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VISUAL BRANDING:
A GUIDE TO DESIGNING VISUAL
IDENTITY

Case: Plannr.eu

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis focused on discussing the definition of visual branding and how to design a visual identity. The main objectives of this thesis are to emphasise the importance of visual branding, and as a final result, a brand visual identity is designed for the case company – Plannr.eu.

The theoretical framework investigated the definition of a brand, branding, and three main reasons why visual branding matters. This first part mainly serves the purpose of guiding readers through the most basic concept. After that, the following chapter studied the key concepts of visual identity as well as practical guide on how to effectively create a visual identity.

The author successfully pointed out the significance of visual identity to a brand. Most importantly, by utilising the knowledge obtained from the first two theory chapters, the visual identity package of Plann.eu was formed after three stages: research, develop and design. Hence, based on the positive feedback received from the case company, the main objective of the study was fulfilled.

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1   INTRODUCTION

Consumers have formed a perception of a company long before they even know who it is and what it does. Most of the first impression is made by glancing at the name, the logo or the campaign of the company. For that reason, visual branding plays an essential role in the whole branding process. What makes it so important is that visual branding can help a company not only stand out from its competitors in a densely market, and build an audience, but also preserve the brand's identity by adding visual elements to the branding process. Therefore, creating a consistent, strong and appealing visual identity is crucial for a company. Even though the visual identity is a small component of a company's overall brand, it is the first image formed in the mind of the potential consumers. With an impressive visual identity, a company can communicate its story, personalities, and values, as well as evoke emotional responses from consumers (Braford 2015; Nieves 2016).

1.1   Aim of the Thesis

When it comes to branding, designing visual identity for a company is one of the most crucial part; however, it is often undervalued. The aim of this thesis is to emphasise the importance of visual branding, and how a well-designed visual identity can distinguish a company from others.

At the final step, the theory framework is applied practically in which the author designs a visual identity package for Plannr.eu. The visual elements consist of a logo, colour scheme, typography, stationery design, favicons, and a website landing page and mobile view design. Finally, to ensure brand consistency throughout any material created in the future, a brand style guide is created and included in the visual identity package.

1.2   Project background

After completing the theoretical framework of the thesis, the author approached Pieter – the founder of Plannr.eu, and asked for a chance to design the visual brand identity for his company. Last year, the company started out with the name My Global Dream, which was a web portal with every necessary information and service for users. Yet, as

they are developing the service further to become a practical planning tool, the current logo can no longer demonstrate entirely the purpose and the international aspect of the business. At the moment, Plannr.eu already has a logo and other visual elements; however, Pieter said they were temporary, and he would be pleased to see other proposals for the company visual identity. Thus, the author was allowed to use Plannr.eu as the case company for the study.

1.3   Case company

Plannr.eu is a planning tool that simplifies the life of expats and second home owners. What it does is that it cuts down the clutter on the channel, gives a clear vision for end users, and shows specific steps of the process. It also makes it easier for users to get in touch with many service providers. Primarily, Plannr.eu solves common problems with expatriation such as loans, pensions and insurance. Additionally, this tool can also be used for other purposes, for example, starting a new business in a new country.

What is great about Plannr.eu is that it benefits both users and partners. With Plannr.eu, users can keep track of their progress, manage their to-do lists and budget. Moreover, they can communicate with service providers or the help desk of Plannr.eu. The tool is completely a free portal for its end users. The company only charges their partners since Plannr.eu is bringing new clients to them. On the partners' side, they can use Plannr.eu as their own website by modifying images, contents, etc. They can also keep track of the data of their clients, and generate automatic offers.

As for this project, Pieter expects that the logo can immediately tell what the company does while looking simple, reliable and less corporate, since the target group are expats, youngsters, and startup owners. Ideally, the logo consists of the icon and the company's name so that it will be more recognisable. Additionally, he wants the logo to look good on the website and other materials, and the visual style should be used across all media.

1.4   Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is Introduction where the author briefly walks readers through the topic of the thesis. The second and third chapters

are reserved for discussing visual branding and visual identity, which forms a theoretical framework for the final project. The result of the project is demonstrated in chapter four. Then it is evaluated and concluded in the last chapter.

2 THE BASICS OF VISUAL BRANDING

Nowadays, companies are no longer building their reputation solely based on products or services that they sell. To tell a story, and become recognisable and irreplaceable in a competitive market, a company, whether it is a non-profit organisation or a start-up, first needs create its own brand. It is undeniable that branding is a powerful and sustainable marketing strategy that every business need. However, the visual part of the branding process is often neglected. This chapter analyses the fundamental definition of a brand and branding, and the reasons why visual branding is important (Nieves 2016).

2.1 What is a brand?

The practice of branding has been around for a long time. More than a century ago, cattle ranchers branded their cattle by burning a symbol into the flesh of the animal in order to signify ownership. This practice is still common these days among the cowboys in the United States. In the 19th century, with the rise of packaged goods in the market, products are marked by producers to indicate their original sources. Today, although the terms 'brand' is widely used, it is unevenly understood and relatively hard to be defined exactly in a single sentence (McLaughlin J. 2011).

When most people think about a brand, the first thing that comes to their mind is the logo. While it is indeed the key visual brand element that associates with a company, a brand is much more than a logo, a name, or a product. Brands are as important to a business as to products or services, and a brand can represent an individual celebrity (Slade-Brooking 2016, 9). Strictly speaking, a brand is not something that physically exists; it cannot be hold, seen, manufactured, crafted, or downloaded (Millman 2011).

During the late 20th century, marketers began to realise that they could create a specific perception in the mind of customers regarding the qualities and values of products or services. They called this perception 'the brand' (McLaughlin J. 2011). Generally, a brand consists of distinctive perceptions, ideas and feelings that people have about a company, which distinguish it from the competition. Brands also help companies find a way to emotionally connect with their customers, become the first and only choice,

build trust, and create lifelong relationships. Simply put, a brand is what customers think about a company and what it can offer (Slade-Brooking 2016, 12; Wheeler 2013).

2.2   What is branding?

As previously discussed, the definition of a brand really depends on the way people perceive it. However, there are certainly actions that a company can take to influence that perception. Those actions are in the realm of branding.

In its simplest form, branding is creating the differentiation, making one product or service seem different from other products in the similar category (Slade-Brooking 2016). In terms of 'creating the differentiation', it is notable to clarify that producing high quality goods or investing great amount of resources on an ad campaign is not branding. Branding is more than that. It is the active process of building awareness and reputation around a company's products and services, shaping the perception that customers have about a company, and eventually gaining trust from them. Branding is also about seizing every opportunity to convince people why they should choose one brand over its competitors (Wheeler 2013, 6).

To succeed in branding, a company must understand its customers' needs and wants. While there are numerous paths to build a successful branding strategy, most design and marketing agencies start with research. The practical five-stage branding process developed by Wheeler (2013) is one of the most concise models that captures all the essential aspects. The model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Branding process by Wheeler (2013).

Before making any branding decisions, the first thing that needs to be done is conducting research on the company. This stage includes clarifying vision, strategies, goals, and values; and researching stakeholders' needs and perceptions. Once the research is car-

ried out, the branding strategy can be developed as in the second stage of the model. At the third stage, designers are involved in the branding process to visualise the future, brainstorm big idea, design brand identity system, and present visual strategy. Then, the identity design is finalised in the fourth stage. In addition, this stage is about developing the look and feel of the brand, initiate trademark protection, and apply brand architecture. The last stage of the process includes developing launch strategy, building guidelines, and testing internally, then externally (Wheeler 2013).

Although each and every stage is worth being analysed and understood thoroughly, this thesis only focusses on the third and fourth stage - designing identity and creating touchpoints. These stages are crucial yet often underappreciated. In the following subchapter, the author discusses why getting the visual branding right can help a company build a successful brand.

2.3   Why visual branding matters?

Visual branding is the visual aspects of branding in general, which means it influence customer's perception through visual elements such as colour, typography, shape, imagery and so on. However, the visual presentation of a company is more than a design; it is the reflection of the company. There are three main reasons why getting visual branding right can help a company build a successful brand.

Similar to choosing an outfit for a first date or an interview, choosing the right way to represent a company is important. The reason for that is because first impression matters – it shapes how new customers perceive a brand. As Davis reported, "On an average day, consumers are exposed to six thousand advertisements and, each year, to more than twenty-five thousand new products," along with the internet age, people make judgements faster than ever, and normally the first thing the brain processes is visuals. Therefore, the visual brand has an immense impact on the first impression customers get of the company; and first impression can either draw attention from potential clients or turn them away (Davis 2002; Kellermeyer 2016).

Beyond the first impression, visual branding can communicate with the audience. In order to make it easier for customers to understand and remember how special a brand

is, it needs to demonstrate and communicate its difference. A logo or a symbol is the fastest way to do so. As Edgar Dale illustrated the connection between learning and images, only about 10% of what we read would be recalled, whereas visual or video content accounted for approximately 50% recollection of the content. Thus, adding visual elements to the branding strategy and marketing plan is the perfect way to make the message more memorable. Moreover, each visual brand conveys a certain mood. Whether a company is casual, professional, modern, laid-back or driven, its visual brand should reflect those unique values to draw in the right clients. Furthermore, visual branding is the tool that can connect a brand with its audience emotionally. Studies have proven that today's customers make decisions based on their emotion rather than logic (Bechara A., Damasio H. & Antonio R. 2000); therefore, if the visual brand creates a trust-worthy, positive and engaging feeling, the likelihood of customers returning to the business is higher (Dale 1969; Kellermeyer 2016; Nichols 2018).

Last but not least, consistent branding builds trust and recognition; hence, a company's visual brand should speak the same language as what is said in its text, audio and video. Furthermore, a well-recognised and trusted brand appearance and identity advocates the idea of an honest and dependable business. It is not exaggerated to say that a strong brand image is one of the most powerful assets of a company. Successful businesses put a lot of effort into building their visual presentation and identity that is clear, professional and consistent from start to finish. Following in the footsteps of the big names in today's market, it is necessary for a brand to have a visual style guide to ensure a consistent use of colour, imagery and typography in every online and traditional marketing materials (Bradford 2015).

To demonstrate how important visual branding is, take a look at Starbucks Corporation – an American coffee company and coffee chain who owns more than 27,000 stores with 300,000 employees worldwide (Bone 2018).

Figure 2. Starbucks current packaging (Peck 2015).

Starbucks has been around since 1971, starting from selling coffee beans in Seattle's Pike Place Market to being one of the most common places where people come to chat, meet up or even work. Since its foundation, the Starbucks logo has always included the bare-breasted, two-tailed mermaid or so-called siren. In 1987, the green colour was introduced to the logo so that it matches the brand's missions to "inspire and nurture the human spirit". Since then, green has been used effectively as the central colour in all branding. In 2011, the logo has become so well-known that Starbucks made a bold decision which was removing the name of the company from its logo and keeping only the signature Siren figure (Harris 2016; Starbucks Corporation 2018).

Figure 3. Starbucks logo evolution (Lippincott 2013).

Due to the popularity of the brand, many coffee shops around the world were exploiting different variations of the Starbucks name and logo. Therefore, the new design helped set the brand apart from its admirers, competitors and identity thieves, while allowing Starbucks to remain simple yet distinctive and recognisable. After launching its new identity, Starbucks has reported significant growth in its stock prices (Lippincott 2013). Additionally, the new logo ensures a refreshed look for Starbucks without losing their core image of the green colour scheme and the siren. It is also a wise decision to remove the text 'Starbucks Coffee' from the logo because the brand is not restricted to serving only coffee anymore, but they also offer teas, other beverages, ice creams, fresh food, packaged goods, consumer products and so on (Cannon 2015).

Besides having a strong visual identity, Starbucks has had numerous clever, strategic visual branding moves. A typical example is having baristas write customers' names wrong on purpose. When customers receive their orders with their names being misspelled, they will find it so amusing that they have to take pictures of the 'mistake' and share it on social media without knowing that they have advertised Starbucks for free. Taking advantage of their drink's shareability, in 2017, the brand came up with a brilliant idea of introducing the infamous Unicorn Frappuccino blended beverage. The drink was a limited-time offer which lasted for four days (Starbucks Newsroom 2017); however, the real reason why it got so popular is simply because it is beautiful.

Figure 4. Starbucks' Unicorn Frappuccino (Starbucks Newsroom 2017).

Most people went out and ordered a Unicorn Frappuccino not because of an advertisement created by Starbucks' marketing team, but because they saw pictures of a beautiful drink that others were sharing across social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter. No matter what the ingredients of this drink was or how many people actually enjoyed it, customers were purchasing it if not to only take a photo or video and post it online. Undoubtedly, the drink became the most popular topic on the internet at that time, and it is all about the visuals (ABC Packaging Direct 2018).

Visual branding has become a crucial part of the branding process in the modern day. In order to build a successful visual branding strategy, first, a company must develop and nurture its visual identity. The following chapter works primarily as a guide on how to create a powerful visual identity.

3 A GUIDE TO DESIGNING VISUAL IDENTITY

Having understood the basics of visual branding, in this chapter, the definition of visual identity and its components are analysed in depth. Then, the author discusses briefly how understanding the target group of the brand is important to the process of designing visual identity. This chapter also serves a purpose of evaluating necessary theories and building a framework to support the final design project.

3.1 Definition of visual identity

Some business owners often make mistake by thinking that the visual identity of a brand is only the logo. As a result, they spend a lot of time and money into designing a logo yet neglect to invest in developing other components to complete a brand. As discussed in chapter 2, a brand is how customers perceive a company, and branding is an act to influence that perception. Correspondingly, visual identity has to be developed more than just a logo in order to affect customers' point of view (Cullop 2016).

In general, visual identity is the tangible manifestation of a brand, such as colour, form, and shape, which visually presents a brand to its audience in order to evoke certain feelings and experiences (Cullop 2016). It is also what makes a company instantly recognisable to its customers even when it is placed among other competitors. In addition, visual identity adds more depth to the branding of the company, and it gives people something to remember.

Visual identity is more than a photo. Together, the visual elements can tell a story that highlights the brand values or tone them down if executed poorly. Even with a well-designed visual identity, a brand can still disappoint, confuse and fail to communicate to its audience if the visual identity does not match the brand value (Thomas 2015).

3.2 Understanding the target group

Brand owners are the ones who have the right to approve the design and pay for it; as a result, designers usually tend to adjust the design according to their clients' tastes and preferences. However, it is the customers who bring revenues to the company, and therefore, are the ones that designers must try to impress as well.

Defining the target group starts with demographics such as age, gender, marital status, geographic location, and income, based on the markets that the brand is in (Christensen 2014). For example, the target audience of Plannr.eu are international expats, youngsters, and startup owners, who are above the age of 18 and looking for guidance on moving abroad. Since this target group does not have limitation on their gender, marital status, etc., the most suitable appearance for Plannr.eu's visual identity is something simple, modern, trustworthy and less corporate feeling.

Understanding the psychology of target customers and their needs is also important to build a successful identity program. When selecting and designing visual elements of the brand, designers should always keep in mind that it is all about how the target group responds to certain colours, shapes and images (Christensen 2014). As in the case of Plannr.eu, they use turquoise as the main brand colour to bring a reliable and settling feeling to the customer.

Building a successful visual identity requires careful market research and deep understanding of the target audience so that both their needs and the brand values can be adapted to the identity program. These key factors ensure that the visual elements can attract the target audience, deliver the appropriate message and eventually, create a lasting relationship with them (Christensen 2014).

3.3   Developing the design

Designing visual identity is similar to building a house, meaning it is not a one-step task. Before creating the company's design assets, it is important to start building from "the ground up and lock in the basics of the design structure" (deBara 2017). The elements that work as the core building blocks for designing an effective identity program are colour, typography, and shape.

3.3.1   Colour

Colour is one of the most powerful tools that designers use to communicate client's message. It can evoke emotion, express personality and set the mood to the brand. The use of colour is extremely versatile. In our daily lives, colour can be used to show direc-

tions, give warnings, make a statement, create an atmosphere, attract people's attention, etc. In a study named "Impact of colour on marketing" conducted by Singh, researchers found that approximately 62 to 90 percent of snap judgements made about products are based on colours alone. Therefore, cautious use of colours can not only differentiate brands from competitors, but also influence moods, feelings, and attitudes of customers, whether positively or negatively (Singh 2006). In design, choosing a colour scheme for a brand identity requires a deep understanding of colour theory, the meaning of colour, and an ability to implement it effectively and consistently over a broad range of media (Wheeler 2012, 149).

In this subchapter, the author explores the basics of colour theory including the colour wheel shown in Figure 5, colour harmony, and the context in which colours are used. After that, each colour and their psychological meanings are analysed more thoroughly.
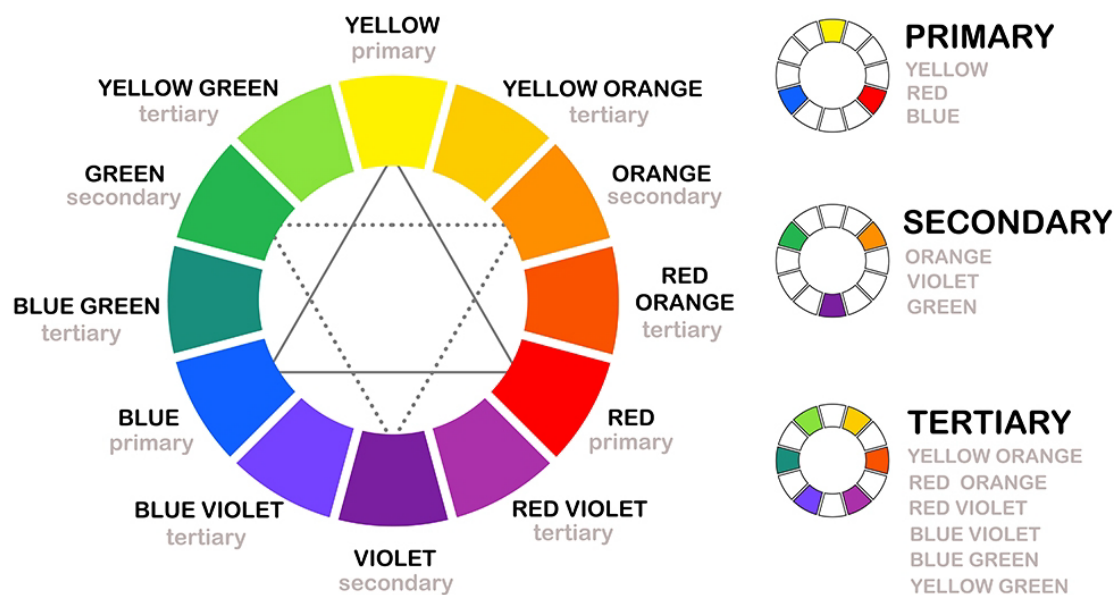
Figure 5. The colour wheel (Cowan 2015).

The colour wheel, also known as the colour circle, is a basic but extremely essential tool used in design. The first circular diagram was created by Sir Isaac Newton in 1666. Since then, numerous versions have been created to visually compare colours and their

interactions with each other; however, the most common one is a wheel of twelve colours based on the RYB colour model (Cowan 2015).

The illustration above shows the relationship between three main colour types: primary, secondary, and tertiary colours. Primary colours include red, yellow and blue. They are pure colours, which means they are unrelated to each other. These colours can be mixed together with the appropriate amount to create any colour in the spectrum. Green, orange and violet make up secondary colours, which are formed by combining equal amounts of two primary colours. On the other hand, tertiary colours are created by mixing a primary and a secondary colour. The appearance of a tertiary colour can tell which primary colour is dominant in the mixture (Sheri 2012).

The colour wheel can also be analysed by dividing it into two sections – warm colours and cool colours. The method is illustrated in the image below.

**Figure 6.** Warm and cool hues on the colour wheel (Mint Creatives).

As displayed in Figure 6, warm colours include red, orange, yellow, and variations of these three colours. In nature, these colours can be found from fire, fall leaves, sunsets and sunrise. Warm colours are used in design to reflect passion, energy, happiness, and enthusiasm. On the contrary, cool colours such as green, blue, and violet, are the colour of night, of water, and of nature; hence, they give a sense of calm, tranquillity, relax, or professionalism (Chapman 2010).

The colour theory goes beyond the temperature of colour. Understanding other aspects that affect a given colour, such as saturation, value, tones, shades, and tints, is the key to use colour effectively. For this project, it is unnecessary to remember all technical terms; however, the author should be familiar with some basic concepts listed below in order to create colour schemes (Chapman 2010):

- **Hue** is another term for colour, for example, blue, green, and red.
- **Saturation** refers to the intensity of colour – how strong or weak a colour is. A colour is considered in purest version when it is fully saturated. When the saturation increases, the colours look purer. On the other hand, the saturation decreasing causes the colours to appear pale.
- **Value** refers to the lightness or darkness of a colour. For example, orange has a higher value than dark blue, black has the lowest value of any colour, while white has the highest.
- A **tone** is formed by adding grey to a colour, making the colour looks duller.
- A **shade** is created by adding black to a colour, which makes the colour darker. In design, in order to avoid too dark and heavy look, very dark shades of colour are preferably substituted for black and are treated as neutral colours.
- A **tint** is formed by adding white to a colour, which lightens the colour. Very light tints are called pastels, which is especially used to create more feminine appearance to design, though there are many other pastel tints that bring a more masculine or gender-neutral look.

Colour harmony is the combination of aesthetically pleasing colour. The colour wheel provides designers a handful of basic techniques that eases the process of creating new colour schemes, especially for beginners. Below is an illustration made by the author

displaying some useful formulas to create harmonious colour schemes (Chapman 2010; Cowan 2015):
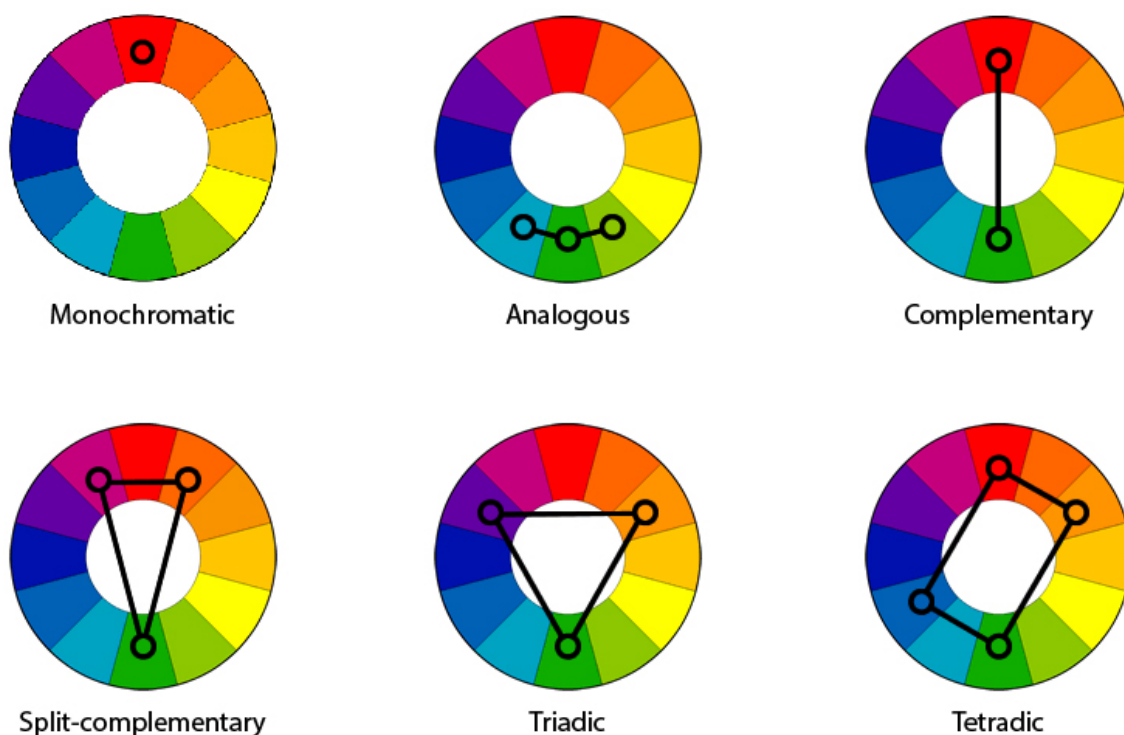
Figure 7. Colour harmony formulas.

- **Monochromatic** colour schemes are created by combining different tones, shades and tints of a specific hue. This is the simplest and easiest technique to create a colour scheme; yet, it can appear boring if done poorly. A solution for this is adding a strong neutral colour such as black or white to keep the diversity.
- **Analogous** is another easy formula to create colour schemes. Analogous schemes are often found in the nature, formed by using three colours that lie next to each other on the colour wheel. This combination typically gives designs an appealing and eye-pleasing look.
- **Complementary** schemes are created by combining colours that lie opposite each other on the colour circle. The high contrast between warm and cool hues create a vibrant and outstanding designs. However, combining exactly opposite colours with the same value, such as red and green, can result in a garnishing and disturbing appearance. This can be avoided by using different tones, tints, and shades, and adding transitional colour between them. Additionally, if the

scheme only consists of two colours, it is advisable to use the hue that is border-ing the opposite one. Well-known brands, such as FedEx and IKEA, also im-plement this solution for their logo design. As shown in Figure 8 below, FedEx uses orange, instead of yellow, with purple in their logo; and IKEA combines yellow, instead of orange, with blue.

Figure 8. Logo of FedEx and IKEA (Fedex. IKEA).

- Similar to complementary schemes, but more pleasing to look at, the **split-complementary** hues refer to taking a base colour and using the two adjacent colours as its complement. For instance, the combination of violet with yellow-orange and yellow-green, instead of only yellow, is considered a split-complementary schemes. These schemes can be seen in famous brands such as Firefox, Taco Bell, and Fanta.

- **Triadic** schemes are created from hues that are equally spaced out, normally forming an equilateral triangle, around the twelve-spoke colour wheel. This is one of the more diverse, but also difficult, colour schemes to use in designs. Ex-perienced designers often prefer triadic schemes for a stunning and unique look. To achieve harmony and balance with these colour schemes, it is important to have only one hue as dominant, while the others are accents.

- The more hues are added to the scheme, the harder it is to pull off effectively. **Tetradic**, or double-complementary are one of the most difficult schemes to use. Combining two pairs of complementary colours requires careful attention to the balance between warm and cool colours.

- Finally, **custom** colour schemes are the hardest to create because they do not follow any predefined formulas discussed above.

Creating colour schemes can be intimidating. Normally, designers select hues based on the requirements of the project, some extent of experimenting and failing, and personal preference. Nevertheless, no matter how dynamic and beautiful a colour scheme is, it is extremely important that the colours are used with meaning and purpose (Sherin 2012).

Figure 9. Colour Emotion Guide (Visually 2013).

Studies have examined the effect that colours have on the subconscious mind, and how it influences people's response to a brand. As illustrated in Figure 8, colours can evoke emotion and express brand values through their own psychological meanings (Chapman 2010; Cowan 2015):

- **Red** is the colour passion, fire, excitement, violence, warfare, and danger. It is also associated with love and desire. Scientists and psychologists have proven that red can actually have physical impact on people, raising heart beats and blood pressure. For that reason, red is used in fire service, in stop lights, and warning signs, to inform people of potential danger. In other cases, red indicates the importance of the event, for example, the red carpet at awards shows. In China, the colour means luck, whereas in Africa, red is the colour of mourning.

From a designer's point of view, red is a powerful colour for grabbing attention to certain elements.

- **Orange** is the combination of passionate red and happy yellow, resulting in a very vibrant and energetic colour. Orange is seen in the earth, and autumn. Due to it being the colour of changing seasons, orange can represent change, movement and optimism. It is also strongly associated with creativity. Moreover, as its name is the same as the name of a fruit, orange means health and vitality. Similar to red, orange can be used to draw attention without being as overwhelming as red.

- **Yellow** captures the joy of sunshine and brings happiness. From a colour psychology perspective, yellow actually stimulates the analytical side of our brain; hence, the colour also represents intellect and the mind. In general, yellow brings a hopeful, happy, cheerful, and fun feeling. On the other hand, yellow is associated with danger, although not as intensively as red. In designs, bright yellow can create a sense of happiness and cheerfulness. Softer yellow is often used in design for babies, rather than blue or pink, for a gender-neutral look.

- **Green** is undoubtedly the colour of nature. It represents balance, growth, fertility and new beginnings. Alternatively, green is also associated with envy or jealousy, and sometimes a lack of experience. Green is the combination of the calming effect that blue has and the happy energy of yellow. Therefore, it is a vibrant yet stable and eye-pleasing colour. Green is appropriate for designs that is related to wealth, stability, and nature.

- When it comes to the most favourite colour, based on the data illustrated below in Figure 10, the winner is blue.

Blue planet

Which one of the colors listed below do you like the most?
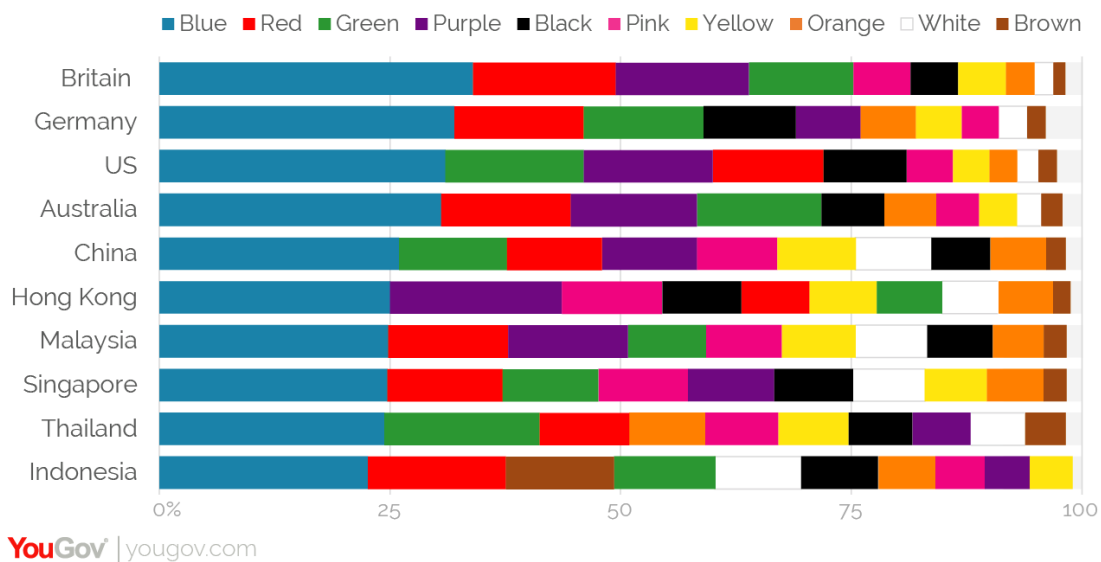
Figure 10. Most favourable colour survey (Jordan 2015)

Blue is the colour of the sky and sea. Generally, it brings a sense of trust, peace, calmness, and responsibility. In design, the meaning of blue is actually versatile and depends on different shades and hues. Light blues are relaxing and calming to look at, while brighter blues represent refreshness and friendliness. Dark blues, for example, navy, are used to express strength and reliability, and are perfect for a corporate and professional sites and designs. Blue is considered to be a sensible choice for many corporations and brands such as Twitter, Facebook, IBM, and Dell.

- **Violet**, or purple, is the mixture of the power of red and the calm of blue. In ancient times, due to the rarity and high cost of the dyes that were extracted from snails to produce purple hues, only royals and very wealthy people could afford them. As a result, purple is associated with royalty and majesty. It is a powerful colour choice to express luxury, wealth, and ambition.

- White, black, grey, or brown, are considered **neutral colours**. These hues serve as the background in designs and are usually combined with brighter colours. Nevertheless, neutral colours can work perfectly on their own to create very sophisticated appearances in design.

Figure 11. Neutral colours (thisismeagankerr.com)

Black is the strongest among other neutral hues. Positively, it is associated with power and elegance, but it can be associated with death, evil, and mystery as well. On the opposite end of the spectrum, white is similar with black – it can work well with almost any colour. It brings a sense of purity, simple and cleanliness, and is popular in minimalist designs. Another commonly used neutral hue is grey which lies on the cool end of the colour spectrum. Although it is sometimes considered moody and depressing, greys work very well in corporate designs. Light greys can be used instead of white, and dark greys are the perfect substitute for black. Brown is another neutral hue that is commonly used for background, giving the designs a sense of reliability, warmth and earthiness.

Different colours have different meaning behind them. With cultural differences, it gets even more complicated. Therefore, besides understanding the colour theory, colour harmony and the meaning of colours, it is the designers' job to always conduct research on the brand's target market to pick the most appropriate hue.

3.3.2 Typography

After creating the colour scheme for a brand, it is time to select its typographic style. Typography is the visual art of creating written words. Before the digital era, typogra-

phy was rather confined to the world of book and magazine design, and a range of advertising and public works such as road signs, billboards and product packaging (Taheri 2016). Nonetheless, since the significant growth of the internet, the art of typography exploded in various directions. Now, typography has become the core building block of an effective identity program. It is impossible to maintain a coherent company image without a distinctive and consistent typographical style that is used with intelligence and purpose (Wheeler 2013, 154). At its best, type can express text both semantically and aesthetically. It can convey information, provoke emotions, tell a story and influence behaviours. Each typeface has its own character and personality; some are more playful while others are more conventional. It is the designer's responsibility to find the right fit for each project (Cullen 2012, 11).

The number of typefaces created by typographers, designers, and type foundries are growing each day. As there is an abundant choice of fonts in the current creative markets, designers must have the ability to differentiate between a good quality font and a bad one. Hence, having the relevant knowledge of typeface is crucial for designers to choose the typographical style wisely.

A typeface is the distinct visual form of a type family. It is a consistent system of related characters such as letterforms, numerals, and punctuation that is created by a type designer. On the other hand, a font is a complete character set of that typeface – each font embodied a specific size and weight. For example, bolded 12-point Times New Roman is considered a different font than normal Times New Roman in 8 point; however, both belongs to the Times New Roman typeface. This difference was important in the old days when printers needed thousands of physical metal blocks to print letters. However, there is a growing acceptance that the two terms can be used interchangeably. Since the rise of desktop publishing, fonts were no longer thousands of tiny metal blocks; instead, they became digital computer files that could be scaled to whatever size or weight users wanted. In a nutshell, users choose typefaces and work with fonts (Brownlee 2014; Cullen 2012, 55).

Typography involves the skill of choosing the right typeface and working effectively with it to communicate the personality of a brand. Choosing typefaces for a design pro-

ject can sometimes become a challenging task if designers do not understand the meaning of each typeface. That is why a classification system can be helpful in identifying, choosing and combining typefaces; nevertheless, each classification only works as a starting point, not a perfect plan. Various classification systems exist with methods based on different factors such as historical development, formal attributes, and intended use (Cullen 2012, 57). The author chooses the classification system that focuses on the font psychology and demonstrated it in the figure below. In this way, typefaces are basically classified in four major categories: serif, sans serif, script, and decorative (deBara 2017; Maag 2018).
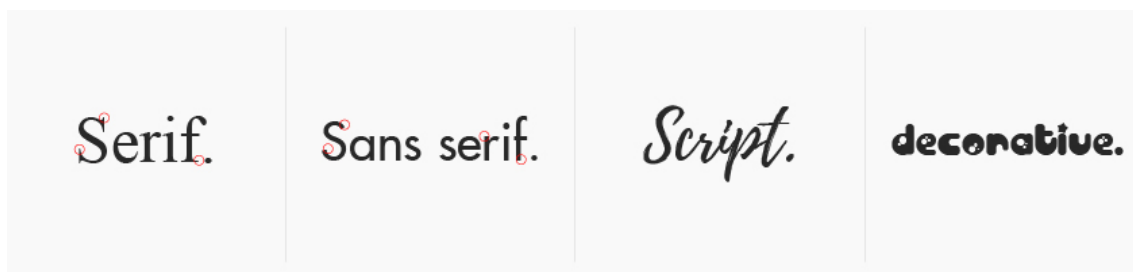
Figure 12. Four categories of typeface.

- **Serif** typefaces, such as Times New Roman and Garamond, have existed for many centuries, long before the born of any other typefaces. The serif style has additional detail that looks like an anchor, or feet, on the end strokes of many characters. Due to its longevity and its popularity in ancient writing, serif typefaces are perceived as trustworthy, classic, traditional, and somewhat old-school. As a result, these typefaces are usually used in formal context such as government documents, company reports, and academic papers. Additionally, serif typefaces are considered easier to read in print; thus, they are more preferred for lengthy printed books, newspaper, and magazines. There are certain serif typefaces, for example, Didot, that can be seen frequently in the fashion industry due to its timeless and glamourous feeling.

- **Sans serif** typefaces was first introduced in the 19th century and used primarily for commercial headlines rather than body text. The term comes from a French word "sans" which means "without". Sans serif is the typeface that does not have the extending features called "serif" at the end of strokes. The popularity of

sans serifs has been rising over the last decade since the boom of screen-based technology. The complex texture and fine details in serifed fonts do not always perform well in digital form because screen resolutions are not sufficient enough to render accurately all reading sizes. Therefore, the monolinear stroke weight and simplicity of the sans serif typefaces becomes an appropriate choice for digital platforms. Sans serif fonts, like Helvetica or Open Sans, often give a clean, minimal, friendly and modern feel to brands.

- **Script** typefaces are considered decorative fonts; however, they are classified in a separate category because of one thing in common – they imitate cursive handwriting styles. Script fonts has typical characteristic of connected flowing letterforms and slanted, rounded characters, as if they are written by different writing instruments such as calligraphy pen and paint brushes. Due to its carefree and creative outlook, script style expresses creativity, interest, luxury, and femininity. Moreover, script typefaces are used normally in headlines, rarely in body text, and never in all caps due to its unreadability. They also look best when being combined with serif or sans serif fonts. Because script typefaces are so distinct, it is advisable that designers use only one script font on a project.

- **Decorative** typefaces, also known as display fonts, "are kind of in a league of their own" (deBara 2017). Each has its own creative elements ranging from an unusual shape in the letters, outlines and shadowing, to a more artistic or edgy touch. These fonts are often tailor-made and customised to form any desired meaning for specific brands. Therefore, decorative typefaces are usually used in logos rather than normal text. The following image is the logo that used decorative fonts to create a distinctive look – the Harry Potter logo.

Figure 13. Harry Potter logo (Wikimedia Commons).

The typeface was designed specifically for the American editions of the Harry Potter book series. Later, it was used in the films. The graphic elements in the typeface reminiscent the magical wizarding world in the series, and especially, the lightning bolt detail in the letter "P" reminds the lightning-shaped scar that Harry Potter had. For more than 20 years, since it was first introduced, the typeface has been the essence of this well-known logo. Because decorative fonts are custom-made, their meanings may vary. They can be fun, unique, direct, or casual, depending on how brands want them to be. In a nutshell, decorative fonts are best fit brands who want to make a bold statement and create a memorable brand identity.

Understanding the psychology of font enables brands to choose the right fit for their brand identities. Besides the aesthetic tone and the meaning that each typeface conveys, its legibility is another factor affecting font choice. The term refers to the ease with which single characters can be recognised. Choosing legible typefaces with careful typesetting is crucial to shape readable text. However, this term does not always apply to all font choice as some typefaces, such as Script and Decorative fonts, intentionally challenge legibility to express the artistry and creativity (Cullen 2012, 55).

Last but not least, designers need to pay attention to the readability when working with typefaces. "Readability" refers to the relationship of the characters with each other, as well as the interaction of colour between typefaces and background.
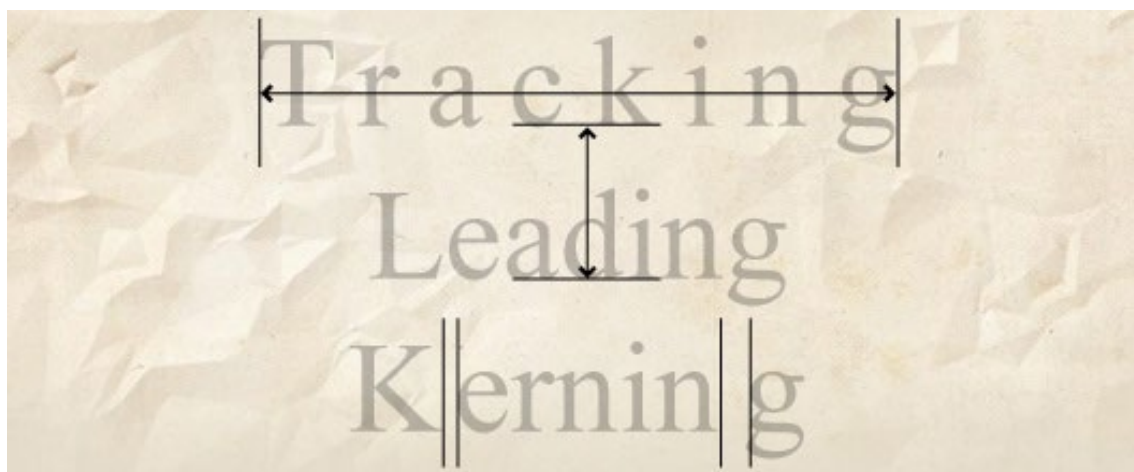
Figure 14. Illustration of Tracking, Leading, and Kerning (Ken 2011).

Even with a legible font, putting it in grey colour on a yellow background still prevents readers from recognising the text. Another factor that affect the readability of typeface is the leading which is the space between lines of text. In normal circumstances, this space should be between 1.25 and 1.5 times the font size. Kerning also maintain typeface readability by adjusting the space between characters. There are certain pairs of letters that cause annoying distraction due to their uneven gaps – they appear either too close or too far away from each other. Kerning can fix those awkward appearances. On the other hand, tracking adjusts the overall spacing of words, lines, and paragraphs to improve type appearance (Cullen 2012, 88).

The typographic style says a lot about a brand. Therefore, designers should have a deep understanding of typography, font psychology and typeface legibility to choose typeface wisely and create an effective identity design.

3.3.3 Shape

When it comes to brand identity design, companies also need to think about form and shape of logo and of other visual elements. Similar to colour and typography, logo shapes have different meanings and can build up the desired reaction from customers. Below is a list of different shapes that can form brand identities (deBara 2017):

- **Round** shapes, such as circles, ovals, and ellipses, are soft and less intimidating than sharp ones. Incorporating round shapes into the brand identity can bring a sense of warmth, community, unity, and love. In history, these shapes are used for badges and stamps; therefore, round shapes can also be used for traditional, authentic or vintage brands.
- **Organic** shapes resemble the shapes of nature such as leaves, flowers, and water. These shapes carry a soft and comfortable feeling.
- **Spirals** shapes, though less common in logo design, are refreshing and captivating. Brands use spirals to show creativity, growth, or an idea of constant flow.
- **Sharp and angular** shapes, including squares, rectangles, and triangles, are associated with strength, stability, trust, and efficiency. Squares and triangles also represent power and technology.

- **Lines** are also used to compose logos. Vertical lines feel masculine and strong, whereas horizontal lines are more grounding, tranquil and secure.
- **Abstract** shapes are easily recognisable as they simulate the form of everyday objects and people, though they are not realistic. In fact, they are simplified versions of organic shapes. In design, they are commonly used as icons or outline elements to represent ideas and concepts.

Colour, typography, and shape are the basis for creating a powerful identity program. After determining the building blocks of design, it is time for designers to bring ideas into tangible design assets.

3.4   Designing visual identity

A brand identity consists of various elements depending on the nature of the business, and it is the business owners who decide which assets are more relevant than others. For instance, a restaurant should put a lot of effort into designing its menu and store interior, while a cosmetic brand whereas a marketing agency concentrates more on the website and the look of social media platforms (deBara 2017). This subchapter continues on exploring certain assets of brand identity that are most important to the project, along with some tips to deliver the best result to clients.

3.4.1   Logo

A logo is undoubtedly the foundation of a visual identity. It is a recognisable and distinctive combination of shapes, colours, symbols and sometimes words to identify an organisation. Not as complicated as it sounds, a logo is, in fact, a simple device that symbolises the values and qualities that a brand promises to its customers. For a long time in history, logos have been used for coats of arms, flags, coins, and watermarks. Since the late nineteenth century, modern trademark laws were established, allowing companies to register a name and designed identity, and protecting them against any unauthorised use of their mark (Slade-Brooking 2016, 24).

Regardless of the industry, a well-designed logo is distinctive, suitable, aesthetic, practical, and most importantly, simple in form. A simple form or shape is definitely easier

to remember. Moreover, a great logo usually caries a concept or meaning that enables a brand to communicate with its audience (Cass 2009).

Although there is no recipe for designing a perfect logo, there are certain criteria that a logo design should meet (Cass 2009):

Figure 15. Logo of Nike, Google, and Apple (from left to right) (Nike, Google, Apple).

- **Simplicity** is the key to success. Considering the world's most popular brands such as Apple, Nike, and Google, their logos have one thing in common – they are very simple. Achieving simplicity in design makes a logo recognisable, memorable and unique.
- The most outstanding and effective logo is not affected by current design trends. Good logo designs must **stand the test of time**. Even when the style is modified over the years, the concept of the logo should remain the same. The logo evolution of famous corporations, like BMW and Starbucks, follows this rule strictly. This principle also ensures a consistent theme for the visual identity.
- An effective logo must be **versatile**. It should be used at any size for a variety of media and applications, and work effectively in monochrome colours. Therefore, the logo should be designed in vector format, and Adobe Illustrator is a great tool for that. To achieve the versatility in a logo design, it is advisable to begin with only black and white. In this way, designers can concentrate more on the concept and form, rather than colour.
- Finally, a logo design should be **appropriate** for its targeted audience. Even though "a logo doesn't need to say what a company does" as David Airey stated, its colours, typography and forms should still embody the meaning of the brand. For example, a logo with a child-like typeface, vivid colours and round shapes would be perfect for a children's toy store, rather than a professional law firm.

The logo acts as the ideal basis for the brand collateral of the company. Once the logo is created and approved, it is time for design refinement and development in phase 4 – creating touchpoints (Wheeler 2013, 164).

3.4.2 Creating touchpoints

As mentioned earlier, depending on the field of business, the number of visual components may differ. For this particular company case, the touchpoints of its visual identity are website design, favicon, stationery design, and finally, a brand guideline to ensure consistency for future marketing materials. This subchapter contains the theory framework that support the development of those visual assets.

Website is the most necessary visual component of a brand. Today, the website of a company no longer works only on the computer screen, but also on iPad, smartphone, and smart watch. Thanks to the existence of websites, every business has become more accessible to mostly anyone around the world. In order to build a site completely, a number of specialists, including graphic and experience designers, developers, usability engineers, content creators, and project managers, are collaboratively involved in the process (Wheeler 2013, 166). In terms of website design, the first and main concern is user interface (UI) and user experience (UX) design.

Figure 16. Illustration of responsive website design (Coulter 2017).

UI and UX designers are involved in the same website design project; however, their skills are applied differently at various stages. UX designers use critical and logical analysis to design the system, structure and user flow. Specifically, they conduct research on targeted users, create wireframes of several pages, prototype certain features and test the overall user experience before moving on to the design stage. This user-centric design focuses on improving the usability, ease of use, and the interaction between the customer and the website. For example, how users navigate through a site, where they click, and how they find the information they want – is a part of what user experience designers have to work on. On the other hand, UI design deals with the colour, typography, graphics, and other visual elements of the website. UI designers create an attractive and responsive visual experience for users by developing UI prototyping, interactivity and animation. Additionally, since there are so many devices available, designers need to adapt the interface and functionality of the site, making it works responsively on all platform, in all size and under all operating system (Jolley 2016).

In addition to website design, brands need to have their own **favicons**. Favicons are, in fact, very little things and probably the least important part of a website. However, paying a bit more attention to these 16x16 pixels squares images can make a site stand out significantly, comparing to other sites without favicons. The figure below displays how a favicon looks like.
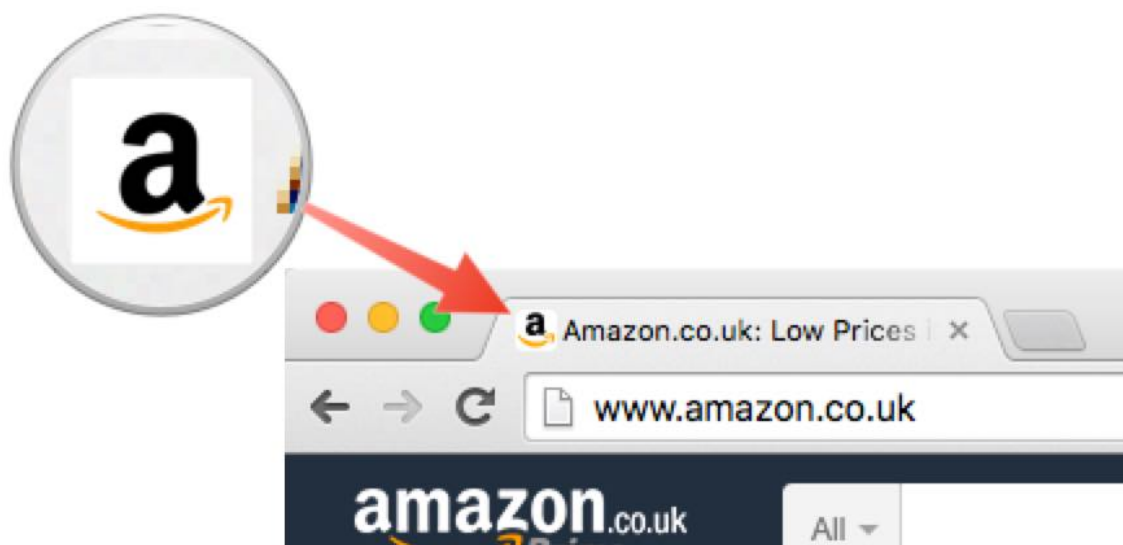
Figure 17. Favicons of Amazon (Sitebuilder 2018).

Favicons are small icons that give brands a chance to attract attention from users and improve their experience in the easiest way. As shown in Figure 17, favicons are located in the address bar of a web browser. They can also be found next to the website's name in a list of bookmarks. Favicons challenge designers to encapsulate many unique details of a brand's visual identity into the simplest and boldest forms (Wheeler 2013, 168).

Moving on to the most essential stationery of a brand – **business card**. Business card, besides carrying the contact information, is a small and portable marketing tool. The quality and the appearance of the card can reflect the cardholder and the company itself, as well as leaving a lasting impression in the eye of potential clients and customers. Nowadays, designers have to deal with trying to include many information in a small card – from email, voicemail, mobile phone number, to double address and websites. Therefore, naturally, the information is placed on the back side of the card, while the front side is dedicated for displaying the logo. In the future where high technology is developed, a business card can become an identification card with user's fingerprint or other biometric data on it (Wheeler 2013, 172). Figure 18 illustrates a business card in U.S standard size, and other areas of the card that need attention.
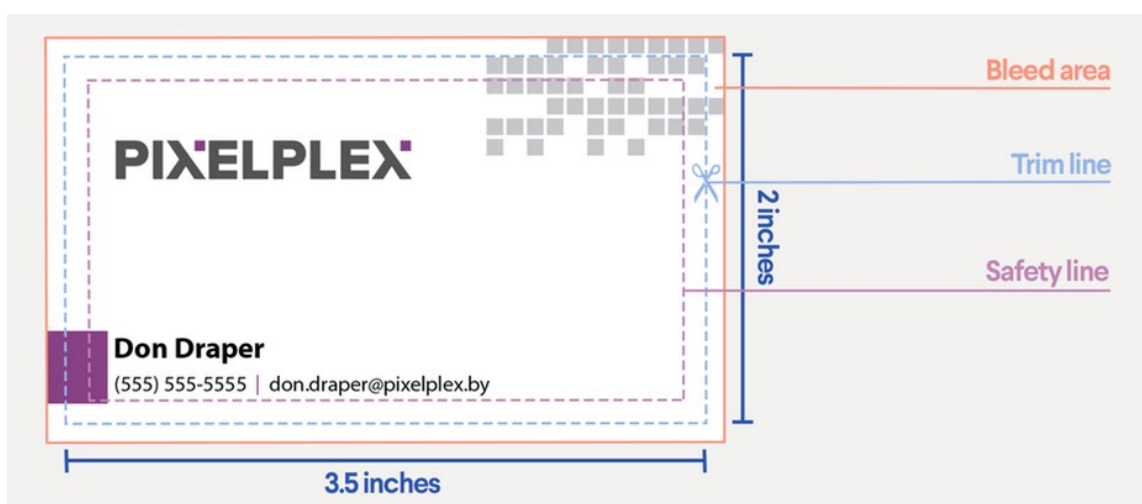

Figure 18. Bleed area, trim line, and safety line on a standard U.S. business card (99designs).

When designing a business card, no matter the size, it is important to always pay attention to bleed area, trim line, and safety line. Important elements such as text and logo should not be placed outside the safety line (Ellis 2018).

Other components of a stationery set such as letterhead, pens, pencils, and envelopes, are simpler to be created, and should be based on the design of the business card to maintain a consistent look.

Last but certainly not least, in order to communicate about the brand in a consistent and responsible manner, a **brand guideline** must be created as one of the most essential part of a successful visual identity program. Below is an example of what a brand guideline looks like.
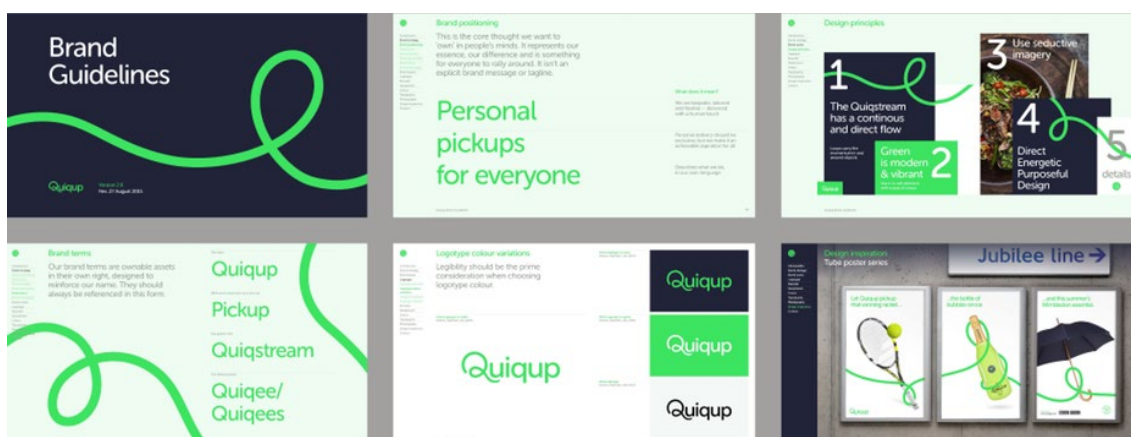
Figure 19. Brand Guidelines of Quiqup (MultiAdaptor).

Brand guideline, as known as visual style guide, is a document that summarises how a brand presents itself. In other word, it's a guiding tool that helps maintain consistency across all teams and channels in a company by demonstrating what a brand should look, feel, and sound like. Before creating a visual style guide, it is important to establish a concrete knowledge about the brand – what their mission and vision is, who their target customers are, and what personality and unique values that the brand has. These core components should be communicated through the style guide (Chan 2016).

Although the design may be different depending on the business's needs, there are some elements that are most essential to be included in every style guide (Chan 2016):

- The first one is the brand story where brands get the chance to introduce themselves to the world. Normally, this part comprises of the components mentioned above: mission, vision, target audience, personality and values. The information should be concise and relevant.
- The next section of the brand style guide is dedicated to the logo explaining how the logo should and shouldn't be used. This section should include all approved versions of the logo, minimum size and proportions, proper spacing between the logo and other contents, and mistakes to avoid such as stretching and rotating.
- Then, the core building blocks that was determined before – colour palette and typography – are included in the style guide as well. The colour section must contain the RGB and HEX codes for digital uses, and CMYK codes for printing. As for the typography, the style guide must give a clear instruction on fonts used for different text styles such as headlines, body text and captions, the alignment and the spacing.
- Additionally, other graphic elements such as icons, patterns and imagery can be specified to ensure that they are used appropriately in any platform and material.

The theory discussed in chapter 2 and 3 are the framework for the final design project. In the next chapter, the result of the project is displayed with detailed explanation from the author on certain design choices and tools used to create each visual element.
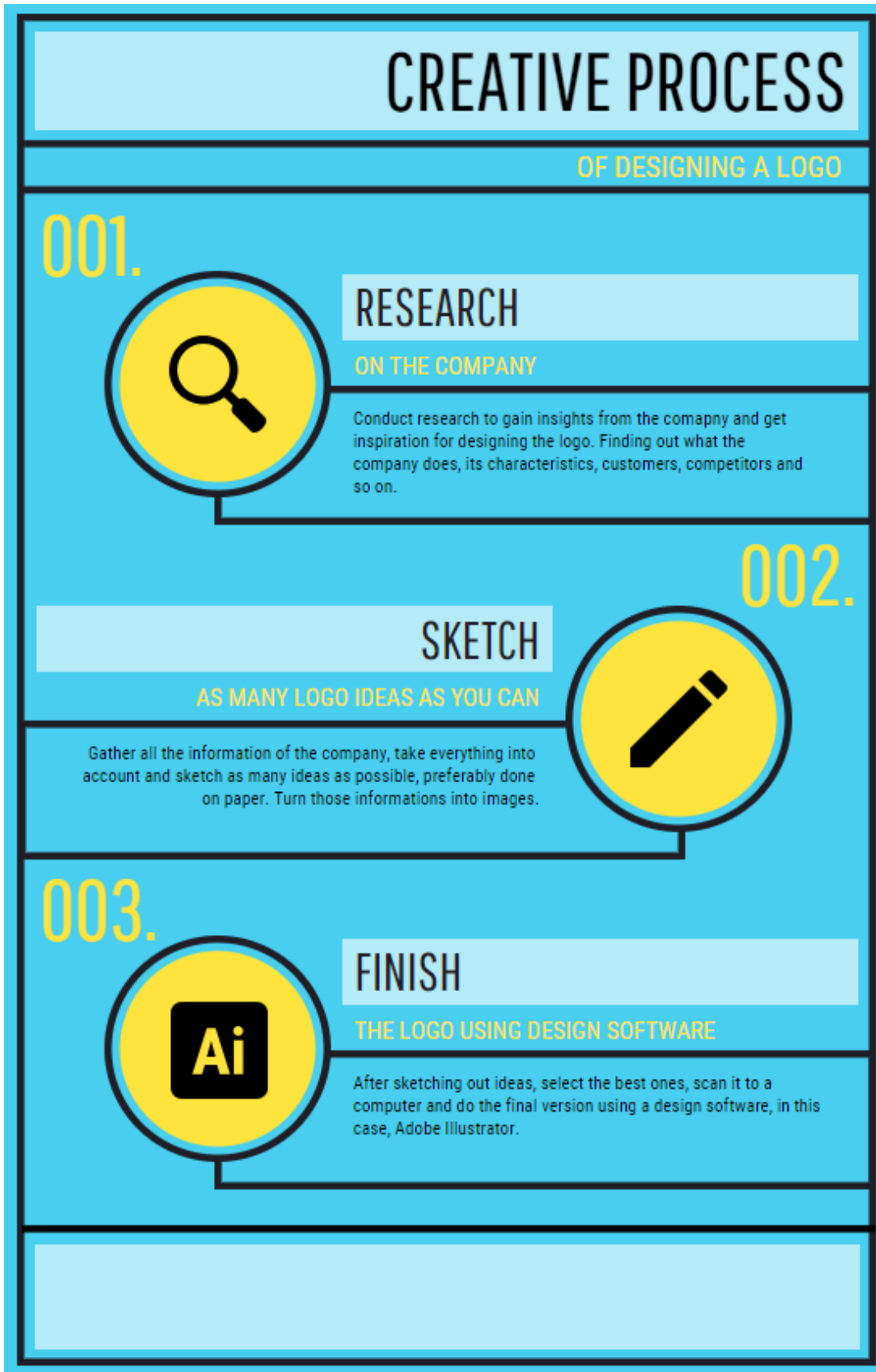
4   THE VISUAL IDENTITY OF PLANNR.EU

This chapter showcases the project's final outcome – the visual identity package of Plannr.eu. In the first subchapter, the author explains how she developed the design by identifying the colour, the typographic style and the shape of the brand. After that, the chapter continues on demonstrating each element created for Plannr.eu. The figures and table included in this chapter are done by the author.

4.1   Approach and implementation

To approach this project better, the author did some analysis on the current visual identity of Plannr.eu to decide which elements should be kept and which should be improved. The current logo is simple, yet, does not fully express what the company does. Its only emphasis is the orange dot, which Pieter prefer to keep. As a result, the primary colour of the logo is expected to be orange as to maintain the coherence between the dot and the icon. This limits choices, but on the plus side, orange is already a great colour to embrace the personality of the brand – young, enthusiastic and positive. In addition, the current logo is using Roboto Slab which gives a feeling of stability, trust and somewhat professional. Nevertheless, the CEO wants the logo to be less corporated because their target groups are mostly young people. Thus, it is the author's job to design a more modern and minimal icon to go with the already-existing logomark. Last but not least, at the moment, as found on Plannr.eu's Facebook page, the marketing materials, such as images, posters, charts and graphs, are not in the same mood and style. Hence, above all else, what Plannr.eu's is missing is a visual style guide to ensure the consistency of all graphic elements.

Although a logo is not a brand's visual identity, it is the first image that consumers see of a brand. Therefore, almost every time, designing a visual identity starts with designing a logo. In order to effectively create a logo, there are certain steps which designers must go through. These steps are illustrated by the author in the infographic below.
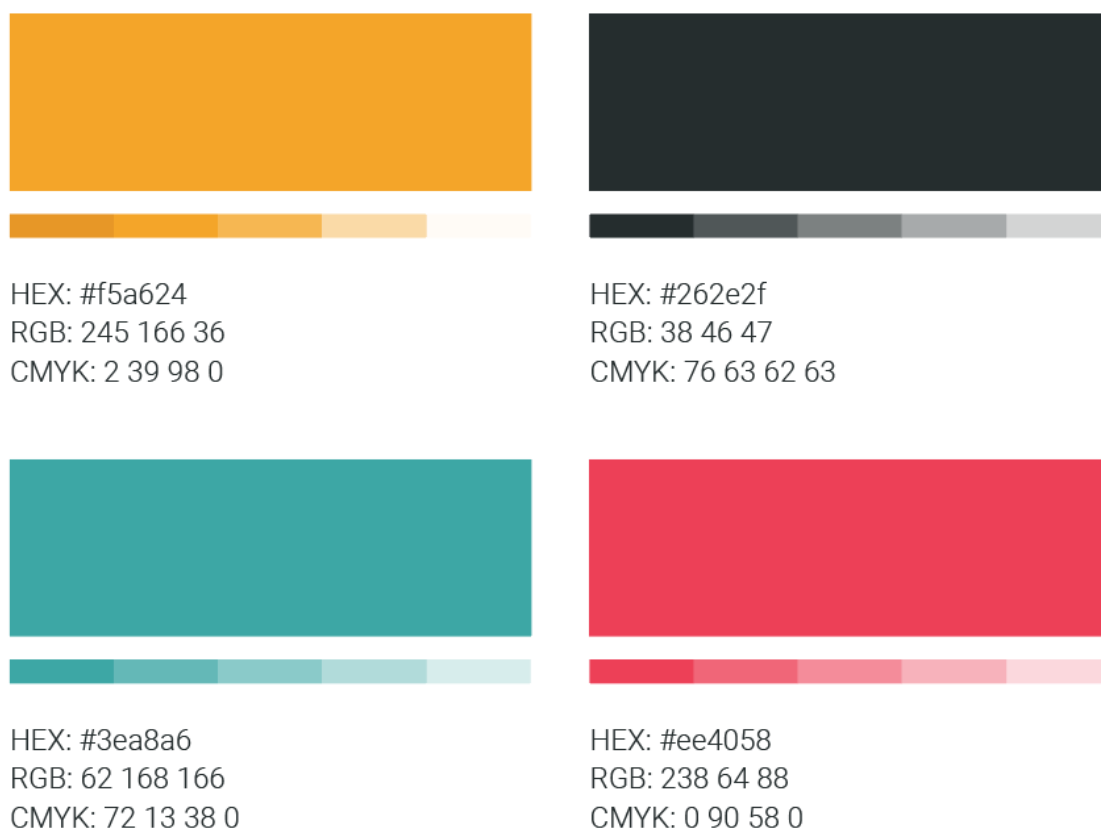
CREATIVE PROCESS

OF DESIGNING A LOGO

001.

RESEARCH

ON THE COMPANY

Conduct research to gain insights from the comapny and get inspiration for designing the logo. Finding out what the company does, its characteristics, customers, competitors and so on.

002.

SKETCH

AS MANY LOGO IDEAS AS YOU CAN

Gather all the information of the company, take everything into account and sketch as many ideas as possible, preferably done on paper. Turn those informations into images.

003.

FINISH

THE LOGO USING DESIGN SOFTWARE

After sketching out ideas, select the best ones, scan it to a computer and do the final version using a design software, in this case, Adobe Illustrator.

Figure 20. Creative process of designing a logo.

Before conducting any creative works, the author must do research on the subject, or particularly, on the case company. After having an interview with Pieter – CEO and Founder of Plannr.eu, the author has summed up the most important information in the table below.

Name of brand	Plannr.eu
About	Planning tool that simplify the life of expats: cut down the clutter on the channel, give a clear vision and show specific steps of the process, etc.
Characteristic	Young, energetic, trustworthy.
Target customers	Primarily expats moving to another country. Age is not restricted. Also, people who needs to know about different issues that may occur abroad such as pension, insurance, loans, etc.
Strength	First open software on private market. 360° approach. Referral incentives. Scalability towards all countries. Freedom of choice. White label branding
Competitors	There aren't any direct competitors. There are only indirect competitors such as relocation agencies. But they aren't necessarily competitors, they can be potential clients/partners.
Current logo and visual identity	Strength: The simplicity - But they are dealing with people who has dreams and imagination, so the logo should look less corporate. Preferable colour: turquoise or orange. Preferable typeface: Roboto and Roboto Slab. Accessible, easy to read.

Table 1. Key points about Plannr.eu and its current visual identity.

The research really helped the author gain inspirations and ideas for the new logo and visual identity of Plannr.eu. As previously discussed in the theoretical framework, the starting point is to develop the design by determining the colour, typography and shape of the logo. Since the company is in its implementing phase, they would prefer using the same colour they have already had in the system. After several discussions and emails, orange and a dark shade of grey were chosen as primary colours, while turquoise and pink are used as secondary colours.

HEX: #f5a624
RGB: 245 166 36
CMYK: 2 39 98 0

HEX: #262e2f
RGB: 38 46 47
CMYK: 76 63 62 63

HEX: #3ea8a6
RGB: 62 168 166
CMYK: 72 13 38 0

HEX: #ee4058
RGB: 238 64 88
CMYK: 0 90 58 0

Figure 21. Colour palette for Plannr.eu

The primary colours are primarily used in the logo, marketing materials, websites, etc. Orange was chosen to express the youthful and energetic spirits of Plannr.eu. As previously reviewed in subchapter Colour from chapter 3, orange is also the colour of change, movement and optimism, which is exactly what Plannr.eu is all about. The dark shade of grey works as a neutral hue for texts in documents and website. It is a perfect

substitute for pure black hue which is often avoided due to its high contrast against bright background.

On the other hand, the secondary colours are only used for decorative elements, small icons, or highlighting different services that Plannr.eu offers.

When dealing with legal paperwork such as loans, pensions and insurances, customers usually look for brands that give them a reliable and secure feeling. Therefore, in order to add a sense of trustworthiness and stability to the brand, a Serif font, such as Roboto Slab, is the perfect choice.

Roboto Slab

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
! # % & / ( ) * ?

Roboto

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
! # % & / ( ) * ?

Figure 22. Roboto Slab & Roboto

While Roboto Slab is used for the final logo, headings and labels, Roboto is used in normal body text to retain a clean and modern feeling to the brand. Both Roboto Slab and Roboto comes in many font weights, ranging from light to bold. However, in the case of Plannr.eu, it is recommended to use Light weight at almost every time, only when the font size is smaller than 18 pixels should the font be used at Regular weight.

The final building block of the design is shape. The shape of the logo is ideally some-thing resembles a path, a location mark, or a plan. Based on the information collected from the interview, the author did several sketches on paper, before finalising the best

ones on computer and sending them out to the client. All of the sketches were inspired by the nature of Plannr.eu's business – a planning tool that eases the life of people who are moving from one country to another.

4.2   Logo concept and variations

From the determined design building blocks – colour, typography and shape – the logo concept was designed in Adobe Illustrator – a vector graphic editing program.

Figure 23. Logo concept.

The path is chosen to represent the smooth and easy journey that expats will experience with Plannr.eu. Moreover, the location pin symbolises the final destination that Plannr.eu will help users get to. Along with an illustrated landscape, the logo carries a dreamy feeling which is suitable for the brand's target customers – people with high motivation as well as expectation when moving to new country. Every visual element of the symbol is minimalised to achieve a simple yet elegant look.

The logo in full version includes a symbol, also as known as a logomark, in front, and a logotype following after that. The logomark can be used separately to represent the brand, whereas the logotype should never stand alone.
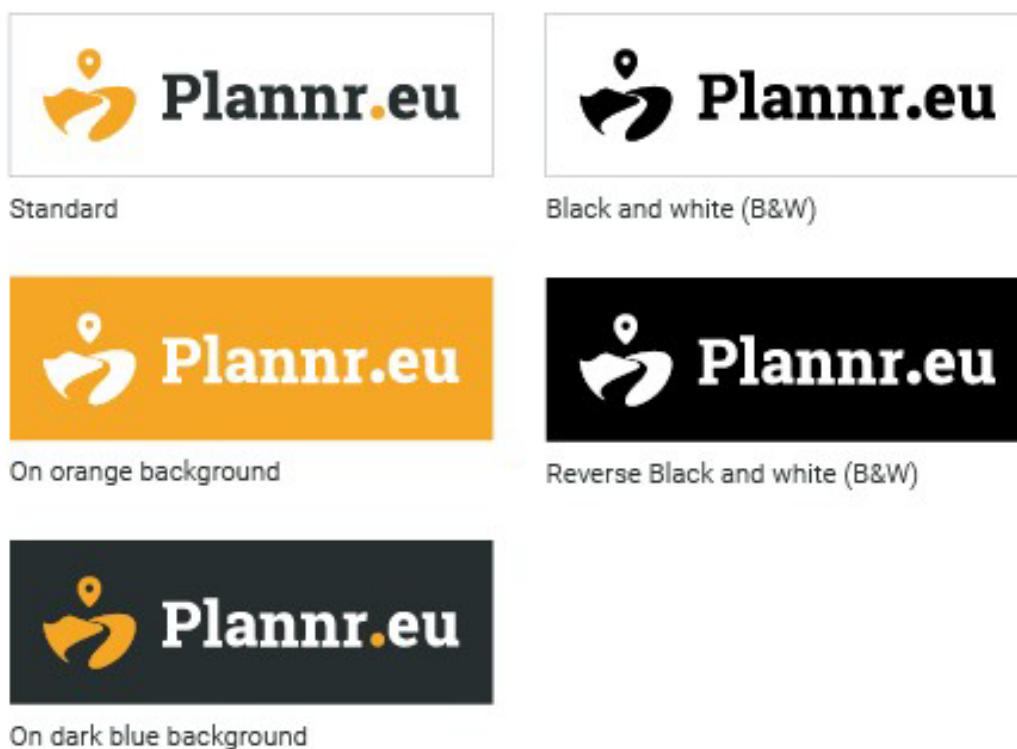
Figure 24. Logo variations.

Based on Figure 23, it is clear that the logo meets another requirement – versatility. The logo can be used in any size and applied to different applications when necessary. For example, for printing on dark-coloured paper, the version on dark blue background can be used, in which the logotype is changed to white, to retains the orange dot in the logo. Furthermore, in basic word documents, the black and white versions can also be used to save cost, instead of printing in colours. When colours are needed, specially for social media platforms, it is recommended to use the standard version. If the background is in orange or any strong primary colour, it is best to use the logo in white for a better appearance.

The Plannr.eu logo works smoothly on any item in the stationery package, including business card, letterhead, and envelop.

Figure 25. Business card of Plannr.eu.

The business card is designed in a common dimension in Western Europe, which is 85x55 mm, since Plannr.eu is based in Belgium. However, with the amount of white space around the main content, the business card can easily be resized into any dimension if necessary.

Other elements of the stationery package are designed based on the design of the business card to maintain the consistency.

Figure 26. Plannr.eu's stationery package.

The author uses Adobe Illustrator CC to design all visual elements in vector format, which allows all objects created inside of it to become scalable while still giving sharp, crisp lines that are print-ready in any dimension. Then, the business card, letterhead and envelop mock-ups are created in Adobe Photoshop CC.

4.3   Favicon

Having created the logo for Plannr.eu, the author only needs to use the logomark as the favicon that will be used on the brand's website. The size of a favicon must be at least 16x16 pixels, which is extremely small. Therefore, the author created a mockup so that it would be easier for readers to visualise the result.
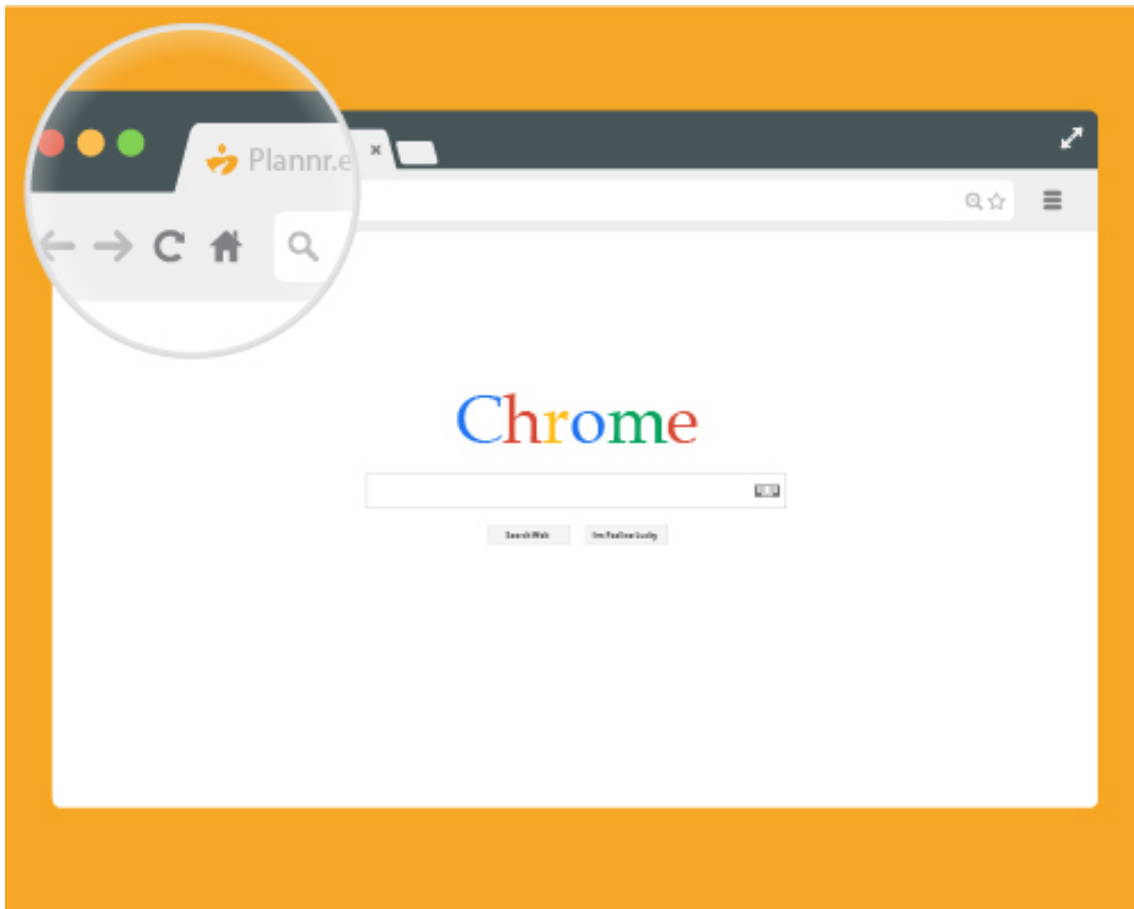
Figure 27. Plannr.eu's favicon.

This icon will appear in Plannr.eu's address bar, sometimes in the history as well, and next to the page's name in a list of bookmarks. If users create a shortcut link from Plannr.eu's page, this favicon will also be displayed as a desktop icon on a computer or an app icon on mobile screen.

4.4   Website landing page and mobile view

As previously discussed in chapter 3, website is a crucial component of a brand. The landing page and mobile screen design should incorporate signature graphic elements, such as colour palette and typographic style, of Plannr.eu to ensure the consistency of the brand. Most importantly, the design has to be scalable and responsive on different devices, platforms and operating systems.
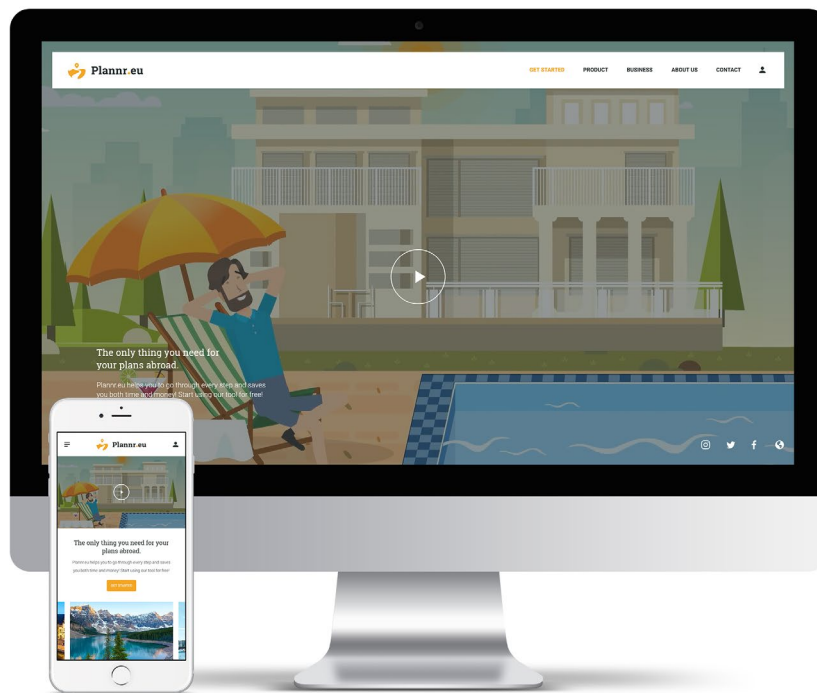
Figure 28. Plannr.eu's website landing page and mobile view.

For this project, the author designed the website landing page and mobile view using a user experience design software application called Adobe XD. The application supports vector design and website wireframing, which means the author could import graphic elements created in Adobe Illustrator. With Adobe XD, the author could also create simple interactive click-through prototypes to demonstrate the functionality and how users can navigate through the site. However, due to the lack of time, the author could only design the user interface (UI) of the site and mobile application, but not a complete prototype for the user experience (UX) part.

5   EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the outcome of the project is evaluated. Finally, recommendations for further research and development are given and the research problems are reviewed.

5.1   Project evaluation

The project was an amazing opportunity for the author to incorporate the knowledge of branding, which was obtained during her study at VAMK, into graphic design. The final visual identity successfully transformed an idea into a tangible and visible thing, which enables Plannr.eu to attract the right customer and hopefully create a positive perception of the brand.

As mentioned in subchapter 1.2, Pieter is opened to any proposals for the brand's visual identity. However, since Plann.eu is in its implementing phase, he would like to keep the text part of the logo, which has the orange dot, and focus on designing the logomark. Hence, the author did several sketches to mainly form an idea for the logomark that would go well with the already existed logotype. As a result, the final logo is displayed in previous chapter.

Based on the feedbacks, the author believes that she has satisfied all requirements set for the project. The logo works perfectly well on many colours, various platforms and in different sizes. Moreover, the style of other visual elements such as the business card and website design are consistent with the brand's characteristic – which is young, enthusiastic and reliable.

5.2   Recommendations

Pieter was very pleased with the result and said that he would consider it as the most possible ideas for Plannr.eu's visual identity. However, there are some legal issues regarding the company's name. Therefore, Pieter cannot implement the new logo right away as there is a possibility that the company has to change its name.

Should Pieter ever use this visual identity package, it is recommended that the brand guidelines introduced in chapter 4 is constantly followed to maintain the coherence of

the brand. If there are new materials created in the future, they should be adapted to the same visual style specified and demonstrated in the brand guidelines.

5.3 Conclusion

The thesis introduced the term visual branding by going through the definition of a brand – an idea and a feeling that customers have about a company, which distinguish it from other competitors, and branding – the actions that companies take to influence the perception that people have about them. On top of that, the author successfully managed to emphasise the importance of visual branding by giving practical examples of how a visual identity can affect customers' first impressions of a brand, help them communicate with it and build trust.

The primary part of the theoretical framework is where the author compiles many practical tips and advices to form a guide on creating visual identity. There are many guides online on how to create visual identity; therefore, it is mainly the author's choice to structure the guide as discussed. First of all, it is crucial to do research on the company and the target group. After that, the design is developed from the ground base – determining the colour palette, typography and shape of the brand. Finally, the logo is formed based on those building blocks, followed by designing some touchpoints such as stationery items, favicon and website, depending on the nature of the business.

At the final step, the author successfully applied the theory into practice and designed the visual identity package for Plannr.eu. As a matter of fact, the author decided to proceed with this project due to her great passion on design. After finishing the project, the author developed further interest in visual branding and UI/UX design. Additionally, working with a real client taught the author to be humble and to understand that her job as a designer is to solve client's problem, not doing what she wants. It was an incredible and valuable learning experience for the author.

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APPENDIX 1. FINAL RESULT PRESENTATION TO CLIENT

Logo

Concept

The dreamy path and landscape is chosen to represent the smooth and easy journey that expats will experience with Plannr.eu. The location pin shows the final destination that Plannr.eu will help users get to.

Logo

Variations

The orange dot is the signature of Plannr.eu; therefore, it is preferable that the dot is kept in orange. As a result, the ideal logo version is the standard one. Under any inevitable circumstances, the logo can be used as following variations.

Logo

Sizing & Spacing

The size of the logo can be increased or decreased as necessary, butt should never be reproduced smaller than 25 mm width.

There should always be at least a space = x between the logo and other graphic and typographic elements.
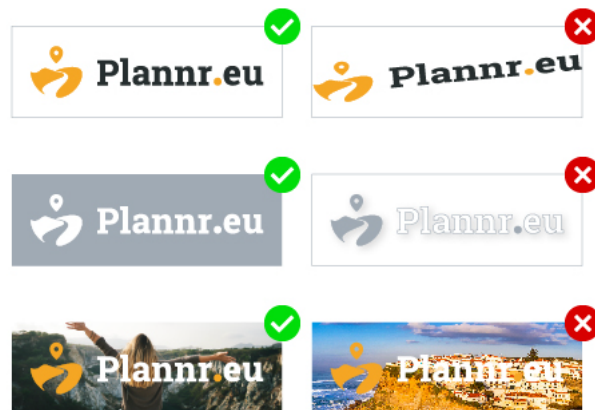

Logo

Dos & Don'ts

Dos
- Use the standard logo mostly everytime.
- Use the B&W version when the background colour (medium grey) does not go well with the orange colour.
- Place the logo on sharp, simple and cool-toned background images.

Don'ts
- Stretch or rotate the logo in any way.
- Outline, add special effects or fill the logo in any way that is different from the logo variations.
- Place the logo on a background that is too bright, too colourful or has the same hue (orange), and has too many details.

Colour palette

Primary usage

Excluding black and white, the following colours are primary colours, which are used as the dominant colour in the logo, typography, marketing materials, social media posts, websites, etc.

HEX: #f5a624
RGB: 245 166 36
CMYK: 2 39 98 0

HEX: #262e2f
RGB: 38 46 47
CMYK: 76 63 62 63

Colour palette

Secondary usage

These secondary colours are used for decorative and small elements, or for highlighting different services of Plannr.eu on its website and mobile application.

HEX: #3ea8a6
RGB: 62 168 166
CMYK: 72 13 38 0

HEX: #ee4058
RGB: 238 64 88
CMYK: 0 90 58 0

Typography

Roboto Slab & Roboto

Roboto Slab: Gives a sense of trustworthiness and stability. Used for title and heading.

Roboto: Modern, accessible and easy to read. Used for body text.

Roboto Slab

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
! # % & / ( ) * ?

Roboto

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
! # % & / ( ) * ?

Stationery

Business card

Business card is the most essential stationery of a brand. On the back side, the main logo pops out on a dark background. On the front, informations of the holder are included along with the logo mark.
The size of the business card is the common dimension in Western Europe as Plannr.eu is based in Belgium.

85 mm

Plannr.eu

55 mm

Pieter Moeremans
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+32-474 37 52 61
pieter@plannr.eu
pieter_moeremans
www.plannr.eu

9
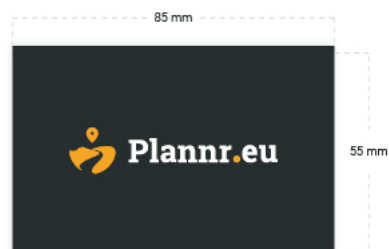
Stationery

Letterhead

After business card, other items are easier to create. This is a letterhead template on an A4 paper - suitable important documents, invitations, contracts, etc.
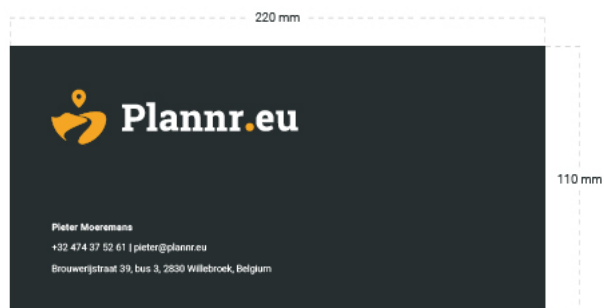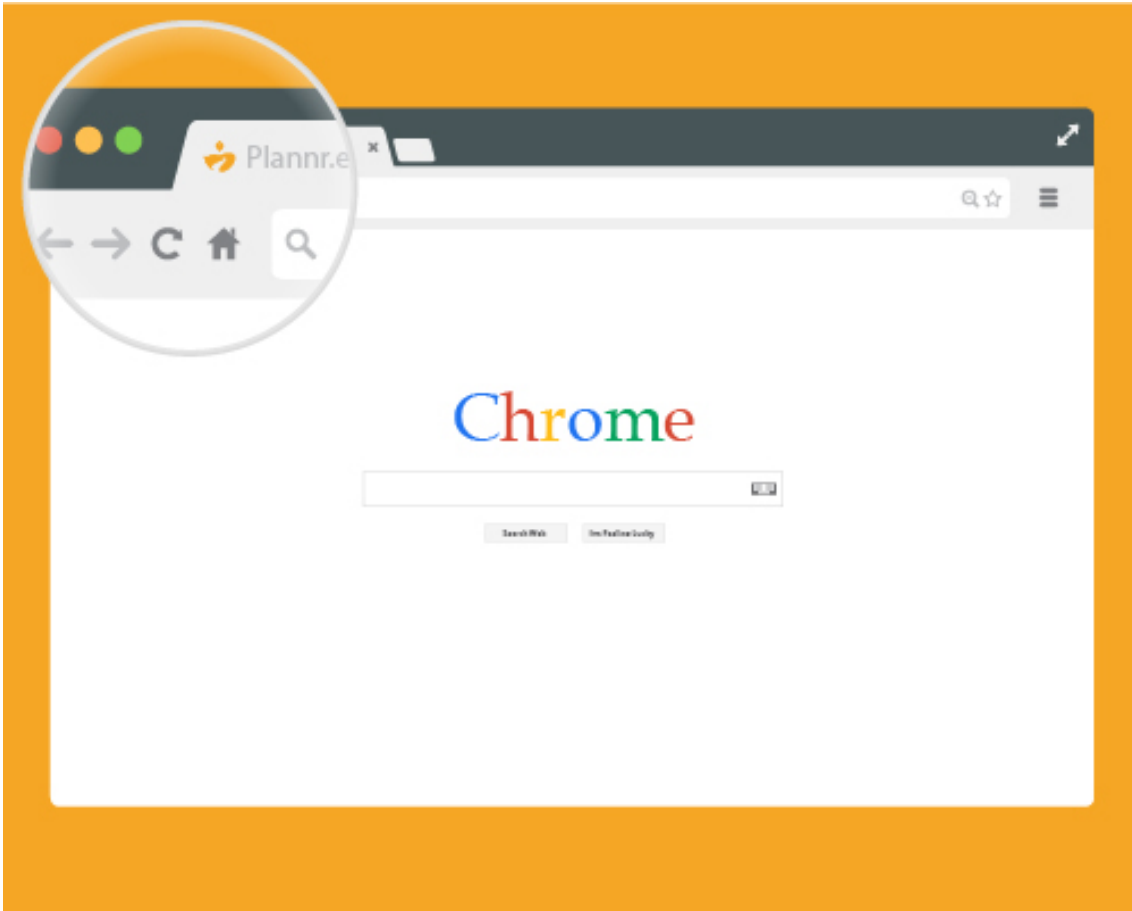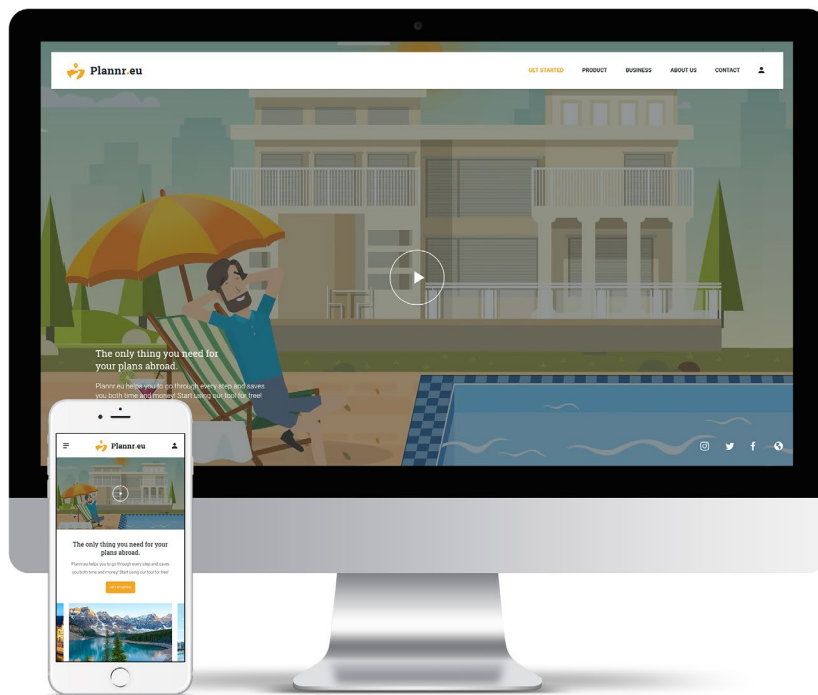

10

Stationery

Envelope

The envelope is optional, but recommended to have at least some in the office. The size is the standard DL envelope which measures at 110mm x 220mm. This envelope size fits an A4 paper folded into thirds.

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APPENDIX 2. RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PLANNR.EU

Company related:

1. Tell me about your company.
2. How do you describe your company's service/ products?
3. Who are your target customers?
4. Who are your competitors? What do you like or dislike about their logos?
5. What set you apart from your competitors?

Design related:

6. Which words in the company name do you want to emphasise?
7. Do you want to include a tagline in your logo?
8. What do you like about your current brand identity and logo?
9. What don't you like about your current logo?
10. What colours do you want to or not want to use in the logo?
11. What kind of typographic style do you prefer?
12. What layout do you prefer, just icon, text, or both?
13. How do you intend to use the logo? On which platforms?
14. Do you have any specific idea for the logo?

Project related:

15. Do you have an exact deadline?
16. How many options do you want to see at first review?