

Designing an icon set - Study, Process, and Implementations

A visual study on redesigning the icon set for our drivers application

How it all started

It's been 4 months since I was working with 21North Europ Assistance and 21North has its very own specialized driver partner application the more we thought through each part of the user experience the more we realized that the app was going to require a ton of custom icons. Nearly every part of the interface, from the Homescreen, to the Toolbar, to the Transition Designer, to the Gestures dropdown was going to require its own set of icons. So that quickly became my main job!

Visual Design

The strategy when designing elements like icons

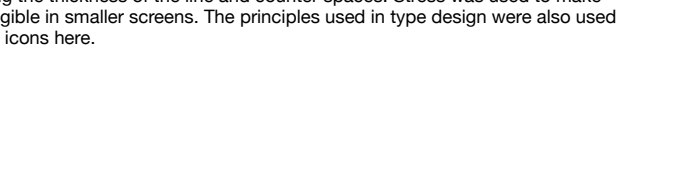
Design is always driven by context. Surprisingly, I found that designing for a professional driver app was one of the most complex contexts to work within. Even just for the icons! Homescreen icons have to be a certain size, and look a certain way. That is different from the appearance of sidebar icons, which is different from those you'd find in a dropdown menu. Some icons re-appear in multiple places, at multiple sizes, and in multiple styles. Establishing consistency across all parts of Ambassador App interface meant that every icon had to be especially versatile. No symbols that looked great at one size, or in a certain style, but couldn't be adapted to others.

Hick's law states that decision-making time is lesser with minimal visual clutter. Elements like icons also add to the visual clutter. And, visually appealing interfaces are perceived as better, faster, easier, and users are more tolerant of errors.

Concept

Revamping of GUI of the Ambassador Application (icons and visual design improvements) after understanding the UX motives of the same. Colour orange was chosen as the primary colour (Also the colour used in your trademarked logo). Challenge was to accommodate the same without making it intrusive to the UX. Motive was the make it part of the user experience as seamlessly as possible. Icons were also re-designed keeping these goals in mind. It is simple, intuitive and eye catchy.

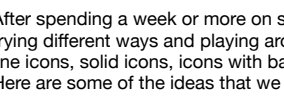
Homescreen icons were designed to be simple and modern. Each icon was reduced to its minimal form, expressing essential characteristics. Also, the icons were designed symmetrically with geometric forms to simplify them further and make the counter spaces more prominent.



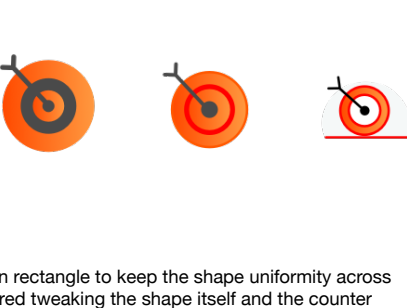
The terminals were rounded off to give a smooth visual tone. Consistency was obtained by maintaining the thickness of the line and counter spaces. Stress was used to make them more legible in smaller screens. The principles used in type design were also used to design the icons here.

Process

My icon design process begins on paper. I'm a big believer in that. It begins with drawing every imaginable possibility for that icon — what the subject matter or metaphor will be and what variations they could take. While in this conceptual phase, I try to remind myself to put everything down on paper — even random ideas that seem unrelated. The next stage is evaluation; analyzing each concept based on how well it fits the goals, constraints, and context for this particular icon.



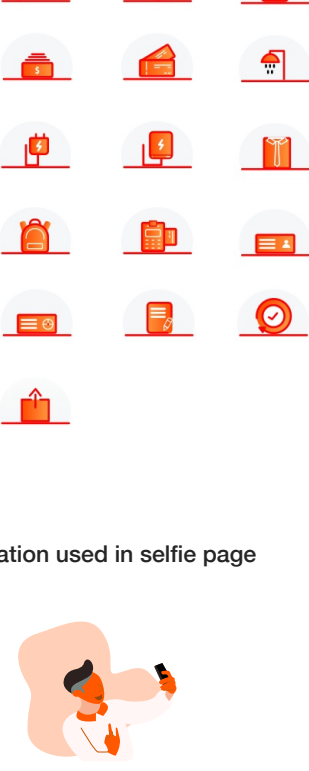
After spending a week or more on sketching, finally we started crafting it in tool. We were trying different ways and playing around with the color and shapes. We tried line icons, solid icons, icons with background and we kept exploring for a while. Here are some of the ideas that we worked on.



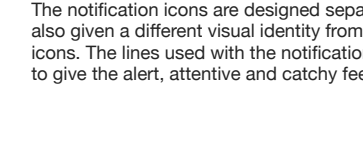
The icons were designed in a construction rectangle to keep the shape uniformity across all icons. Making them look uniform required tweaking the shape itself and the counter spaces in the icons.

Final Icon Sets

Homescreen Icons



Notification Icons



The notification icons are designed separately and also given a different visual identity from the other icons. The lines used with the notification icons is to give the alert, attentive and catchy feels to the user

Secondary Icons

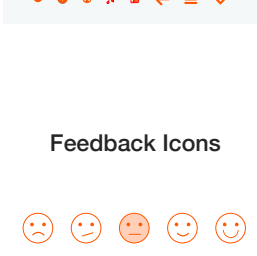
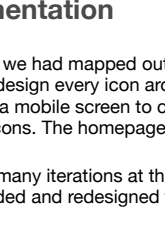


Illustration used in selfie page



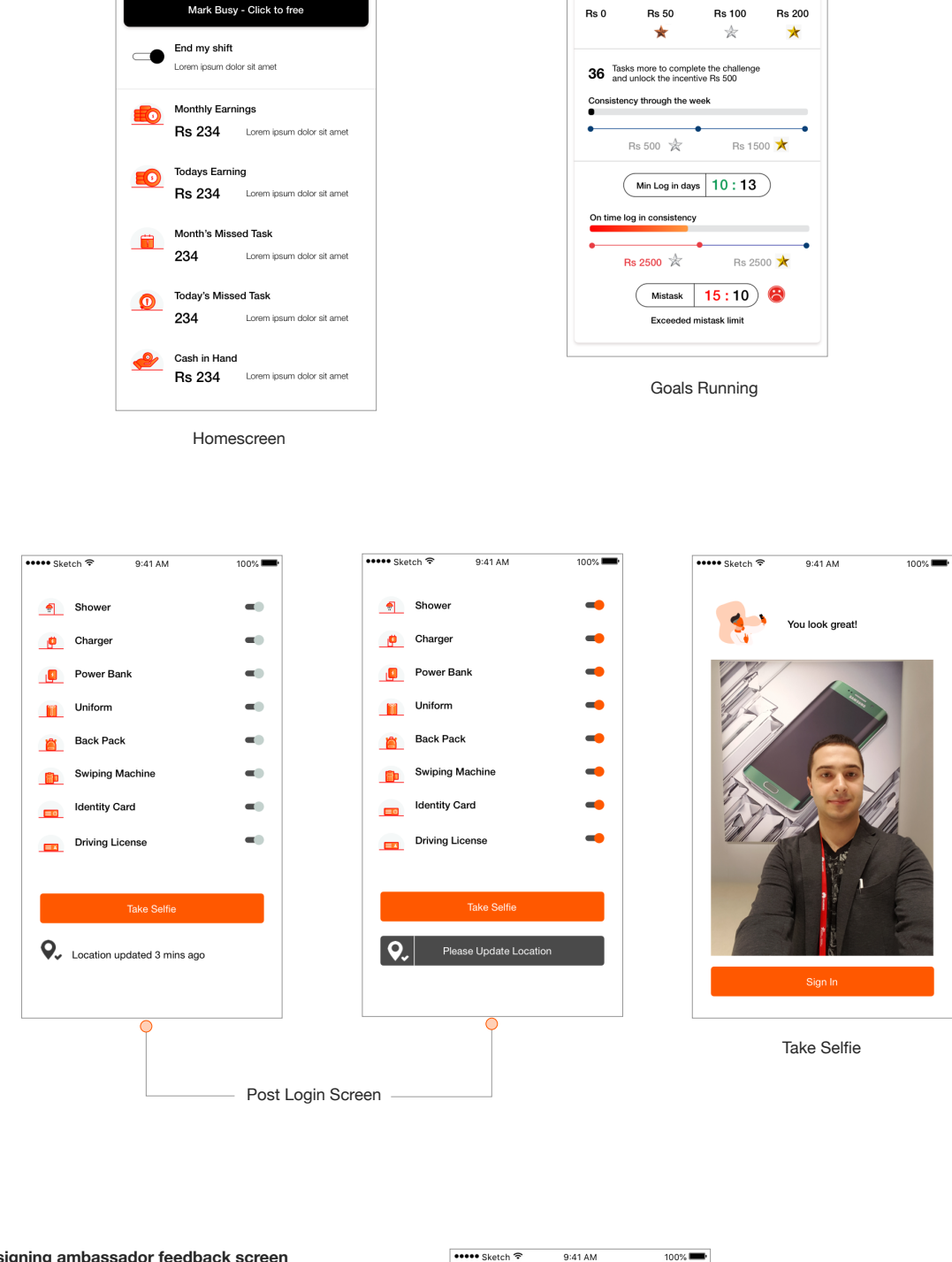
Feedback Icons



Implementation

At the start, we had mapped out all the 17 main icons in our Ambassador App and planned to design every icon around its context. When the design was finished it was mocked on a mobile screen to check for consistency. All the screens were used to check the icons. The homepage had a different set of icons than the list view page.

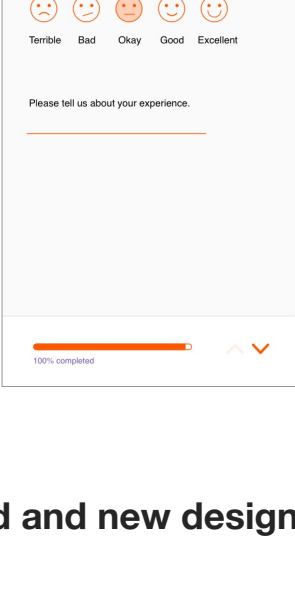
There were many iterations at this step which required tweaking. Some of the icons were discarded and redesigned to maintain the design language and uniformity.



Designing ambassador feedback screen

As our ambassador are the actual fuel of business, we find it necessary to take feedback from them. After the completion of each task, we ask them to share their experience with us. The idea was to keep it simple and straight forward.

Because we believe that the purpose of creative feedback is to move the project forward and make enhancement in a better way.



Visual Comparison between old and new design

Revamping GUI from UX perspective

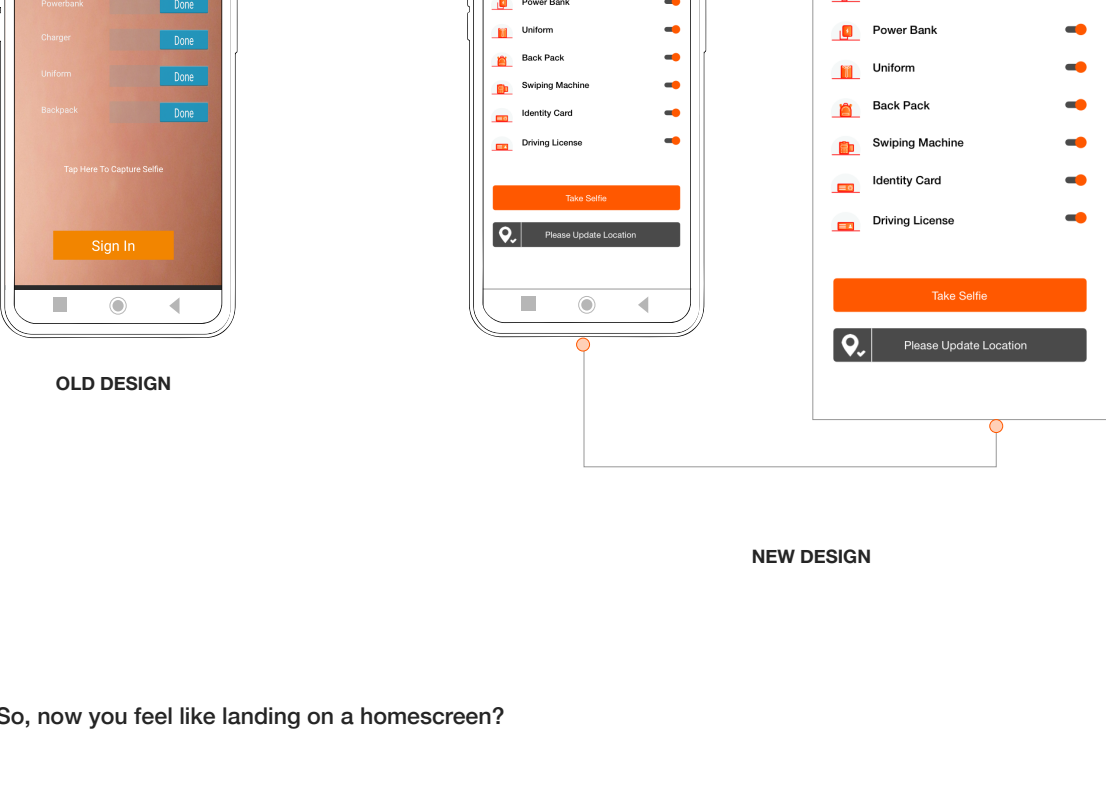
Visual perception is one of the most productive and quick ways through which people are able to obtain information and get it processed by the brain. That is why the aspect of applying visual elements of high functionality in the interfaces such as icons and their impact on the general efficiency of the product has been an actual topic in the global design community for a long time.

The only aspect a designer is interested in using icons is speed. The vast majority of cases people fix and perceive pictorial elements like icons and illustrations faster than words. A great proportion of users are visually-driven creatures by nature, so the following mechanisms of visual perception often work and should be considered in the design process:

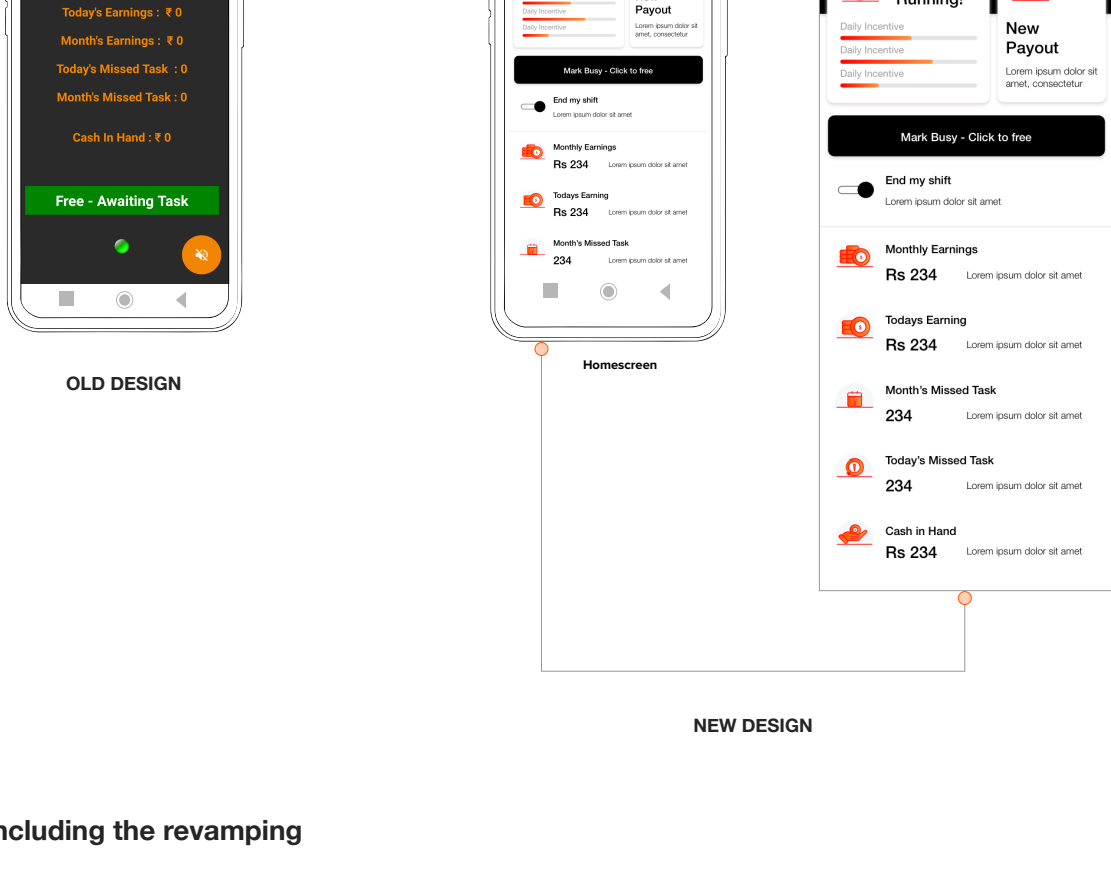
Human eye fixes images much faster than written text

As psychologists claim, people need about 1/10 of a second to get a general perception of a visual scene or element (that speed is indeed impossible for textual items)

Visuals are transmitted to the brain much faster and important pieces of information are often fixed by the brain as visual images even if they were obtained via text perception



So, now you feel like landing on a homescreen?



Concluding the revamping

- speeding up data perception
- enhancing the memorability of the element via visual images
- improving navigation with visual markers
- saving up space on the screen or page when the long words or phrases are replaced with icons

“Well, it was fun and overall a great experience designing and setting up environment through visual design. The most important thing I learnt is that Visual design can go hand in hand with UX.

And I think, we should always design to make it functional and beautiful rather than just working on beauty. “