

Creating Visual Identity and Brand Guidelines to achieve Consistency in Brand Experience – Case Kokonat

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<p>Many marketers acknowledge the importance of building and managing a brand. However, the process of creating a visual brand identity tends to be overlooked. In many cases, the visual identity is solely associated with the company logo, when it is in fact a visual presentation of the corporate identity. Visual identity plays a crucial role in differentiating the business from competitors in a highly saturated market, increasing perceived product values, creating brand awareness and communicating a brand story among customers. When implemented properly, visual identity can make a substantial impact on brand consistency, which eventually leads to business growth and customer loyalty.</p> <p>In this thesis, the author investigates the need for having a visual identity and the process of forming a successful one. The study was carried out through a literature review, which serves as the main foundation to design a visual identity for the case company, Kokonat. Additionally, qualitative research was conducted with Kokonat's founders in order to gain insights into the company background and customers' needs and expectations. This provides tremendous support in creating a visual identity which can successfully communicate the brand values and brand story to the targeted audience.</p> <p>Based on the derived insights from the literature review and qualitative research, an appealing and professional visual identity that corresponds to the brand values was created for the case company. To ensure that the visual identity is coherent and consistent, brand guidelines were developed to support the author in designing customer touchpoints, including a website, presentation template and business card. As visual identity and brand associations are created with a unified look and feel, brand consistency would be maintained, which was the ultimate objective of this project-based thesis.</p> <p>As the brand story and brand tone of voice were listed outside the scope of this thesis, it is recommended that the commissioning company should continue to develop and incorporate these details into the current brand guidelines, which were mainly focused on the visual identity aspect. More importantly, the case company should always keep the brand guidelines up-to-date, as well as inform its employees to closely follow the guidelines to maintain the consistency of the visual identity, and eventually the brand experience.</p>	
Keywords Branding, brand identity, visual identity, brand guidelines, brand consistency, brand experience, logo design, customer touchpoints	

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1 Introduction

The purpose of the first chapter is to briefly introduce the commissioning project, as well as the case company. In this chapter, project background and its objectives, along with a list of project tasks that need to be fulfilled, will be discussed to define the project scope. Explanations of the international scope will be provided, followed by the introduction of the key concepts, with a view to laying the foundation of the thesis. Therefore, the audience can have a general overview of the project, subsequently understand the different approaches used to accomplish the project goals and objectives.

Chapter 2 and chapter 3 will respectively discuss the theoretical concepts used in the thesis, and background of the commissioning company, with the aim of reasoning and speculating the approaches adopted in the design process presented in chapter 4. Chapter 5 serves the purpose of evaluating the outcomes of the projects, as well as presenting the author's recommendations for the case company and her reflection upon learning.

1.1 Background

Many marketers acknowledge the importance of building and managing brand identity and brand image. However, sometimes people might neglect one crucial element of brand identity, which is visual identity. When considering the visual identity of a brand, some people think that having a logo to be displayed is already sufficient. Nonetheless, a visual identity is more than a logo. A successful visual identity is a combination of intentional selections of shapes, colours, typefaces and imagery, which are deliberately chosen to convey the right messages, bring forth the brand values and communicate the brand story to the audience.

When a visual identity and guidelines are built with all required elements, the brand will be able to follow the guidelines to maintain coherence and consistency of the brand image and brand experience in customers' minds. In order to accomplish that, all the customer touchpoints of the brand, for instance, sales presentation, company website or employees' business cards, would need to be designed according to the guidelines. With brand consistency achieved, the brand will stay longer in customers' minds, and it is also easier and faster for the customers to recognise the brand over another.

A successful visual identity, along with brand guidelines, and designs of customer touchpoints to result in brand consistency are the main goals of this project, which the author

aims to achieve for the commissioning company – Kokonat. This required close cooperation between the thesis author and Kokonat’s founders so that the author can fully understand what they wanted to convey from their visual looks, and how it could be achieved with the design process.

1.2 Case Company

Kokonat is a Helsinki-based business-to-business start-up that specialises in strategic planning and creative communications. Founded in 2019 by two fresh master graduates from Aalto University, Katri Laakso and Johanna Dietrich, Kokonat’s main purpose is to support companies in the Nordic region to become more creative and effective in their communications towards customers. (Kokonat 2020.)

Although started quite recently as a relatively small company, Kokonat has considerable potential for growth since both of its founders, Johanna and Katri, have profound knowledge in communications thanks to their work and study experiences. With the ambition to expand their business outside of Finland’s boundary to other Nordic countries, Johanna and Katri understand the importance of having a proper, everlasting visual identity and consistent brand image. As Johanna, one of the founders, had worked with the thesis author earlier, she decided to get in contact while the author was looking for a commissioning company for her thesis, and later entrusted her to create Kokonat’s visual identity and design its online and offline applications.

1.3 Project Objective and Tasks

As briefly discussed above, this thesis aims to study different visual elements to create a successful and appealing new visual identity for Kokonat; and based on that designing the visual looks for customer touchpoints, to maintain consistency in brand experience.

In order to achieve the project objective, the author needs to implement a set of project tasks as follows:

- PT 1. Preparing theoretical framework on brand, branding, visual identity and brand guidelines for consistency in brand experience and customer touchpoints
- PT 2. Interviewing customers about their needs and expectations, and evaluating the current visual identity of the case company
- PT 3. Establishing the new brand’s visual identity and creating the brand guidelines

PT 4. Designing visual looks for different customer touchpoints to ensure consistency, for example, online applications (website design and presentation template) and offline applications (business cards)

PT 5. Presenting the outcomes to the case company and receiving feedbacks

PT 6. Evaluating the project

Table 1 below presents the theoretical framework, project management methods and outcomes for each project task.

Table 1. Overlay matrix.

Project Task	Theoretical Framework	Project Management Methods	Outcomes
PT 1. Preparing theoretical framework on brand, branding, visual identity and brand guidelines for consistency in brand experience and customer touchpoints	Brand, branding, brand visual identity, brand guidelines, consistency in brand experience, customer touchpoints	Desktop research	Definitions of brand, branding, visual identity and brand guidelines The importance of visual identity in branding The importance of brand guidelines in building a consistent brand experience
PT 2. Interviewing Kokonat's founders about their needs and expectations, and evaluating the current visual identity of the case company	Case company's background information Current visual identity	Qualitative research with the founders of Kokonat	Current situation of the case company Evaluation of the current visual identity Customers' needs and expectations
PT 3. Establishing the new brand's visual identity and creating the brand guidelines	The outcome of PT 2 Theory on creating a visual identity and the graphic components involved in the process Theories about establishing brand guidelines	Desktop research Graphic design program: Adobe Illustrator	Visual identity including logo, colour theme, typography Brand guidelines
PT 4. Designing visual looks for different customer touchpoints to ensure consistency	Visual identity and brand guidelines from PT 3 Theories about creating touchpoints	Graphic design program: Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe XD Presentation program: Microsoft PowerPoint	Digital assets: Website design, corporate presentation template Printed assets: Business cards
PT 5. Presenting the outcomes to the case company and receiving feedbacks	Outcomes from PT 2, PT 3 and PT 4	Presenting and discussing with the customer	Customer's feedback and evaluation
PT 6. Evaluating the project	Customer's feedbacks and own knowledge gained after the project	Evaluating	Evaluation of the project and self-reflection

1.4 Project Scope

With the view to getting the best result for the project, the author only focuses on the theoretical framework that is directly related to the project tasks. Therefore, other theories related to the topic, for example, theories about branding management, are not included.

On the other hand, the project scope is substituted with hand-on experience and practical tasks instead. The scope of the project is listed below:

- Brand and branding, brand consistency, customer touchpoints and brand experience
- Visual identity: logo, colour theme, typography
- Brand guidelines
- Customer touchpoints: design of online and offline applications

Since the project is mainly focused on graphic design and visual identity, the demarcation would also include other branding strategies, such as defining key messages or positioning, and verbal identity including tone of voice or brand brief. Additionally, the author would not be able to include the process of managing assets after the design phase, especially the launching, nurturing new brand elements and evaluating the success of the branding process, as they are out of the scope agreed with the commissioning company.

1.5 International Aspect

The objective of this project is to create a visual identity for a Finnish start-up, with the view to expanding the business outside of Finland's border to other Nordic countries. This partially serves as proof of the international aspect of the project. Additionally, the fact that the thesis author has a foreign background but came to study in Finland, and later on found a Finnish commissioning company to assist with its visual identity, would also significantly contribute to the international viewpoint.

1.6 Benefits

This project is substantially beneficial to the case company Kokonat, especially when there is a lack of a visual identity for Kokonat to operate efficiently. The outcome products, including visual identity, brand guidelines and design of application examples for its customer touchpoints, are necessary for every business. Having these products packed under the same package would also maintain consistency for the brand identity, and later

would considerably support Kokonat in achieving consistency in brand experience with customers.

On the other hand, the project would also bring the author the benefit of practising her knowledge in marketing communication, branding and graphic design. This could result in more experiences in the specific field and help her to build a strong portfolio for her career path.

1.7 Key Concepts

Brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, design or a combination of all mentioned things which identifies one seller's products or services, also serves to distinguish the seller from other existing competitors in the market (Armstrong, Kotler & Opresnik 2017, 237). A brand helps the seller to establish an emotional connection, lifelong relationships with customers, and in the end, becomes irreplaceable to the customers (Wheeler 2017, 2).

Branding is a process which is used to create awareness for the brand and extend the loyalty from customers. The main purpose would be about seizing the opportunity to persuade customers to choose the brand over another. It is also the set of activities to create intangible – such as emotional benefits a brand provides, and tangible attributes – such as a brand name or brand identity. (Wheeler 2017, 6 & Slade-Brooking 2016, 15.)

Brand identity is the collection of all brand elements such as logos, typography, colours, messages, tone of voice that company creates with the purpose of portraying the right brand image to the customers (deBara 31 July 2017). **Brand image**, unlike brand identity, refers to the way customers actually perceive the brand (Surbhi 2018).

Visual identity is comparatively the most important qualities of a brand identity. It contains all visual elements that are related to a brand, such as logos, typography, icons, illustrations, colour palettes (Song 14 May 2018). Visual identity can also be understood as a brand's holistic look and feel, which enables the consistency among the brand, its strategy and other individual visual assets (Phillips, Mcquarrie & Griffin 2014, 318).

Brand guidelines, also known as brand style or brand style guide, is a document that serves the purpose of a referencing tool, in order to maintain brand consistency by specifically stating how a brand should look, feel and sound like (Chan 9 July 2019).

Brand consistency is the practice of always delivering messages that are aligned with brand images and brand values. It could be achieved, for example, by presenting the logo, colour theme or other visual brand elements repeatedly to the customers. (Stringfellow 2018.)

Brand experience is the set of interactions that people have with a brand's products or services. It is also related to **customer touchpoints** – the place where people encounter and interact with the brand in general (Neumeier 2004, 16 & 76). Brand experience is also conceptualised as “sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environments” (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello 2009, 52).

2 The Branding Process to Create Consistency in Brand Experience

In order to achieve the ultimate goal of this project – to create an appealing and engaging visual identity which conveys the personality of the case company, and brand guidelines to assist the company to maintain brand consistency, the author needs to acquire an adequate understanding of these key concepts. Therefore, in the second chapter, she will further examine the theories behind these concepts, as well as explain why these influence the desired outcome.

A theoretical framework was created to visually present the correlations between the key concepts, including brand and branding, visual identity, brand guidelines and consistency in brand experience. This framework is based on the branding process (Wheeler 2017, 6-7), with adaptation due to the project scope and demarcation. Moreover, each part of the framework will be discussed into detail as subchapters of this chapter.

Below is the theoretical framework that is used in the thesis (Figure 1), and the original branding process (Figure 2), which has been utilised as an inspiration.

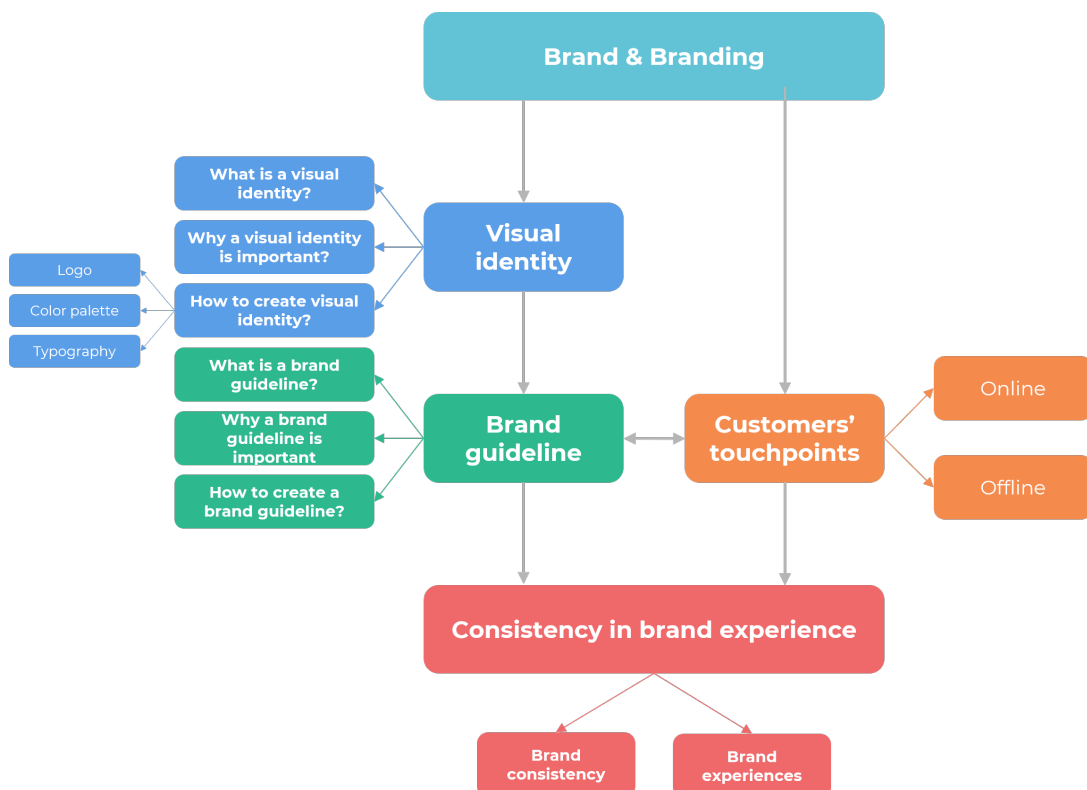


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the theoretical framework.



Figure 2. The branding process (Wheeler 2017, 6-7).

2.1 Brand and Branding Definitions

To start with the branding process, the first and foremost definitions to understand are brand and branding. It is crucial to fully understand these two essential terminologies, before further moving forward with the project.

So, what exactly is a brand? **Brand** appears as an imperative concept in marketing context, nonetheless, it is fairly difficult to come up with a concrete definition of brand. Armstrong & al. (2017, 237) defines brand as a name, term, sign, symbol, design or a combination of all mentioned things which identifies one seller's products or services, also serves to distinguish the seller from other existing competitors in the market. In The Dictionary of Brand, Neumeier (2004, 23) defines brand as "a person's perception of a product, service, experience, or organisation," and the perception can be either practically or emotionally related.

According to David Haigh of Brand Finance (Wheeler 2017, 2), brands have three main functions: Navigation, Reassurance and Engagement. Navigation means that brands have the capacity to differentiate the business from others, whilst direct and navigate consumers when they are exposed to several similar products. Reassurance means a brand has the responsibility to communicate with the consumers about the product essential feature, thus convince people to make the decision. Lastly, brands need to be able to drive engagement and foster loyalty by utilising various means of support, such as tone of voice or imagery that are associated with the brand. Additionally, Wheeler (2017, 2) mentions that brand helps the seller to establish an emotional connection, lifelong relationships with customers and becomes irreplaceable to the customers as well.

As a strong brand supports business to emerge and be distinct from an intensely competitive market, it is indisputable for business to start a brand-building process efficiently – and that is when branding comes into play. To define branding, Slade-Brooking (2016, 15) states that **branding** is a process to create differentiation and awareness for the brand and extend the loyalty from customers. It is also the set of activities to create intangible –

such as emotional benefits a brand provides, and tangible attributes – such as a brand name or visual identity.

2.2 Brand Identity and Visual Identity

There are plenty of elements that fall under the category of brand, and brand identity is one of them. Designing brand identity is also a crucial stage in the branding process. Unlike brand, which is a corporation's intangible asset, brand identity is tangible and perceived by human senses. **Brand identity** is the collection of all brand elements such as logos, typography, colours, messages, tone of voice that company creates with the intention of portraying the right brand image to the customers (deBara 31 July 2017).

Occasionally, brand identity is mistaken with brand image. It is important to understand the distinction between these two concepts – brand image refers to consumer perceptions of a brand (Nandan 2005, 264), whereas brand identity is “how strategists want the brand to be perceived” (Aaker 2012).

To understand the process to create a successful brand identity, Wheeler (2017, 149) presents this approach to the process:

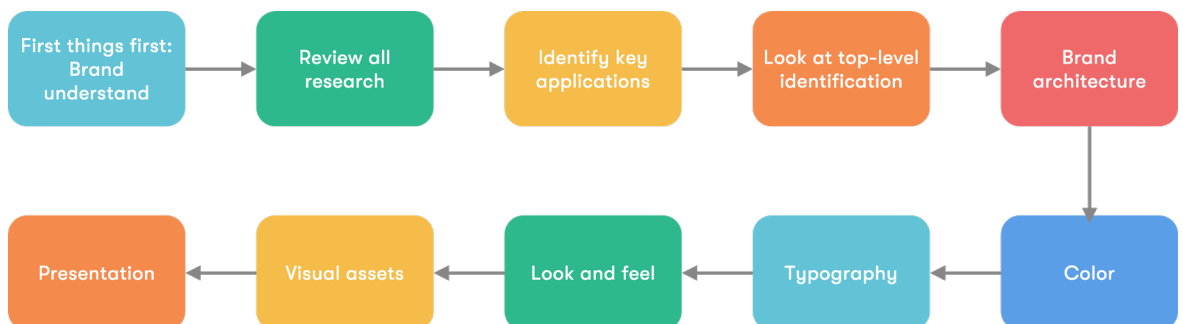


Figure 3. Overview of Phase 3: Designing identity (Wheeler 2017, 149).

Although many people identify brand identity as visual elements and interchangeably use the words "brand identity" and "visual identity," the author argues that visual identity is, in fact, an important part of establishing brand identity along with verbal identity that involves a brand story, messaging and tone of voice. When discussing brand identity in a business-to-business service context, Coleman, de Chernatony & Christodoulides (2011, 1069) describes brand identity as a multidimensional construct which is made up of by five different facets consisting of marketing culture, client relationship management, corporate visual identity, integrated marketing communications and brand personality. As stated in the project scope, corporate visual identity will be the main topic of discussion.

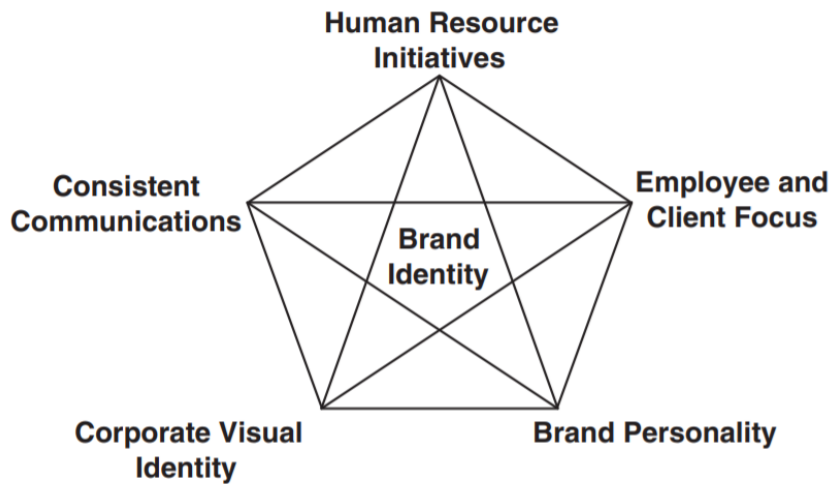


Figure 4. The B2B service brand identity network (Coleman & al. 2011, 1069).

As the retail market has become highly competitive and crowded, the function and price of the product can no longer be the main determinants for customers when it comes to buying decisions. When exposed to a range of similar products, buyers will tentatively turn to the visual look and feel to determine the product value. Therefore, brand communication has progressively become more visual, as visual assets have overperformed and replaced verbal elements in advertising. Containing all visual elements of a brand identity, **visual identity** is defined as the holistic look and feel of a brand, which enables the consistency among the brand, its strategy and other individual visual assets. (Phillips & al. 2014, 318.) Regarding all elements in corporate visual identity, logo, colours and typography are among the most prominent and essential assets, and they are also the key components to be considered to create a successful visual identity.

2.2.1 Logo

Undoubtedly, the logo is the fundamental asset of brand identity. A logo, as known as brand mark or brand icon, is a simple design created using “a combination of shapes, colours, symbols or sometimes letter or words” with a purpose of delivering the business mission, vision, values or promise. A logo can take many different forms, from simple, clear words or letters in custom typeface, to an abstract, symbolic mark, or sometimes a combination of both.

The topology of marks can be grouped into five main distinctive categories, including wordmarks, letterforms, pictorial marks, abstract or symbolic marks and emblems

(Wheeler 2017, 55). Mascot logo and combination mark are also two honourable mentions; however, mascot logos are far less common to be used (Morr 29 April 2019).

Wordmarks are plausibly the simplest form of a logo, which are created by using the company or product name in a custom typeface that represents the brand personality. This approach is adopted and utilised by various companies with a short, unique and distinct name such as Google, Nokia, eBay, Coca-Cola or VISA. Sometimes wordmarks logo can be used by new business, as this is a convenient and efficient strategy to create awareness of the new brand. (Wheeler 2017, 55 & Morr 29 April 2019.)



Figure 5. Google logo as an example of wordmarks (Google 2020).

As wordmark design heavily depends on the typeface, typography plays a vital role when creating a wordmark logo. As fonts or typefaces have unique personalities and distinct characteristics, the typeface used in the wordmark logo should be relatable, sometimes customised, to accurately convey the ideas of the business to consumers. (Morr 29 April 2019.)

Letterforms, or sometimes known as letter marks, or monogram logos, are similar to wordmarks as this is created using a unique typeface. However, letterforms only use one or more letters, usually the brand's initials, to represent the brand. Some noticeable examples of companies using this approach are HBO, Unilever, HP, NASA, General Electric and IBM. Letterforms are known to simplify your design and assist consumers in remembering the brand name, especially the lengthy ones. (Wheeler 2017, 55 & Morr 29 April 2019.)



Figure 6. HP logo as an example of letterforms (HP 2006).

Pictorial marks are icons created based on recognisable images, which are simplified and symbolised to better represent the business idea. Some of the most iconic pictorial

marks belong to well-known brands, such as Apple, Twitter, Dropbox or NBC. This approach is more applicable for companies with strong brand recognition, as it is challenging for small businesses to come up with a generic image which can represent the company and also remain relevant throughout the entire existence. (Morr 29 April 2019.)



Figure 7. Apple logo as an example of pictorial marks (Apple 2013).

Abstract or symbolic marks are somewhat similar to pictorial mark logos, however, instead of using a recognizable image, an abstract, more ambiguous form is used instead. Abstract marks give designers more freedom when creating the logo without depending on the cultural implication of an individual image. When using this approach, distinct shapes and colours are taken into careful considerations, as they are the ambassadors to carry business ideas. For instance, Nike swoosh can imply the idea of movement, progress and freedom (Morr 29 April 2019). Some other noticeable mentions using abstract or symbolic marks are Pepsi, HSBC or Hyatt Place.



Figure 8. Nike swoosh, an example of abstract marks (Nike 2009).

Emblems are created by placing distinct texts, usually brand name, sometimes also with pictorial marks, inside a unique shape such as badges or crests. All elements are inextricable in the emblem logo. Since emblems generally require lots of details, they tentatively give out a traditional, classic impression. IKEA, Starbucks or UPS are some companies who are using emblems as their brand marks. (Wheeler 2017, 55 & Morr 29 April 2019.)



Figure 9. UPS logo created using the shape of a crest (UPS 2003).

Mascots are illustrated characters that are inextricably connected to the brand. KFC's Colonel Sanders or Michelin's Bibendum are among the most well-known mascots that are used to create a logo. Typically, mascots are not considered as a separate topology, as they are more commonly combined with the wordmarks to represent the brands. (Morr 29 April 2019.)



Figure 10. KFC's Colonel Sanders (KFC 2006).

Combination mark is not considered as a topology of the mark; however, it is frequently used as an efficient approach when creating a logo. A combination mark is a logo created by combining a typography-based mark, such as wordmark or letterform, with a graphics-based mark, such as pictorial mark, abstract mark or mascot. As combination mark is more versatile and also able to help consumers to connect the brand name with the pictorial mark, this approach has achieved enormous popularity compared to other approaches. Many companies are using combination marks, such as Microsoft, Adobe, PayPal, Puma, Airbnb or Slack. (Morr 29 April 2019.)



Figure 11. Slack's combination mark (Slack 2020).

When designing a logo, it is vital to select the shapes and forms that are relevant and suitable for the brand identity. Colours and typography are also extremely important to the brand identity, as they have a significant influence on the logo design, and also play an essential part in brand personality and brand communication.

2.2.2 Colour

Choosing the right colours for the brand identity can be one of the most influential yet challenging tasks for designers, as colour is among the most powerful tools to convey messages, evoke mood and communicate information. Effective colour selection can help distinguish a product from another comparable choice, help customers make the correct brand association or determine whether to make the purchase decision or not. (Sherin 2012, 7.)

According to a study published by Dr Singh of the University of Winnipeg, Canada, consumers appear to make purchasing decisions within 90 seconds of their first product encounters and 62-90 per cent of the evaluation is focused solely on their perception of colour (Singh 2006, 783). Similarly, ColourFast, a Canadian-based plastic-card maker, also reports that 93% of purchasing judgements are made on visual perceptions, whereas 84.7% of consumers choose colours as the main influence for product purchases (Clifford 2015). In addition, 80% of respondents also hold the same opinion that colours can substantially improve brand awareness. Some of the most familiar examples of the relationship between colours and brands that can be mentioned are Heineken's distinct green or Coca-Cola's red (Singh 2006, 784).

Therefore, it is particularly essential for designers to understand how to effectively utilise colours for brand identity. To achieve this, vast knowledge of colour theory such as colour wheel, colour harmony and colour psychology should be acquired and applied when it comes to designing a visual brand identity.

Colours, or hues, are produced by objects reflecting lights in different combination of wavelengths. Humans can determine different colours thanks to the degree of light reflection and production of rays of different lengths from a surface. Red, blue and yellow are the primary colours, which means they are easiest to be distinguished by human eye. (Sherin 2012, 10.)

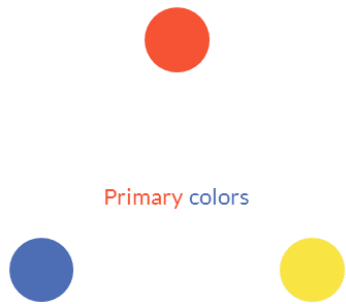


Figure 12. Primary colours – red, blue and yellow (Nguyen 16 January 2017).

When these primary colours are combined, the secondary colours including orange, green and purple are created.

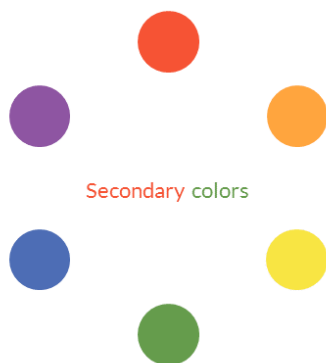


Figure 13. Secondary colours (Nguyen 16 January 2017).

When applying the same mixing process to six mentioned colours, tertiary colours are produced, making up a colour wheel.



Figure 14. Tertiary colours and colour wheel (Nguyen 16 January 2017).

To further expand the colour wheel and create new colours, different colour values and intensity can be applied. For example, by mixing a colour with black, white or grey will result in different shades, tints or tones of one colour. (Sherin 2012, 10.)



Figure 15. Colour values and intensity: Hue, Tint, Tone and Shade (Nguyen 16 January 2017).

There are 10 million colours that can be differentiated by human eye, and each of them carries its own meaning and message. As Gael Towey, Creative Director of Gael Towey & Co. suggests that colour can create emotion, trigger memory and give sensation (Wheeler 2017, 154). Therefore, it is crucial to choose the appropriate colour to represent the business, reflect the brand personality and connect with the product characteristic.



Figure 16. Colour Emotion Guide (The Logo Company 2013).

Different colours can be associated with different emotions and feelings; therefore, it is important to understand the meaning behind each colour. For example, red is usually connected with energy, love, excitement, power, boldness or passion, and it is also used to stimulate the appetite. Hence, a lot of food and beverage (F&B) brands are using red for the brand identity, such as Coca-Cola, KFC, Pizza Hut or Popeye's. However, red can also be interpreted as dangers or risky situations. (Clifford 2015.)

Although pink is considered as a tint of red, pink carries an entirely different meaning. Whereas red is connected with power, confidence and boldness, pink appears to be sweeter and softer, gentler and more feminine. Pink is usually used in beauty brands or brands that are targeting women (Morr 29 April 2019).

Yellow, as it is usually associated with the colour of the sun or sunshine, represents joy, optimism, happiness, brightness or warmth. Together with red, yellow is also used in F&B brand identities, such as McDonald's, Burger King or Hertz. Orange, which is also a warm colour, is considered to be invigorating and friendly. Orange is associated with being playful, energetic and cheerful. It is also used to communicate affordability and happiness. Fanta is an outstanding example of a brand using orange as the primary colour, as orange is able to represent the brand characteristics and personality. (Clifford 2015.)



Figure 17. Colour Psychology (Nguyen 16 January 2017).

Blue, which is the colour of the ocean and sky, is the most popular colour to be used in logo and brand identity design. Blue is commonly known for being secure, calm, trustworthy and reliable. Additionally, it is also connected with success, maturity and loyalty. Therefore, many finances and technology-based companies such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, IBM, HP, Nokia and Samsung are using blue as their primary colour. Green, which is typically associated with environmentally-friendly, fresh, earthy and organic brands, is used in lots of F&B brands. It also communicates harmony, growth, hope and peace. (Big Gorilla Design 2017.)

Purple is a colour of majesty and royalty, luxury and wealth. Purple dye was extremely expensive in the past; therefore, purple was only worn by prosperous people and aristocrats. However, in modern times, purple also means imaginative and creative, sometimes even nostalgic. (Morr 29 April 2019 & Clifford 2015.)

Besides purple, black is also used to communicate luxury and exclusiveness. Furthermore, black can represent sophistication and modern, power and authority. Sometimes it can be associated with being classic and elegant. As black can carry various meanings, it can be used in various industries with different brands, such as Sony and Apple, Adidas, Nike and Puma, or Gucci and Chanel. Similar to black, grey is also a neutral colour which is used in tech, futuristic and modern brands. (Clifford 2015.)

Brands are not necessarily represented by one colour. For example, Google, Microsoft or eBay are notable examples of brands using several colours in the logo design. This approach is meant for emphasizing the versatility and diversity of the products. (Morr 29 April 2019.) However, when it comes to picking several colours for the design, designers need to take colour schemes and colour harmonies into careful consideration, in order to determine the right colour combinations. To tackle this situation, various models based on the colour wheel are introduced, including monochromatic, analogous, complementary, split-complementary and triadic and tetradic/rectangular colour schemes. (Sherin 2012, 19-21.)

The monochromatic colour scheme is the practice of creating a colour palette by combining one particular colour with variation in its value and intensity, which creates different shades and tints. This is certainly a safe and reliable approach; however, the design can also be monotonous and dull. (Sherin 2012, 19-21.)

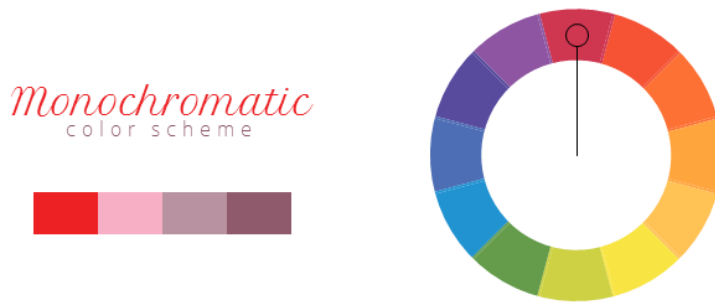


Figure 18. Monochromatic colour scheme (Nguyen 16 January 2017).

Analogous colour scheme is the formula of incorporating several colours that are placed next to each other on the colour wheel. This combination is particularly efficient in conveying feelings and emotions, for example, when being used together, yellow and orange are tending to represent or exemplify the warmth and cosiness. (Sherin 2012, 19-21.)



Figure 19. Analogous colour scheme (Nguyen 16 January 2017).

Complementary colour scheme is formed by pairing two opposite colours on the colours wheel. As these opposite colours have a contradictory relationship with each other, it is able to attract audience attention. Blue and orange, purple and yellow, or red and green are among the most common combinations using this approach. (Sherin 2012, 19-21.)



Figure 20. Complementary colour scheme (Nguyen 16 January 2017).

Slightly different to complementary, split-complementary combination picks two colours which are adjacent to the first colour's complement on the colour wheel instead. (Sherin 2012, 19-21.)



Figure 21. Split-complementary colour scheme (Nguyen 16 January 2017).

Triadic and tetradic/rectangular colour schemes, whose names are quite self-explanatory, are created by using colours that eventually form either a triangle or rectangle on the colour wheel. However, sometimes the chosen colours can provide tremendously high contrast, so it is suggested to use one as a primary colour whereas others serve as accents. (Sherin 2012, 19-21.)



Figure 22. Triadic colour scheme (Nguyen 16 January 2017).

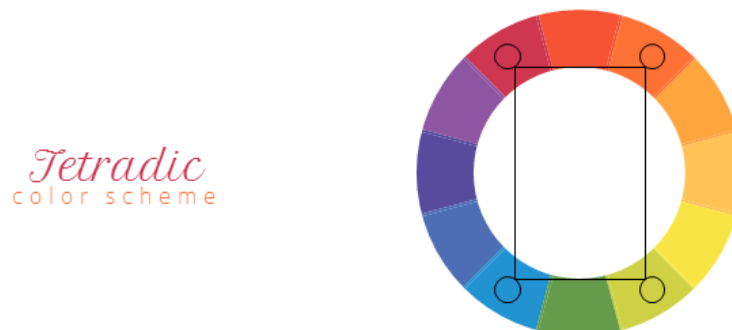


Figure 23. Tetradic colour scheme (Nguyen 16 January 2017).

The selected colours will make up a colour theme, or colour palette, and this is an essential asset of the visual identity. However, it is suggested that only one to two colours are used as the primary colours, whilst others serve as secondary, or supporting colours that are used less frequently. This assists the brand to be more lively, vivid and exciting, but still on-brand.

In short, choosing the right colours for the visual identity helps convey messages and evoke emotions; therefore, it is imperative to carefully consider the brand personality and decide how it should be perceived.

2.2.3 Typography

In addition to deciding the appropriate colours for the visual identity, it is equally important when it comes to selecting the right fonts and typefaces. The art of using typeface, which is known as typography, is an essential skill that every designer should master.

To begin with, let's discuss what the main difference between font and typeface, as these terms are frequently used interchangeably. A typeface is a consistent design of a type family, as it consists of characters, such as letterforms, numerals and punctuations, created by related shapes with similar attributes. On the other hand, font is usually understood as a member of the type family, with a specific size and style. (Cullen 2012, 55.)

Similar to colours, typefaces are also key tools in visual communication, as different types can convey different meanings and emotions, and tell their own story. As there are hundreds of thousands of typefaces in the world, type classification is incredibly complicated and perplexing. However, most people associate typefaces to be sorted into four different categories, including serif, sans-serif, script and display (Chapman 2018).

Serif

Playfair Display

Sans-Serif

Roboto

Script

Miss Robertson

DISPLAY

Rosella

Figure 24. Type classifications: Serif, Sans-serif, Script and Display.

Serif typefaces are types with a small line attached to the letter. Some of the most world-wide known serif typefaces are Times New Roman, Baskerville, Didot, Bodoni, Rockwell and Playfair Display.

Serif

Sans-Serif

Figure 25. Sans-serif and serif typeface (Midori 23 April 2019).

As serif types have a long history of existence, they are commonly associated with being classic and sophisticated, delicate and elegant, formal and old-style. Serif typefaces are also used in printed documents, such as books and newspaper, as it is suggested that serif fonts give readers better legibility. (Adobe 2020.) Serif fonts are adopted by many fashion and high-end brands such as Prada, Tiffany & Co., Burberry and Rolex because of the feelings they evoke.

On the other hand, sans-serif typeface is associated with minimalism, clean and straightforward, somewhat informal. As sans-serif fonts did not appear until the 19th century, they are usually considered to be more modern. Some of the most well-known sans-serif typefaces are Arial, Helvetica, Open Sans and Roboto. With the feelings associated with sans-serif, it is incredibly favoured within the last few years, since the minimalist trend has been settled in and constantly growing popularity. Furthermore, sans-serif fonts are easier to read when viewing on a digital screen, such as mobile or desktop. Therefore, it is heavily used especially by tech-based companies, such as Facebook, Google, Airbnb, Uber, Netflix and Spotify. (Midori 23 April 2019.)



Figure 26. Famous tech-based brands are using sans-serif typefaces in their logo design (Midori 23 April 2019).

Script typefaces consist of calligraphy, cursive, brush script to hand-lettering. As they resemble handwritten texts, script fonts are known for being more feminine, delicate and less formal, and frequently carry feelings of warmth, elegance and aesthetics. Some notable mentions of script typefaces are Dancing Script, Windsong, Scriptina or Lucida Script. (Saffron Avenue 2018.)

Last but not least, display, or sometimes known as decorative typeface, is possibly the largest category with many variations (Chapman 2018). This category includes fonts with unique shapes and forms for a custom, highly distinctive look. Some brands that are using decorative fonts are IBM, Disney or Lego (Midori 23 April 2019).



Figure 27. Use of decorative fonts in large brands (Midori 23 April 2019).

To sum up, there are different categories of typefaces and each of them evokes different emotions and feelings. Thus, it is essential to fully understand the meaning behind the typefaces, to eventually select the right font that shares similar attributes and personalities of the brands.

2.2.4 Shape

Similar to colour and typography, shape is another graphic design element that carries distinct meanings which can evoke specific emotions. This psychology of shapes is applied in logo design especially with the pictorial or abstract mark approach. Not only can understanding the emotions provoked by distinct shape be advantageous in logo design, but it is also useful if brands wish to come up with on-brand supporting graphic elements. Despite the fact that it is not mentioned as commonly as the colour psychology or type psychology, when used correctly, this element can accomplish the desired reaction from consumers. For instance, a soft-edged, circle logo will provoke different reactions compared to a sharp and angular logo. (deBara 31 July 2017.)

Shapes can take various forms; however, it is widely accepted that geometric, organic and abstract shapes are the three major categories of shapes. Geometric shapes are usually

associated with mathematical equations, and take up common forms such as circles or ovals, squares, rectangles or triangles. On the other hand, organic shapes are usually connected with natural elements such as earth, fire, water or air. Finally, abstract shapes, which can be created using a combination of geometric and organic forms, are often asymmetrical, complex and unpredictable. Abstract shapes are usually used to represent and interpret an idea in reality. (Free Logo Services 2017.)

Typically, when it comes to geometric shapes, circles and ovals stand for perfection, unity, completion and creativeness. Many brands utilise round shapes to build community and love feeling. Generally, rounded or soft-edged shapes are considered to be more feminine. Contrarily, straight-edge shapes such as squares, rectangles or triangles are commonly used to represent masculine traits such as strength or power, reliability or stability, trustworthiness and efficiency. Last but not least, straight lines such as vertical or horizontal lines, which are also considered as geometric forms, also have their own meanings. Vertical lines usually carry the meaning of masculinity and strength, whereas horizontal lines hold a sense of tranquillity and stability. (deBara 31 July 2017.)

There is a wide variety of shapes that fall under the category of organic shapes. However, these forms are commonly associated with four elements of nature: earth, water, air and fire. Earth elements consist of flowers, leaves, trees or mountains, and those can carry different meanings. For example, floral design can be interpreted as feminine, whereas logo design illustrating trees or mountains can represent stability and trustworthy. On the other hand, water-related shapes, such as waterfalls, droplets or waves, can indicate flexibility, dynamism, willing to change, or purification. Air shapes, which usually include spirals, clouds, winds or swirling lines, are associated with knowledge, creativity, innovation and imagination. These are commonly used by tech-based companies or music-related businesses. Lastly, fire shapes are normally used to emphasize passion, dynamism, energy and inspiration. (Free Logo Services 2017.)



Figure 28. Mozilla Firefox – an example of a brand using fire element in logo design (Murray 11 June 2019).

Abstract shapes, as mentioned previously, are usually created by combining geometric and organic shapes. Abstract shapes can be more perplexed and unpredictable; however, their characteristics still resemble those of geometric shapes. For instance, soft-edged and rounded shapes are more feminine and versatile than sharp and angular shapes, which typically represent masculine traits such as strength, power and stability. (Free Logo Services 2017.)

2.2.5 Brand Guidelines

Once the visual identity has been created including different necessary elements as mentioned previously, it is imperative that all elements should be gathered and address in a set of standards and guidelines. This does not only help to keep brand consistent, but also streamline the production of marketing materials. Brand guidelines, sometimes known as brand style guide or brand book, is created with such purpose. It is defined as a document which serves the purpose of a referencing tool, in order to maintain brand consistency by specifically stating how a brand should look, feel and sound like (Chan 9 July 2019).

There are plenty of reasons why businesses should have a well-developed style guide in the process of establishing brand identity. First of all, as brand guidelines and standards are applied and followed properly, brand consistency will be achieved and maintained. Further discussion on why brand consistency is important will be followed up in sub-chapter 2.3 – Customer Touchpoint and Its Contribution to Brand Consistency. Having a strong

and consistent brand identity will increase brand recognition and encourage brand awareness, as consumers will be able to identify and recall brand better in the future. Additionally, a brand style also sets specific, standard rules to be adhered and followed, which helps to save time and efforts and further avoid confusion for employees and external agents. As brand guidelines help to keep every staff on the same page when it comes to creating graphics or content for marketing communications, this enables the relevancy and cohesion of all brand messaging, as well as differentiate the brand communications from potential competitors. (RedAlkami 4 October 2018; Modicum 24 July 2016.)

Brand guidelines should be accessible by internal employees, including all departments in the companies. The brand guidelines are frequently adhered by Marketing and Design department, or anyone creating a marketing or communication materials such as presentations. Additionally, brand guidelines should also be approachable to external creative partners, for instance, outsourced branding or design agency. There are four different types of brand guidelines, including online brand centres, “in the cloud and on the ground”, media relation portals and lastly, marketing and sales toolkits. (Wheeler 2017, 203.)

The first type of guidelines, which is online brand centres, means having an interactive web page as storage for all brand identity components and making it accessible to every employee or external partner. This approach is used by many large firms, as it provides a user-friendly and easy-to-access interface for every party involved in brand management. (Wheeler 2017, 203.)

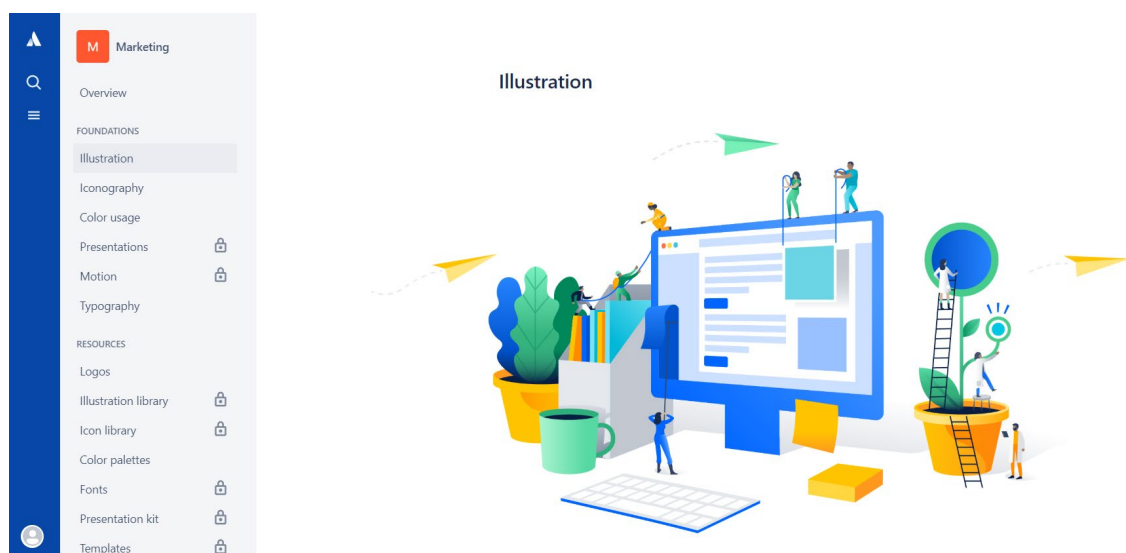


Figure 29. Atlassian’s Online Brand Centre (Atlassian Design 2020).

Beside online brand centres, many other companies choose to publish their brand guidelines as a booklet in digital format, which is accessible by their employees and external design partners. (Wheeler 2017, 203.)

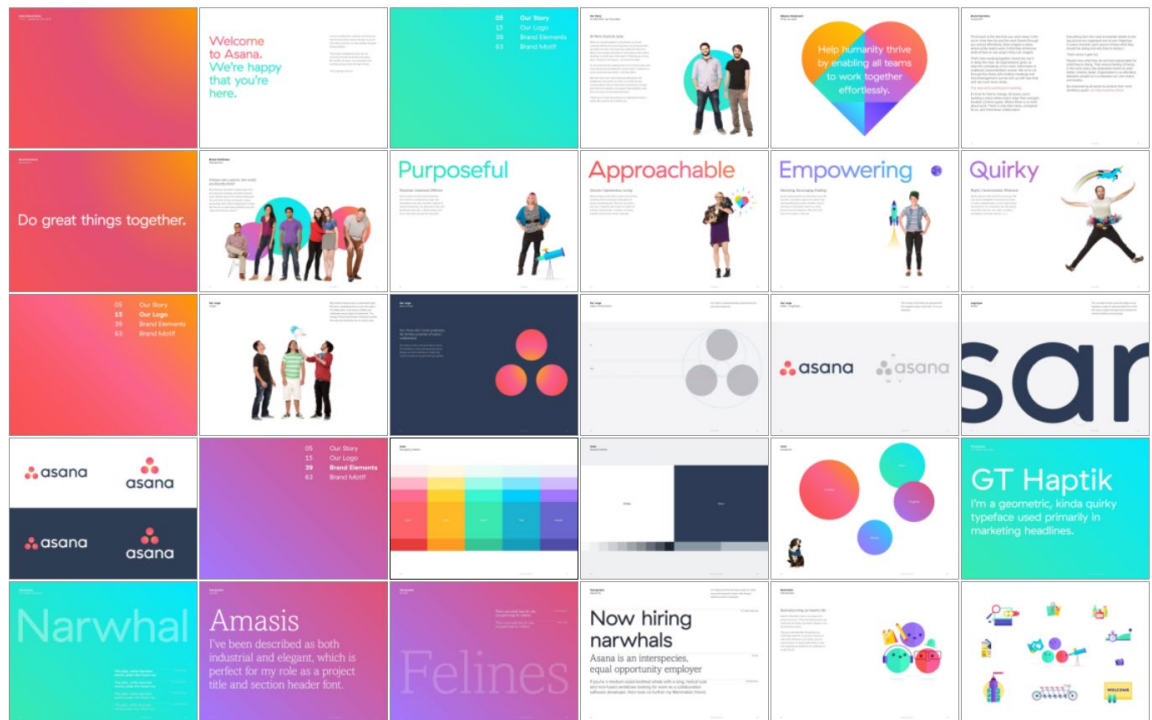


Figure 30. Asana's Brand Book (Linden & Daigle 01 October 2015).

Similar to online brand centres, media relations portal is also an accessible web page where corporations publish their logos and images, especially used for media purposes. This does not carry as much information and brand identity elements as the two previous brand guidelines types. Lastly, where businesses have independent distributors and dealerships, the marketing and sales toolkit approach is used, as they need to monitor the consistent, cohesive look and feel of various points of distribution in order to create a recognizable and distinctive retail presence. (Wheeler 2017, 203.)

There are a variety of essential components establish a brand identity which should be included in the brand guidelines, including a brand story, logo guidelines, colour palette, typography, imagery and brand voice. Brand story gives insight into how the brand is created and represented to the world. Usually, company mission and vision, core values, target audience and brand personality are covered in this section. (Chan 9 July 2019.)

6 essential elements of a brand style guide



Figure 31. Key components of brand guidelines (Chan 9 July 2019).

Regarding logo guidelines, different sets of standards such as responsive logo, logo variations in colours, logo minimum size, logo spacing and logo misuse cases are usually among the list of items to be mentioned. When it comes to colour palette, a swatch of colours used in the brand identity will be listed, together with the colour codes in either printing (PANTONE or CMYK code), or in digital screens (RGB and HEX codes). Typography, as discussed in sub-chapter 2.2.3, is an imperative asset of the visual identity. Beside the font used in the logo design, it is advised that another font should be chosen in creating brand collaterals to create contrast with the logo. Imagery section should be able to present which photos and illustrations are suitable to be used. (Chan 9 July 2019.)

Brand voice, or tone of voice, specifies the language in which the brand should be communicated. This is extremely beneficial when it comes to expressing the brand personality. For instance, if a brand decides its personality to be relaxed, laid back and friendly, it should not use complex words or jargons in the communications. (Chan 9 July 2019.)

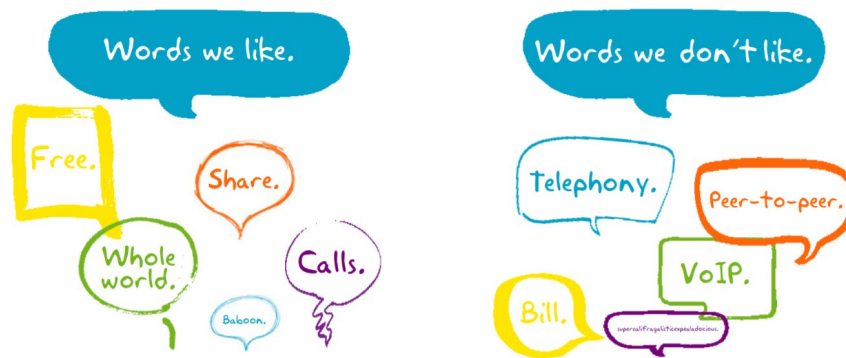


Figure 32. Skype's brand voice guidelines (Skype Brand Book 2017).

Once those six key components have been covered, businesses can also gather information on their brand marketing collaterals, including digital assets such as website, social media layout, banner ads or presentation; or physical, printed products such as stationery (business cards, letterhead, envelopes), brochures, packing or store signage. (Chan 9 July 2019.)

2.3 Customer Touchpoint and Its Contribution to Brand Consistency

As mentioned previously, having well-developed, easy-to-access and up-to-date brand guidelines is a critical step towards maintaining brand consistency. Brand consistency is the practice of constantly delivering messages that are aligned with brand images and brand values. It could be achieved, for example, by presenting the logo, colour theme or other visual brand elements repeatedly to the customers. This repetition ensures that the brand will be easily recognized through all marketing platforms and customer touchpoints. (Stringfellow 2018.) Overall, this has a positive impact on brand experience, which is defined as the set of interactions that people have with a brand's products or services (Neumeier 2004, 16). Brand experience is also conceptualised as "sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environments" (Brakus & al. 2009, 52).

How does keeping brand consistent can affect brand awareness and recognition? It is scientifically proved that people are psychologically wired to seek for patterns and consistency, as humans have context-dependent memory, which means it is easier for people to remember a piece of information when the context of memory is known. Similarly, it takes less effort for consumers to remember a brand if it stays consistent throughout all marketing channels since the context-dependent memory of the audience is getting strengthened every time he or she comes across the brand. (Maestro 2019.)

Once brand consistency has been maintained, it is more likely for brands to earn trust to cultivate long-lasting customer relationships, and eventually achieve customer loyalty. According to Lucidpress State of Brand Consistency Report (2019), constituents reported an average of 33% in growth when brand consistency is maintained. In addition, 60% of over 200 brands that were surveyed agree that brand consistency can be significantly beneficial when it comes to lead generations and engaging with current customers. Furthermore, inconsistent branding can cause substantial damage to the brands, such as causing customer uncertainty in the market or lowering the reputation or credibility of a product.

Therefore, it is essential that brands should strive for consistency in every aspect of marketing communication. In order to achieve this, brand touchpoints should be created with constant consultation and reference to the brand guidelines. Touchpoints, or customer touchpoints, are the place where people encounter and interact with the brand in general (Neumeier 2004, 76). In the branding process, Wheeler (2017, 6) also indicate the phase 4 of the process is to creating touchpoints.

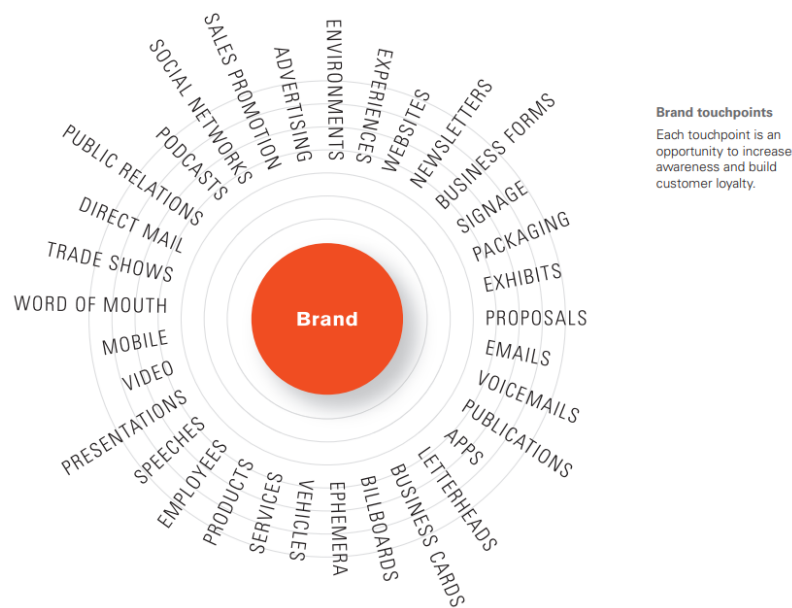


Figure 33. Brand touchpoints (Wheeler 2017, 3).

As illustrated in Figure 33, there are various brand touchpoints that can influence brand awareness and customer loyalty, of which website and business cards are among the most popular. Whereas the website brings digital visibility, traditional business cards reveal brand identity in reality. Thus, website design and business card design should carefully follow the brand guidelines to maintain consistent brand experience in these two prominent touchpoints.

2.4 Chapter Summary

As mentioned previously, the main objective of chapter 2 is to define and analyse the theoretical framework used as the foundation of the thesis, which is presented in Figure 1. Moreover, key concepts relevant to the theoretical framework including brand, branding, brand identity and visual identity, brand consistency and customer touchpoints and their impacts on branding are also discussed, which provides rational explanations behind the design process which will be presented in chapter 4.

To summarize, brand is defined as a name, term, sign, symbol, design or a combination of all the things listed, which identifies the goods or services of one seller and distinguishes the seller from other established competitors on the market. (Armstrong & al. 2017, 237). Branding is a process to create differentiation and awareness for the brand and extend the loyalty from customers (Slade-Brooking 2016, 15).

In the branding process presented by Wheeler (2017, 6-7), designing brand identity is a crucial stage of the branding process. Brand identity is defined as the collection of all brand elements such as logos, typography, colours, messages, tone of voice that company creates with the intention of portraying the right brand image to the customers (deBara 31 July 2017). In a business-to-business service context, brand identity is made up of by five different facets including corporate visual identity (Coleman & al. 2011, 1069). Visual identity is described as the holistic look and feel of a brand, which enables the consistency among the brand, its strategy and other individual visual assets (Phillips & al. 2014, 318).

Logos, colour, typography and shape are among the key components that establish a corporate visual identity. In order for the visual identity to be effective and convincing, these elements should be produced in a way that is capable of conveying the essence of the brand and transmitting relevant messages to the audience. Once created, these assets shall be collected and addressed in the brand guidelines, together with other essential components to the brand identity such as a brand story or brand tone of voice. It is recommended that all these visual assets should be presented repeatedly when creating touchpoints, as it can tremendously help to increase brand recognition and awareness, and ultimately maintain a consistent brand experience.

3 Qualitative Research on Customer's Situation, Needs and Expectations

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the case company's current situation and business background, examine the case company's characteristics and understand their needs and expectations of the new visual identity. As the principal objective of this product-based thesis is to establish the visual identity for the case company, it is essential that the thesis author fully understand these mentioned issues to successfully create a compelling identity that is able to convey the corporate messaging to the target audience.

With a view to acquiring a profound understanding of the case company's situation as well as its founders' needs and expectations, the author decided to conduct a semi-structured, face-to-face interview with two founders of Kokonat – Katri Laakso and Johanna Dietrich. Semi-structured interview approach was chosen as the main data collection method, as it facilitates free discussion by providing interviewees with the opportunity to explain or expand on their previous answers. This would result in a rich and detailed collection of data and in-depth knowledge of the case company; thus, a semi-structured interview is highly effective in this context. (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis 2019, 444-445.)

In order to properly and efficiently carry out the interview, the author had prepared in advance the interview guides with a predetermined list of themes based on the existing theory and author's experience when it comes to creating a visual identity. Even though the wording was left open, the questions were still divided into three main themes, the first topic was to discuss the case company's business background and situation, the second was to evaluate the existing visual identity whereas the third topic focusing on the founders' needs and expectations (Appendix 1). The interview was recording by making notes, and the result is presented in the subchapters.

3.1 Case Company's Situation Analysis

As discussed in the subchapter 1.2, Kokonat is a recently-founded consulting business that focuses on strategic planning and creative communications. Kokonat's key goal is to enable businesses in the Nordic region to become more innovative and successful in interacting with their customers. As Kokonat is a Nordic business, the founders want Kokonat's identity to be represented by a collection of Nordic values, such as integrity, fairness and style of work.

As communication consultancy industry is fairly competitive in Finland, Kokonat has a wide number of competitors, some of which are Ellun Kanat, Cocomms, Kreab and Kaiku Helsinki. Whereas most of their rivals are perceived as long-established businesses with a sense of being “traditional”, Kokonat strives to differentiate itself by selecting “fresh”, “different” and “bold” as its key characteristics. For this reason, Kokonat’s founders decided to call their company “Kokonat,” which was influenced by the Finnish term “kookos” meaning “coconut”. Additionally, they also expect the brand image to be viewed as “professional” yet “elegant” by the target customers. (Dietrich & Laakso 12 August 2019.)

3.2 Evaluation of the Existing Visual Identity

Before approaching the thesis author, Kokonat had another logo created by a freelancing graphic designer found on Fiverr, a global marketplace offering businesses freelance services. As the company name was inspired by the word “coconut,” the Fiverr graphic designer developed the logo using a palm leaf illustration. However, after a few months utilizing the logo, Johanna and Katri decided that having only a logo was not sufficient to create a proper brand image. The logo was developed without any instructions about how to use it properly, and the guidelines for colour palette or typography were lacking. This caused inconsistency when creating marketing materials, for instance, Kokonat used the logo in colour on its social media channels, while the black-and-white logo was used on the pitch deck. In addition, Johanna and Katri both want a suitable template for the Kokonat website and the business cards, which were absent from the final product of the freelancer. (Dietrich & Laakso 12 August 2019.)

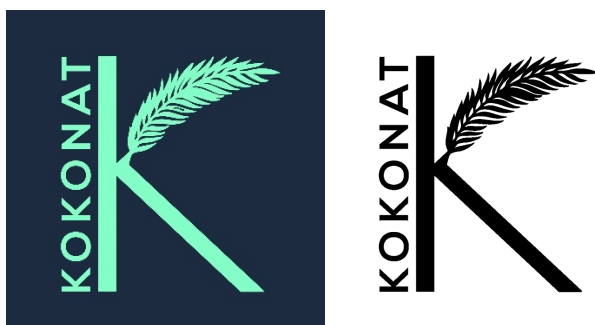


Figure 34. Kokonat’s original logo in colour and in black-and-white (Dietrich & Laakso 12 August 2019).

Furthermore, several people mistakenly thought the palm leaf, which was incorporated to the letter K, was another item, e.g. a quill. Besides, the colours used to create the logo, which were neon aquamarine and Prussian dark blue, were not able to show the characteristics of Kokonat, which is fresh, bold, distinctive yet elegant. Johanna and Katri also

emphasized that Kokonat is a Nordic business, therefore, they would strive for simplicity and minimalism if possible, as these traits are the significant milestones in Scandinavian design. Therefore, using an illustrated palm leaf is not the best way to reflect the brand image. (Dietrich & Laakso 12 August 2019.)

3.3 Customer's Needs and Expectations of the New Visual Identity

As discussed in the previous chapter, Kokonat new visual identity is expected to be able to represent the company as a Nordic-based communication consulting agency, which seeks to position itself as a professional yet fresh start-up in the consulting industry. The fact that the company name was derived from the fruit coconut was rather peculiar and rare, which once again highlighted the distinctiveness and boldness of Kokonat compared to their competitors. In addition, it is essential to remember that Kokonat is a Nordic company and its brand is expected to retain Nordic values; thus, the visuals should be aligned with the Scandinavian design style. According to Mallon (23 September 2018), the Scandinavian design focuses on minimalism and functionality, which means creating a clean and simple design without using clutters. Therefore, the new visual identity should strive for a sleek and simplistic look and feel.

With a view to maintaining the consistency in the portrayal of the brand identity to the target customer, Johanna and Katri decided that the new visual identity should be established and delivered together with the template design for certain customer touchpoints such as website, business cards and PowerPoint pitch deck (Dietrich & Laakso 12 August 2019).

4 The Process of Designing Identity of Kokonat

The purpose of this chapter is to go through the process of designing the visual identity of the case company Kokonat on the basis of the theories mentioned in Chapter 2 and the qualitative research carried out in Chapter 3. In this chapter, the author would also offer explanations and associations created by certain design decisions, and discuss how the particular selection of design elements might serve to best reflect the brand personality and brand story.

As mentioned in Figure 3. Overview of Phase 3: Designing identity (Wheeler 2017, 149), the first crucial step of creating an identity is to understand the brand. Therefore, the semi-structured interview with the co-founders of Kokonat was conducted and discussed in Chapter 3, so that the author would have a better understanding of the case company. Thanks to qualitative research, the author has gained valuable insights into the company's business background and also the aspirations of the customers. In addition, the author has also performed a brief competitive audit to examine the visual identity of the potential competitors to gain insights into the market and competition. The logos and main colours are the main elements of competitors' visual identity to be analysed in this research, and the findings are presented in Figure 35.



Figure 35. Competitive audit on the visual identity of potential competitors (Ellun Kanat, Cocomms, Kaiku Helsinki and Kreab).

4.1 Designing the Logo

On the basis of the results provided in Figure 35, it can be clearly shown that all competitors have selected wordmarks as their solution while designing a logo. As Wheeler (2017, 55) described, wordmarks are used popularly as they are not only simple to create, but also convenient and efficient when it comes to generating visibility for new businesses. Additionally, as Kokonat is a business-to-business service company, which is very abstract and complex to come up with a pictorial mark or abstract mark that might represent the company's offering. With businesses providing communication consultancy such as Kokonat, "words" could be the closest definition of the company's product. Last but not least, the company name is distinctive, short and simple so wordmarks would work better than a letter mark. All points considered, wordmarks would be the most suitable solution to creating the logo for Kokonat.

However, as mentioned earlier in subchapter 2.2.1, typography plays a crucial role when creating a wordmark logo, as typefaces can have specific identities and distinctive features. Therefore, the typeface chosen to create the logo should be related to the brand itself. As the main characteristics of Kokonat are professional and fresh, elegant and different and the logo should aim for simplicity and minimalism, a sans-serif typeface with high thick-and-thin contrast in the letter strokes would be ideal in this situation. Sans-serifs are generally considered to be simple and modern, whereas a strong contrast of the strokes in the letters can give out the impression of elegance and professionalism.

Kokonat strives to be different from other competitors by forming the brand name influenced by the coconut fruit (Dietrich & Laakso 12 August 2019). Therefore, this idea could also be applied when it comes to developing the visual of the brand. After several rounds of brainstorming and feedback with the client, the author has decided that the best way to incorporating the illustration of the coconut in the letter "O". In this way, the logo can still be a wordmark, but the main concept of having the coconut as inspiration would be still visible.



Figure 36. The final logo concept was created as a wordmark using a sleek sans-serif with high thick-and-thin stroke contrast, incorporating the coconut illustration in the letter "O".

As seen from Figure 36, the wave line is an important feature of any illustration of the coconut. Therefore, it was used as the main visual in the letter “O” as a subtle hint for the audience to recognize the coconut shape. Furthermore, the wave is considered as a water-related shape that signifies flexibility and versatility, which greatly contributes to the brand personality of a young start-up.

When it comes to the situation when the logo cannot be displayed as a whole, for instance, a favicon for the website, a logo symbol may be used instead.

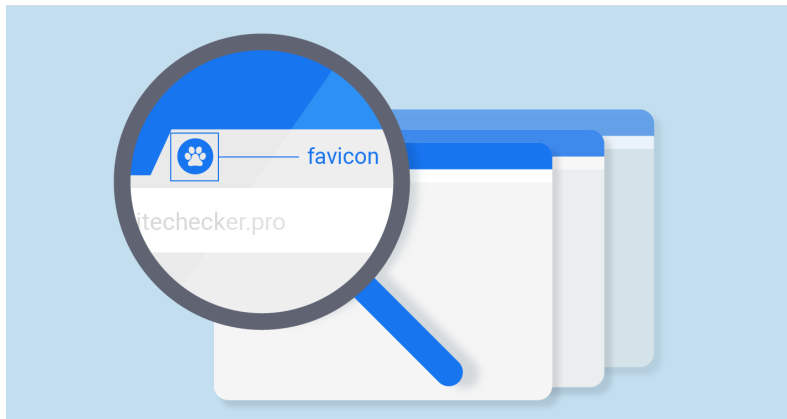


Figure 37. Favicon is a small icon shown at the top of the web browser to represent a web page (Sitechecker 2018).

After coming up with the final logo concept for Kokonat, the author has decided to use the letter “O” with the wave line in the middle to be the symbol of the logo. Although the logo must be used as a whole in all communications, the use of the symbol is only allowed with certain purposes.

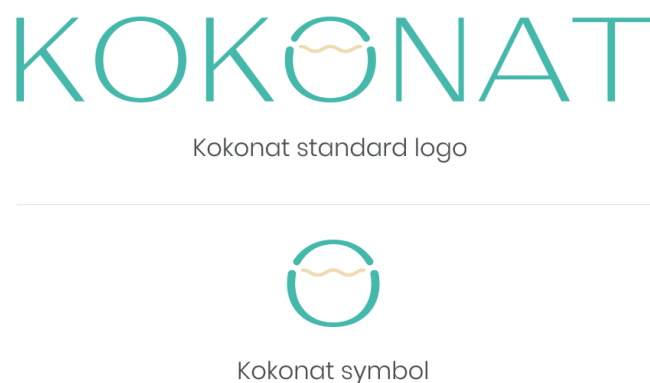


Figure 38. Kokonat standard logo and Kokonat symbol.

The letter “O” was chosen as Kokonat symbol because of several reasons. Firstly, it is the simplified illustration of the coconut, which is the main inspiration of the brand name and

logo. This evokes a feeling of freshness and distinctiveness which are appropriate to the personalities of Kokonat. Secondly, from a geometrical point of view, a circle may offer a sense of harmony and creativeness, and it is generally considered to be more feminine.

The chosen colour of the logo is Pantone's Colour of the Year 2010, Turquoise. Pantone provides a structured colour matching program and is recognised internationally as the common language for colour coordination from designer to manufacturer to retailer to the customer (Pantone 2020). According to Pantone (2010), this appealing, luminous colour is created by combining the tranquil qualities of blue and the energetic aspects of green.



Figure 39. Turquoise was chosen the 2010 Color of the Year by Pantone (Pantone 2010).

Turquoise is generally associated with meanings of refreshing, feminine, creativity and friendship (Born 20 November 2010). These traits of turquoise are strongly related to Kokonat's background and strategy, as Kokonat is presenting itself as a fresh start-up in the creative communication industry.

There are four different variations of the logo colour. The most preferred version is logotype in turquoise with the wave in beige. The explanation of why beige is chosen as the colour of the wave will be presented in subchapter 4.2.2. This turquoise-and-beige version works well on a white or light background; therefore, it should be used as often as possible. The second version includes the logo in turquoise, and should only be used when the usage of the preferred logo is restricted. For example, in the situation when only one colour printing is permitted, this version may be used instead of the preferred logo. The third variant of the logo is the negative one colour, which could be used when the logo is placed on top of a coloured background or image. Lastly, the logo could be presented in black, but this should only be used in situations having the logo in colours is not possible, for example when printing in black-and-white.



Figure 40. Four variations of Kokonat standard logo and symbol.

The logo was created in Adobe Illustrator, a software that specialises in designing vector graphics such as logo and illustration so that the logo can be resized without being blurry or pixelated.

4.2 Building Brand Guidelines

When the visual identity of Kokonat has been created, the next stage would be to establish the brand guidelines for visual identity. As mentioned in subchapter 2.2.5, the brand guidelines would demonstrate how the visual identity should be properly created, as well as provide the guidance for users to maintain brand consistency when representing the brand. In general, brand guidelines should cover six essential elements including a brand story, logo, colour palette, typography, imagery and tone of voice (Chan 9 July 2019). Nonetheless, due to the demarcation of the thesis project, which focuses solely on the topic of visual identity, the author will only cover three specific elements: logo, colour palette and typography. As the logo development and variations were discussed in the previous subchapter, this chapter will be dedicated to the introduction of colour palette and typography. The full version of the brand guidelines can be found in Appendix 2.

4.2.1 Colour Palette

In order to create the colour palette for Kokonat based on the main colour of turquoise, the author has used the split-complementary colour schemes to generate two different colours to support presenting the visual identity.



Figure 41. Split-complementary colours of turquoise on the colour wheel.

As seen from Figure 41, the split-complementary colours of turquoise are vibrant shades of red and orange. As these colours are extremely prominent which might de-emphasize turquoise as the primary colour, two tints of red and orange which are light pink and beige were selected instead. Beige is used for the colour of the wave in the logo, as this makes the wave stand out of the logotype, and complements to the colour of the coconut illustration. Pink is used as an accent colour with the main purpose of highlighting specific design elements when needed. Additionally, a dark grey was added to the colour palette. Its purpose is to substitute solid black as the colour for body text and paragraph when creating marketing materials, as the author believes that solid black is generally avoided because it provides too much contrast to other colours.

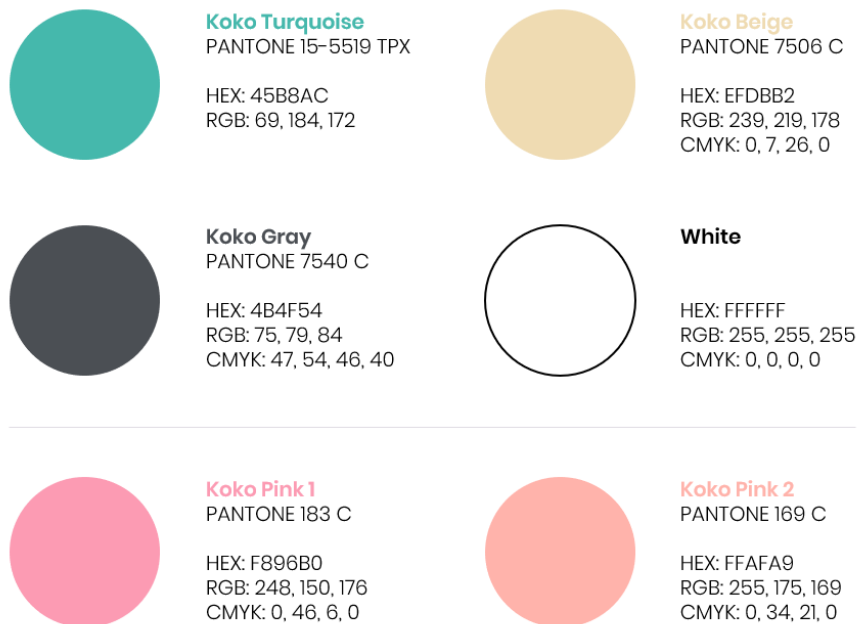


Figure 42. Kokonat's Colour Palette.

4.2.2 Typography

When it comes to typography, Playfair Display was chosen for presenting titles and headings, whereas Poppins was chosen for body text. Both of them are free-of-charge typefaces from Google Fonts, and they can be used for personal and commercial use.

HEADINGS AND TITLES

Playfair Display Bold **Aa 123**

BODY TEXT

Poppins Semibold **Aa 123**

Poppins Light Aa 123

Figure 43. Typography guidelines for Kokonat.

Playfair Display, which is one of the most famous serif typefaces on the Internet, has been chosen for headings and titles as it evokes a sense of elegance, delicacy and professionalism. On the other hand, Poppins is more commonly known as a modern and fresh geometric sans-serif, which is approachable and somehow quirky. Poppins can work seamlessly with Playfair Display, as this font pairing is one of the most popular font pairings according to Google Fonts. When used together, this pairing can perfectly represent the personalities of Kokonat, which are “professional and fresh, elegant but different and bold”.

Popular pairings with Poppins

Roboto +

Open Sans +

Raleway +

Playfair Display +

Playfair Display **Bold** ↓

Poppins **Regular** ↓

Oswald +

The spectacle before us was indeed sublime.

Apparently we had reached a great height in the atmosphere, for the sky was a dead black, and the stars had ceased to twinkle. By the same illusion which lifts the horizon of the sea to the level of the spectator on a hillside, the sable cloud beneath was dished out, and the car seemed to float in the middle of an immense dark sphere, whose upper half was strewn with silver. Looking down into the dark gulf below, I could see a ruddy light streaming through a rift in the clouds.

Figure 44. Playfair Display and Poppins font pairing is one of the most famous font pairings (Google Fonts).

4.3 Creating Customer Touchpoints

As the colour profiles and typography guides of Kokonat have been defined, the visuals of the customer touchpoints could finally be designed. As discussed in the interview with the co-founders of Kokonat, the three main touchpoints which need to be created are Kokonat's website, presentation template in Microsoft PowerPoint format and printed business cards. These touchpoints should be developed based on the brand guidelines so that they can have the same look and feel with the visual identity, thus maintaining the consistency across all marketing channels.

4.3.1 Website

As the world has been getting more and more digital over time, one of the first brand experiences from customers typically come from visits and interactions with the company's website. Website is also one of the most important marketing channels when it comes to digital marketing, especially in the business-to-business context. Therefore, it is vital that the website design gives out positive impressions and nicely aligns with the brand identity.

With the brand personalities and brand guidelines in mind, the author has created Kokonat's website design using the turquoise as the main colour, Playfair Display as the main typeface for headings and Poppins as the typeface for body text. The wave line from the logo also contributes to the website design when it comes to creating a specific shape.

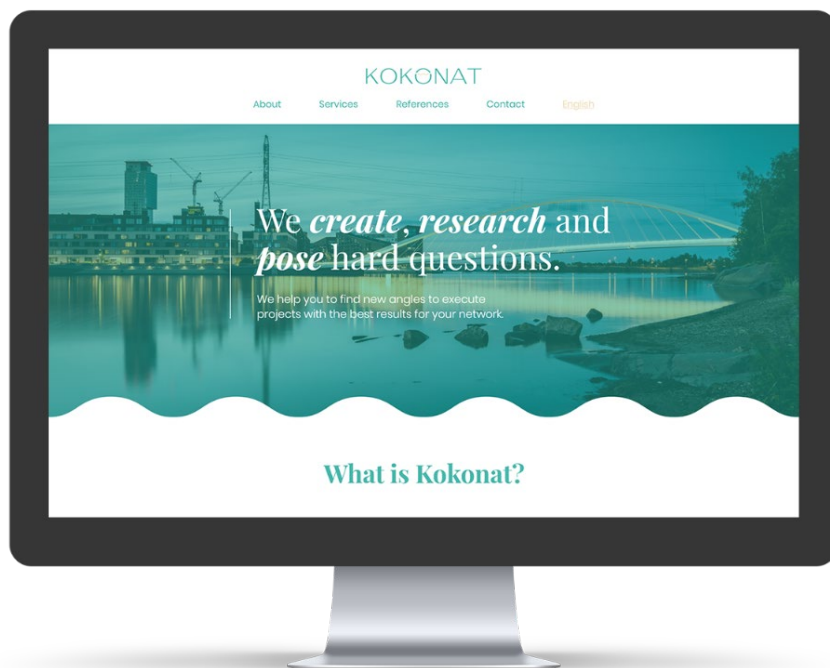


Figure 45. Kokonat's website design at first glance (above-the-fold view).

Rather than delivering the content in various pages with a complex web structure, Johanna and Katri chose to include all sections in one scroll, single web page. This approach is especially suitable for young start-ups with services that are straightforward and easy to understand. The content of the page has a seamless reading flow, beginning with the navigation menu, hero section with a bold statement, introduction to the company, service descriptions, customer testimonials, contact information with a message form, and lastly a footer with a newsletter subscription call-to-action.

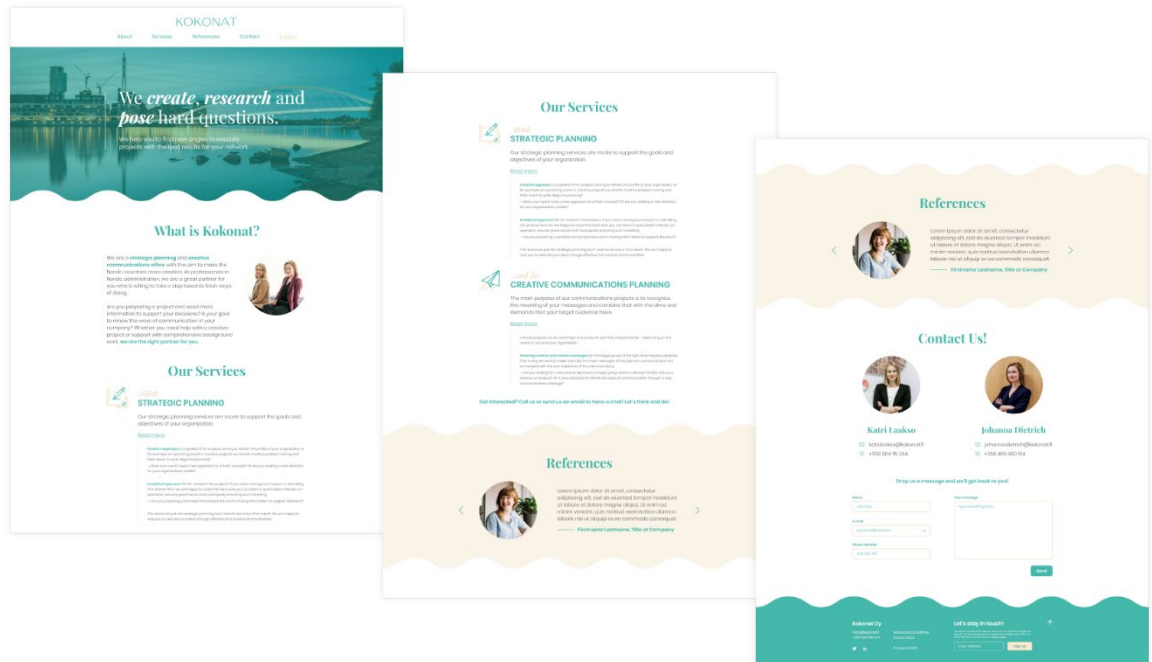


Figure 46. Kokonat's one-scroll, single-page design.

The website was created in Adobe XD, a software specialising in web design. The mock-up of the first screen was created using Adobe Photoshop.

4.3.2 Presentation Template

Besides the website, presentations are the second most important customer touchpoints for Kokonat, as Johanna and Katri need to deliver their pitch decks to clients during the first meetings. Therefore, it is necessary for Kokonat to have a professional, customized design for the presentation template in PowerPoint format, which should align with the visual branding to maintain brand consistency.

Kokonat presentation template was created having 12 different layouts, customized for the purpose of presenting ideas to clients. The template has a clean, minimal look and feels

with lots of white space. In addition to using the same colour palette and typefaces specified in the brand guidelines, the logo symbol has also been used as a decorative element in the bottom-right corner of the layout. Moreover, all the shapes in the template are either round or soft-edged shapes to further compliment the logo symbol.

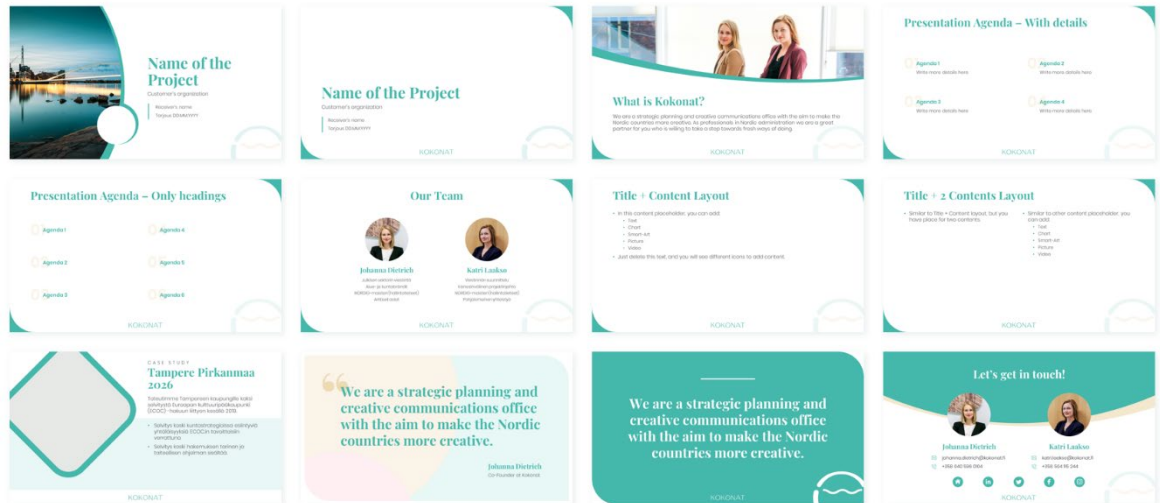


Figure 47. Kokonat’s PowerPoint template.

The template was designed and created using Microsoft PowerPoint, as this is the most popular program to create presentations worldwide.

4.3.3 Business cards

Besides digital applications such as website and presentation template, Kokonat would still need a traditional printed business card for operating the business. As a strategy to differentiate the business from competitors, Kokonat’s business card was designed to be used vertically with the photos of the co-founders printed in full-colour. The front of the business card uses turquoise – Kokonat’s primary colour, as the solid background colour for the design. This allows clients to better memorise the brand colour and makes it easier for them to recall the brand later on.

Similar to the PowerPoint template, the logo symbol was used as a decorative element in the corner of the business card. Although the business card was created using a common European dimension of 85x55mm, Kokonat strives to differentiate by having two opposite corners of the business card cut out. This tactic, which is inspired by the presentation template, aims to evoke a sense of boldness and distinctiveness for the company.

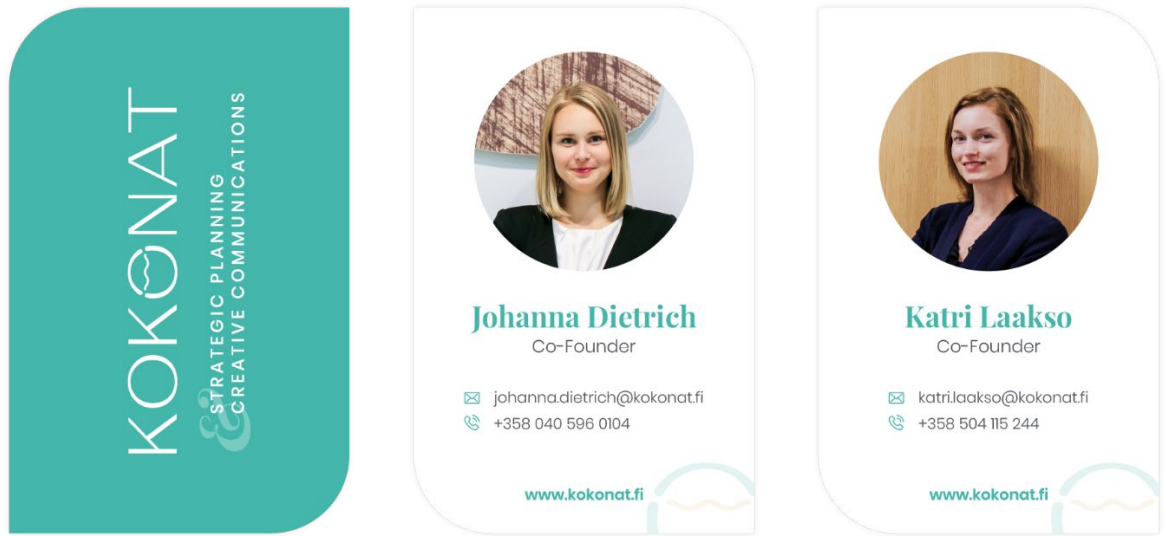


Figure 48. Kokonat's business card design.

The business card design was initially created in Adobe Illustrator, and later on finalized in Adobe InDesign, a software mainly used for creating printed documents and stationeries.

5 Discussion

In this final chapter, the outcome of the project will be discussed and evaluated, in order to examine if the final product has fulfilled the project's objectives and the empirical part has aligned to the theoretical framework. Additionally, further recommendations on building brand identity will be discussed. Lastly, the author will present her reflection on learning during the project.

5.1 Key Outcomes

After four months of working closely with Kokonat's co-founders, the author has managed to create an appealing and professional visual identity for the company, which corresponds to Kokonat's personalities and fulfils the expectations from the founders. Additionally, she also created the design for several important customer touchpoints for Kokonat, which helps maintain and ensure brand consistency throughout its marketing channels.

Customers are completely pleased with the finished product. They also noted that the project has made a major contribution to their performance in the first year of operation. Additionally, they have already developed their website based on the web design provided by the author and started utilising the new logo, presentation template and business cards in the communications with their prospects and customers.

From the perspective of the graphic designer, the author is relatively satisfied with the outcome. In her viewpoint, the visual identity is finally able to represent the brand personalities and core values as well as convey the main messaging to the target audience. Furthermore, brand consistency has been ensured as the product was delivered under one package along with the brand guidelines, which is the ultimate goal of this project.

5.2 Project Evaluation

The four-month project was split into four different stages. The first stage is to understand the brand as the author conducted the semi-structured interview with Kokonat to inspect and investigate the brand story, as well as the core values to be conveyed by the design. Based on these findings, the author started the second phase to create first logo concepts utilising her existing knowledge in branding and continuously researching for more ideas in designing the identity. The third phase started when the logo concept has been approved. Afterwards, the author started to finalise the logo together with deciding other key

elements of the visual identity such as colours and typography, to build the brand guidelines. The final stage of the project is to design the visual of the customer touchpoints based on the brand guidelines.

In general, the project has been quite straightforward, as the goals were specifically set in the beginning, as well as the deadline for the project tasks. The communication with the clients has been smooth with active cooperation from both parties. Johanna and Katri, founders of Kokonat, have given the author many suggestions and ideas as well as feedback, which helps her to constantly improve the design to reach the customers' expectations.

As the author was also working and studying during the time scope of the project, it was sometimes challenging for her to meet the deadlines. This has put her under considerable pressure, which heavily affected her idea generation when creating the concepts for the logo. Fortunately, Johanna and Katri have sympathized with the situation and continuously supported her to overcome the challenging times.

5.3 Recommendations

As one of the main topics of the project is to maintain coherent and consistent brand identity, it is recommended that the brand guidelines should always be followed especially when creating new marketing materials. This can be considerably challenging especially for external partners, for example, an outsourced marketing agency, to create marketing materials and collaterals for Kokonat. Therefore, it is crucial that the brand guidelines should be updated regularly and communicated efficiently to better address the brand story, brand values and the visual identity of the case company.

Additionally, the brand guidelines should not only include the visual components but also the brand story and tone of voice, so that the brand communication can be easily coherent on both the visual and verbal side. This might be unnecessary in the beginning phase of operating the business as Kokonat only has two employees at the moment. However, once the company gets bigger, it becomes more important that the brand tone of voice guidelines is developed, included in the brand guidelines and implemented in Kokonat's communication.

5.4 Reflection on Learning

Even though the author has been studying in International Business, specialising in Customer Relationship Management and Communications, she has always had a passion for graphic design and worked as a graphic designer. Therefore, this thesis topic has been a great combination of her expertise in Marketing and Branding, and her self-taught knowledge and skills in graphic design. This has resulted in a great opportunity for constantly learning and brushing up on her skills. Initially, for example, she was not completely aware of the importance of brand consistency to the business growth, however, after researching on the topic, she has understood that consistency can have a tremendous effect on the business. As the visual identity can greatly contribute to brand consistency and brand experience, the visual identity should be implemented carefully to be aligned with the brand guidelines.

On the other hand, the author has also had the opportunities to brush up her skills in logo design in web design. For examples, she has acquired a profound understanding of how a particular design choice can make a difference to the branding, as well as sharing the right story and evoking the appropriate feelings. This knowledge is extremely important in visual communication, which is one of the author's main interests. Besides, the project and customers' expectations have encouraged her to learn the basic of web design as well as to start using Adobe XD as the main tool for user interface design, which is considered as an imperative asset to have if she wants to continue her career path as a visual designer.

In conclusion, the project has been a pleasant journey, both to the thesis author and the case company. The author feels fortunate to have the opportunity to work with Kokonat, as well as help the founders to create a visual identity which can properly represent the brand. Furthermore, this project has enhanced her confidence and encouraged the author to continue pursuing similar projects in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Guides

Case company's current situation and business background related questions:

1. What is the name of your company?
2. How long has the company been established?
3. What is the product/service that you are offering?
4. What is the field of business you are operating in?
5. What are the characteristics of your business? If you have to describe your company in few words, what would they be?
6. Who are your target customers?
7. Who are your potential competitors? What do you think about their visual identity?
8. What differentiates your business from your competitors?

Evaluation of the existing visual identity related questions:

9. Do you have an existing visual identity? If yes, why do you want to redesign the current identity?
10. What do you like/dislike about it?

Customers' needs and expectations related questions:

11. Do you have any specific idea about the new logo?
12. Can you list out some logos that you like?
13. Do you have any preference when it comes to colour and typography for your new identity?
14. What materials would you need for the new visual identity?
15. Do you have a specific deadline for the project?

Appendix 2. Kokonat's Brand Guidelines

Kokonat's Brand Guidelines

Version 1.0 – April 2020

© 2020 Kokonat Oy

KOKONAT

Contents

Logo Overview

Introduction to our logo and symbol

Typography

Primary and alternative typefaces

Logo Guidance

Clear zone & minimum space, log don'ts

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Color Palette

Primary and secondary colors

Contact Information

Got a questions? Contact us!

KOKONAT

LOGO OVERVIEW

Logo concept

As coconut is the main inspiration for the brand name, it is also used as a key component in the logo design by incorporating the illustration of the coconut in the letter "O". The wave line is an important feature of any illustration of the coconut. Therefore, it was used as the main visual in the letter "O" as a subtle hint for audience to recognize the coconut shape.

The logo was created with a sans-serif typeface to maintain the minimalism and simplicity of the design. On the other hand, the fact that the typeface has high thick-and-thin contrast also creates a sense of elegance for the design.



"coconut"

+

KOKONAT = KOKONAT

company name

final logo concept

KOKONAT

LOGO OVERVIEW

Logo and symbol

The logo must be used as a whole in all communications. The use of the symbol is only allowed with certain purpose, for example a favicon for the website or as a decorative elements in several marketing materials. No other use is allowed.

In social media (LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube etc.) the symbol can be used if the area is too small for the full logo.

KOKONAT

Kokonat standard logo



Kokonat symbol

KOKONAT

LOGO OVERVIEW

Logo variants

The logo is available in four different color variations:

1. Preferred logo – two color
2. Preferred logo – one color
3. Negative logo – one color
4. Black logo – one color



KOKONAT

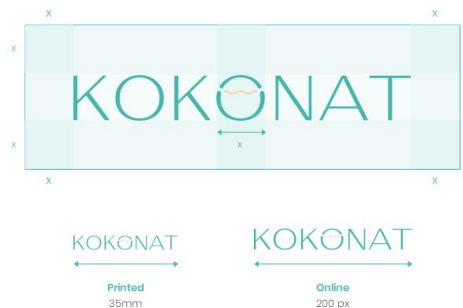
LOGO GUIDANCE

Clear zone & minimum space

The logo is surrounded by a protected area, in which no other elements may be placed. The clear space is the size of the symbol as big as it is in logotype.

The minimum width of the logo is **35 mm** in printed materials and **200 px** in web and email.

The clear space and minimum size are required to maintain the integrity of the logo and ensure visibility and legibility.



KOKONAT

LOGO GUIDANCE

Logo don'ts

The logo should always be used in the standard form to ensure brand consistency. Here are a few things to avoid:

1. Do not recolor any of the elements in the logo.
2. Do not skew or distort the logo.
3. Do not add special effects to the logo.
4. Do not add other elements within the logo's clear space.
5. Do not place the logo over busy photography backgrounds.
6. Do not use the logo with any inappropriate background colors.



KOKONAT

COLOR PALETTE

Primary and secondary colors

Koko Turquoise and Koko Beige are the two main colors in Kokonat's color palette, and should be used as the **primary colors** when creating marketing materials. Koko Turquoise is used in the logotype, and Koko Beige is used as the color of the wave inside letter "O".

Additionally to two mentioned colors, Koko Gray should be used as a substitute for pure black. White can also be used.

There are two different shades of Koko Pink that can be used as **secondary colors**. Secondary colors should only be used as supporting color – for example, highlighting or using as accent colors.



KOKONAT

TYPOGRAPHY

Primary typefaces

Playfair Display and Poppins are two main typefaces to be used in every possible marketing materials. Some of the examples are print media and marketing materials, PowerPoint template or website design.

HEADINGS AND TITLES

Playfair Display Bold Aa 123

BODY TEXT

Poppins Semibold Aa 123

Poppins Light Aa 123

KOKONAT

TYPOGRAPHY

Alternative typefaces

When Playfair Display and Poppins are not available, Georgia and Tahoma can be used as substitutes.

HEADINGS AND TITLES

Georgia Bold

Aa 123

BODY TEXT

Tahoma Bold

Aa 123

Tahoma Regular

Aa 123

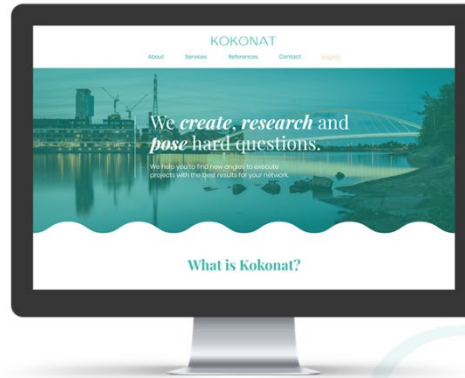
KOKONAT

APPLICATIONS

Website

Kokonat website should be created using the primary typefaces and the color palettes mentioned previously.

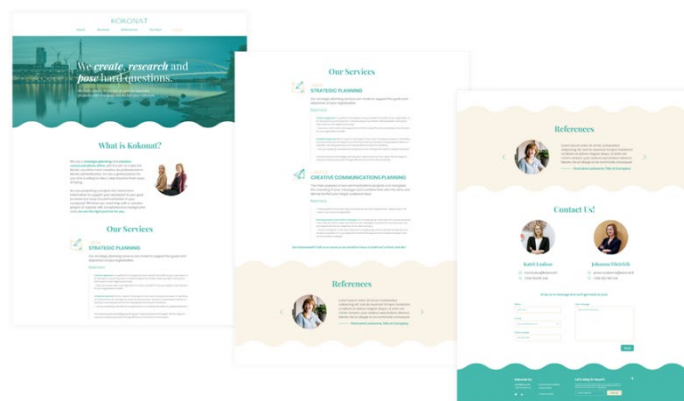
The UI design style should be minimal yet elegant, with plenty of white space and subtle use of the Kokonat's symbol / wave as decorative elements.



KOKONAT

APPLICATIONS

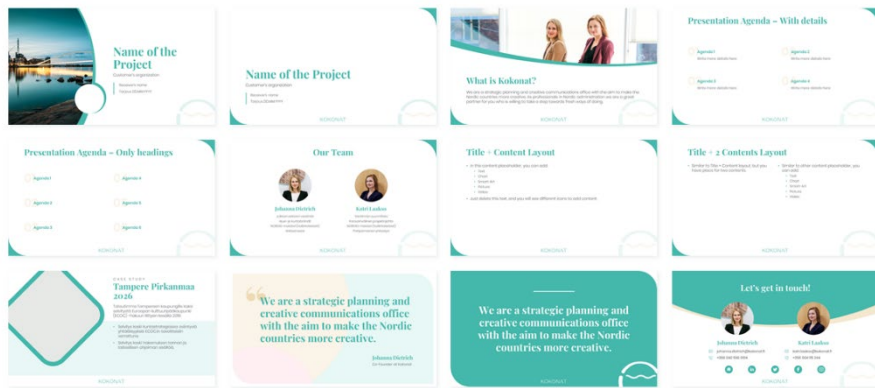
Website



KOKONAT

APPLICATIONS

PowerPoint Template



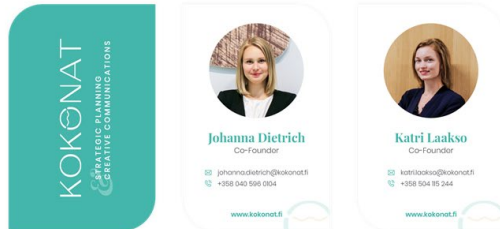
KOKONAT

APPLICATIONS

Business Cards

Kokonat business cards should be printed with the size of 85 x 55 mm, with rounded corner on two opposite corners if possible.

The business cards should always be printed in colors.



KOKONAT

Got a question? Contact us!



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