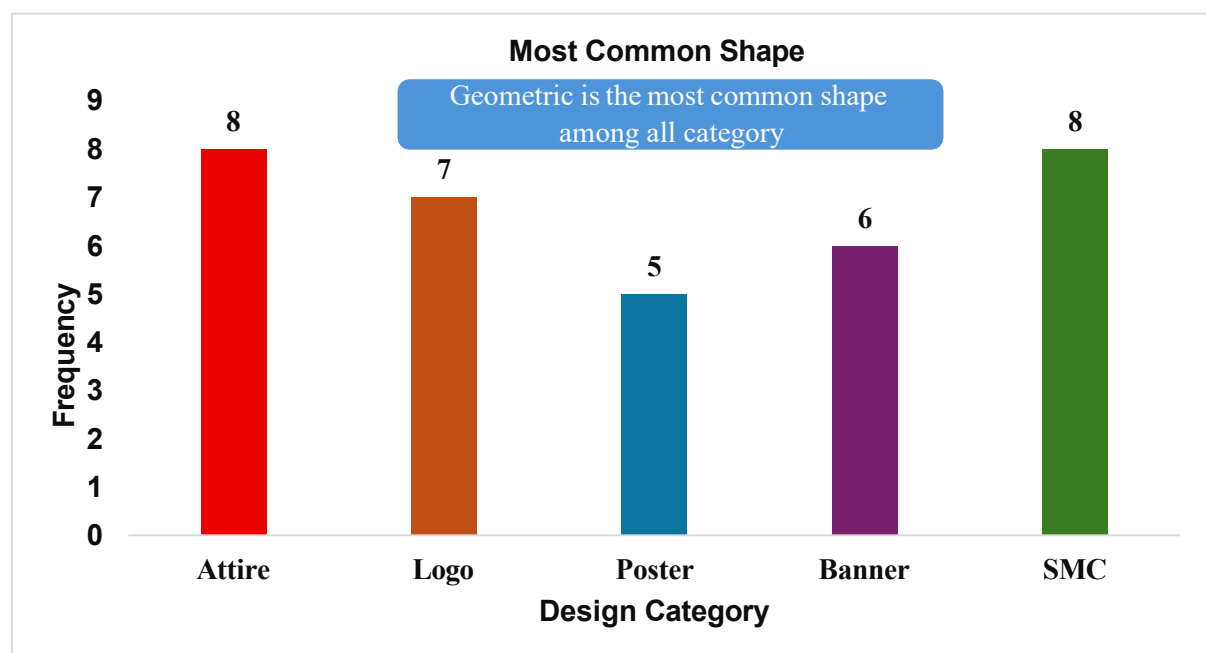


Figure 2 Dominant Shape Frequency Across Design Category

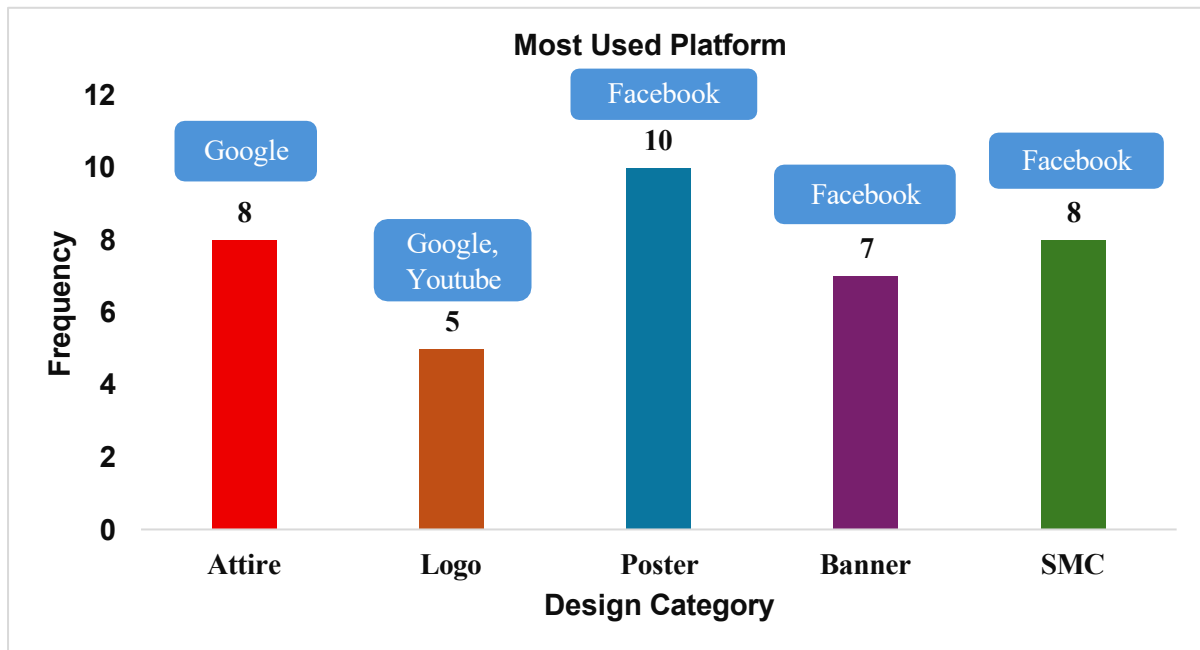


Figure 3 Most Used Platform by Design Category

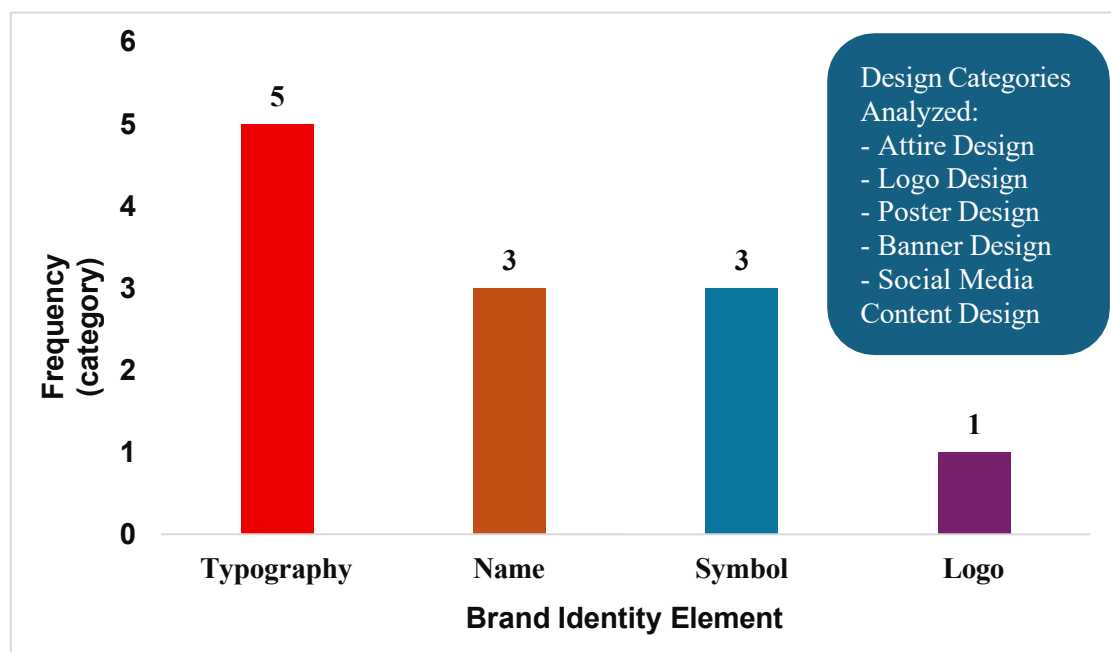


Figure 4 Frequency of Brand Identity Element Across Design Category

7 FINDINGS

The results from Tables 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 show that the most popular platform being used is Facebook. This is because women's sports are not being highlighted on the current most-used social media platforms, such as Instagram or TikTok. Due to the underrepresentation of women's sports events, most of the sample came from an official organization and not from their own platform. Where the official organization mostly uses Facebook as the main social media platform.

The results show that the most common element of brand identity is typography for every sample of attire, logo, poster, banner, and social media content. This is because typography can easily represent a woman's brand identity by just stating the keyword that can represent women. Other than that, the other common element of brand identity name and symbol. This is because a name is one important thing in creating a brand identity. Next is the least brand identity element, the logo, except for Tables 7 and 8. This is because the posters, banners, and social media content mostly do not have a logo for the event or social media posting. They are just playing around with color to represent the woman's identity.

For the Color, the most common element is the use of pastel colors. Pastel colors, such as blush pink, lavender, mint green, and powder blue, are often employed to enhance the approachability and aesthetic appeal of the branding, distinguishing it from the typically bolder colors used in men's sports. Beyond the prevalence of pastel tones, cool colors such as blue, teal, green, and violet frequently emerge as a significant branding element, particularly in attire and banner design. Unlike the high-contrast or 'aggressive' palettes (such as bright reds or neon) often associated with traditional men's sports branding, cool colors in women's athletic contexts signify stability, professionalism, and confidence.

Based on the result, the most common element in the shape category is geometric. Geometric shapes emerge as the predominant design element across all categories, reflecting a strategic preference for structured, clean, and modern aesthetics that define the current visual identity of women's sports branding.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that women's sports branding is primarily concentrated on Facebook, a consequence of the ongoing underrepresentation of female athletes on other major social media platforms. The study identifies typography as the preeminent component of brand identity within this sector. Furthermore, the strategic application of specific color palettes, such as pastel and cool tones, in conjunction with geometric shapes, serves to project an image of stability, professionalism, and contemporary sophistication. These visual trends define the current landscape of women's sports and serve to effectively differentiate these brands from the more aggressive aesthetic traditionally associated with men's sports branding.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors played equal contributions towards the production of this paper.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

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