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# MODULAR APPROACH TO EVENT BRANDING

Creating a visual identity for #FGJ19

Bachelor's thesis Game Design

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### **Abstract**

The main objective of this thesis was to investigate how modular approach can be utilised in instances of branding. It specifically looked into cases of creating visual identities for game jams – a hackathon like game creation events. It analysed individual elements their branding materials consisted of, and then applied this knowledge in the creation process of the #FGJ19 event branding.

The thesis includes two case studies and one in-depth design case analysis. One of the case studies was an independent game jam (Nordic Game Jam), and the other one centred on the Global Game Jam umbrella brand which #FGJ19 is apart of. The in-depth design case concentrated on Finnish Game Jam, the institution organising the #FGJ19 event. The thesis also studied modular systems, and the ways they can encourage cooperation and improve community engagement.

The final product was a customizable asset pack/image library – released under the CC license (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) – and free to use for both the local regional organisers (for customising event related materials) and attendees (as graphics in their jam games). The thesis also includes a post-mortem breakdown of the materials created by both organisers and attendees, along with their feedback.

In the future, additional research would be recommended to draw more concrete conclusions on how modular branding can be used effectively. But regardless of the limited amount of cases studies, using modular approach in this particular case was successful and beneficial in terms of community engagement, and thus it can be recommended to anyone designing branding in similar circumstances.

# **Keywords**

event branding, game jams, graphic design, visual identity

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the process of building a visual identity and successful branding of events. More specifically, it focuses on game jams, hackathon-like events, where game developers meet and within a short span of time (typically anywhere between 24-72 hours) design and execute a prototype of a video game, often with a given theme used as inspiration. Although digital games are more common, board games and other types of games can also be created at these events. Game jams are organised both online and/or at a single or multiple physical locations anywhere in the world. (Global Game Jam 2019.)

The author is an avid game jam participant, and also a deputy board member at Finnish Game Jam, a non-profit association which organises regular jams all over Finland. The main event of the year is Finnish Game Jam (#FGJ), an annual multi-location game development event, and a part of Global Game Jam (GGJ) which takes place every year at the end of January. In 2018, #FGJ18 attracted more than 1000 jammers and organisers together at 22 different physical locations (Finnish Game Jam 2018).

The main objective of this thesis is to investigate how modular approach can be used in branding events. This knowledge is utilised in creating an interactive identity for #FGJ19, with strong emphasis on community and collaboration. During the research part of the project, case studies of similar events were analysed in order to understand how and why similar events have been branded, and used as a reference.

### 2 BRANDING & COMMUNITY BUILDING

In our modern global world, branding has become part of our everyday lives more than ever before. Countries, schools, organisations, events, celebrities and others now use these techniques to set themselves apart, stand out, compete for attention and interact with their audience. However, branding is not only about creating graphics to represent the institution visually. A good brand identity consists of the look, feel and everything in between including reputation, overall customer experience and embodies the 'personality' of the organisation. (Davis 2009.)

With branding events, the same principles apply. Brandon Rafalson, the content marketing manager at Bizzabo – a company that offers technological solutions for events – writes in his blog that it is not only the colours, logos and fonts that matter, but also the attitude, aesthetics and the overall essence of the event. This can be achieved with both digital branding like a website, social media posts or email newsletters, and through print and other on-site branding like posters, flyers and swag items. While the event brand should stay true to the branding of the organisation behind the event, it is very important that the event itself also has a distinct brand of its own (Figure 1). (Rafalson 2019.)



Figure 1. Creation of event branding (Rafalson 2019)

A brand should always try to respond to social trends if possible, but first and foremost it should always make sure to stay in tune with its audience, customers and fans. In our current times some of these changes include, for example, the rise of various social media platforms, but also global issues and political topics like conscious consumerism and climate change. (Davis 2009.)

With many new technologies on the rise, the relationship between brands and their audience has significantly changed over the past few decades. One of the main changes has been the fact that instead of speaking to the customer, brands now try to engage with them and seek a dialogue. Customers are not afraid to voice their opinions, influence the brand and sometimes even help to co-create a product or a service. They expect a deeper connection, greater transparency from the business side of things and are often proud members of the community of fans supporting a particular brand. (Sb.)

# 2.1 Case study of Nordic Game Jam 2018

A case study is one of several methods, each with their own advantages and disadvantages. In this thesis it is used to get more knowledge of why and how other game jams have been branded. According to Yin (2003) a case study is preferred over other methods when "Why" or "How" questions are being asked, and when a current day phenomenon with some real-life context is being analysed. The goal is to collect, analyse and present data. The main purpose of a good case study is to highlight a decision or a set of decisions, including why, how, when and with what result those decisions were taken (Schramm 1971).

This chapter looks closely at different cases of game jam branding. First it is Nordic Game Jam 2018, an independent game jam from Denmark, which is a great example of successful execution of the modular approach. Later, a study of Global Game Jam's overall branding is also included, along with examples of how it was interpreted in 2018 by several sites worldwide.

# **Branding of Nordic Game Jam 2018**

Nordic Game Jam is a 48-hour game creation event open to developers from all around the world. It has been organised annually since 2006 in Copenhagen, Denmark. In the recent years the event has grown, and now includes a pre-party and a two-day game development conference as well (Nordic Game Jam 2019).

### **NGJ 18 Visual elements**

To establish its visual identity, Nordic Game Jam 2018 used a modular set of visual elements described below. This included a 2018 version of their logo, a selective colour palette, and a group of characters depicted as variations on typical tasks one would perform at a game jam. These elements were then mixed and matched to create a variety of digital and print deliverables.

The logo of Nordic Game Jam features the same silhouette and typography every year. Playful robust shapes of a custom font for the word "Nordic" are used, and a few small homages to games are subtly included. One can for example notice the outline of a classical game character Pac-Man in the letter "d" or the player character / board game marker used instead of dot above "i". The 2018 version of the logo (Figure 2) features two of the main accent colours for that year, pastel pink and yellow.



Figure 2. The 2018 version of the Nordic Game Jam logo (Nordic Game Jam 2017)

As for the colour palette, a subtle variation of the three primary colours (red, blue and yellow) was chosen for the accent colours, and a dark mint for a main background block colour (Figure 3). All are presented in soft pastel shades, which make the whole arrangement seem optimistic and inviting. Pastels are defined by their high hue value and low to medium saturation. These shades became very popular in the 1950s America, and as many things fashionable they keep coming back every 30 years or so (in the 1980s and more recently in the 2010s). They are a great choice specifically in the world of digital design, since they are very well suited for filling in large areas, they are easy on the eyes, and carried with them are many positive associations. (Bigman 2016.)

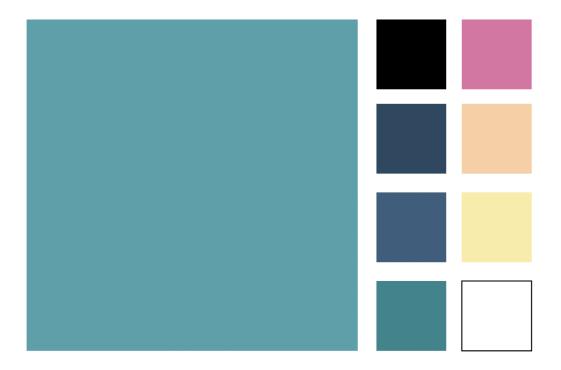


Figure 3. Nordic Game Jam 2018 colour palette

Lastly, a set of bird-like character illustrations was created (Figure 4). They each depict a different area of game development, for example programming, creation of art assets, music, playtesting or management. They are accompanied by visual elements like extension cords, cables and virtual reality (VR) goggles which tie all the illustrations together while reinforcing the tech aspect and theme of game development as a primarily digital discipline.

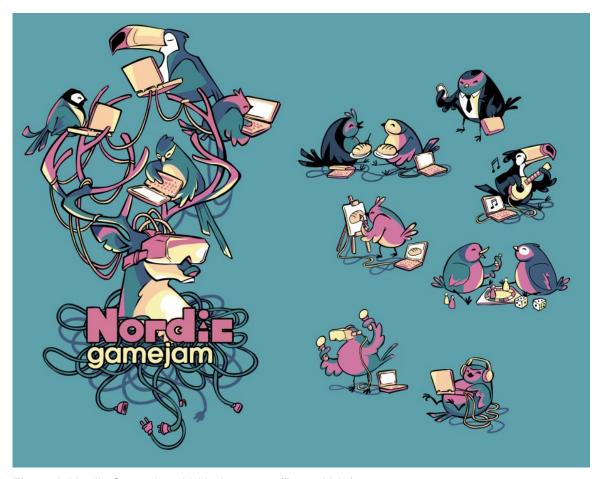


Figure 4. Nordic Game Jam 2018 characters (Bruer 2017)

These illustrations are eye-catching and help to tell a story. They communicate even the more abstract ideas while providing room for interpretation and imagination. Digital illustration provides a fresh feel while engaging the audience (Dyakovskaya 2017).

# **Deliverables**

For Nordic Gam Jam 2018, both digital and print deliverables were created. The digital ones included social media headers, banners and posts (Appendix 1/1) utilising the graphic elements and colours discussed above. For the 2018 website, black and white photos from previous years were used (Appendix 1/2) on top of the other branding. The absence of colour in these photos was a great visual choice, since despite the photos being undoubtedly taken by different photographers and from multiple sources, the result is clean and unified. As far as print goes, Nordic Game Jam only prints t-shirts given to every attendee upon

registration (Appendix 1/3). No other mass-handout materials like flyers or programmes were printed to ensure that the event is as environmentally friendly as possible (Nordic Game Jam 2019).

# 2.2 Case study of GGJ branding and its interpretation by sites worldwide

Global Game Jam is the largest game creation event taking place in physical locations all across the world every January. The first ever Global Game Jam was organised in 2009 in 23 different countries. Since then, GGJ has grown significantly with 103 countries, 800 site locations and over 40,000 jammers participating in 2019. The event is run entirely by volunteers. (Global Game Jam 2019.) This brand also acts as the umbrella organisation for #FGJ, a yearly event organised by Finnish Game Jam ry and the topic of this thesis.

# **GGJ Visual elements**

All Global Game Jam media files, including logos, brand guidelines, templates and insignia, are publicly available at globalgamejam.org/media. GGJ encourages everyone to create their own marketing materials to promote their jam sites, like t-shirts, banners, stickers, posters and alike. The regional organisers are asked to include the GGJ logo in the promotional materials of events associated with Global Gam Jam.

The main element of the GGJ logo is a stylised blue planet Earth with a bright yellow infinity symbol wrapping around it, signifying the goal of unifying game developers and game jam enthusiast all around the globe. A few different versions are available, including one without any text. There are two different versions with text, one to be used on top of light coloured backgrounds featuring text in purple, and the other for black and other dark colours featuring text in white (Figure 5). They are all available as both SVG and PNG files for convenience.



Figure 5. Global Game Jam logo: light with text (Global Game Jam 2019)

The overall colour palette used by Global Game Jam consists of a set of analogues colours – from purple, blue, blue-green and yellow-green to yellow (Figure 6). Analogues colours are any colours set next to each other on the colour wheel, and therefore, they are constitutionally harmonious in nature, because they all reflect similar light waves (Edwards 2004). The main colours of the logo consist of cyan blue and bright yellow, the rest is used for accompanying elements of the visual branding.



Figure 6. Global Game Jam colour palette

Two typeface families are recommended in the GGJ branding document (2019) – Futura Book and Aller. In the context of GGJ, Futura is used for headings, body copy, and the Global Game Jam title in all caps. Even though san-serif fonts are usually pared with serif ones, Aller font family was chosen as an accompanying font (also san-serif), to represent the technology focus of GGJ. This font is recommended for pull quotes and subheadings. (GGJ branding document 2019.)

Global Game Jam also provides templates and other kinds of downloadable content. In 2018, those included social media headers for Facebook events, Facebook groups and Twitter, as well as a circular sticker design featuring the GGJ logo and the "Innovation, Experimentation, Collaboration" motto. Apart from those, an editable poster template was also available for anyone to use (Appendix 2).

# Posters created by sites worldwide

Every year, most regional sites create their own print and/or digital marketing materials to promote their event. This mostly consists of posters and social media banners. Since the organising teams vary greatly in size and skill, the visual quality of the materials fluctuates as well. While some sites are able to create a professional looking posters – Old Skull Games, France (Appendix 3/1), some not so much – The Lab, California (Appendix 3/2).

Different approaches when creating them are also utilised. Some sites choose to follow the GGJ branding more closely – KTH Stockholm, Sweden (Appendix 3/3), some get inspired by the general style and colour palette – TIM WCAP Catania, Italy (Appendix 3/4), and some produce their own independent artwork all together – Lithuania (Appendix 3/5). A few locations also take inspiration from their home country and local culture, for example Mexico (Appendix 3/6) and Honolulu, Hawaii (Appendix 3/7).

# 2.3 Modular design, identity systems and style guides

A good brand design consists of so much more than a good logo. The key here is the word "system". A modular brand system must include all the visual elements that can be combined together and used to create a ranging variety of the company's touchpoints. These elements working together then help to keep the branding always consistent and familiar across different media. (Arthur & Fague 2017.)

At its core, this should include: (1) a logo in a vector version, which is strongly recommended for its flexibility when used across a variety of different mediums and sizes of distribution; (2) any secondary logo elements like vertical and horizontal versions, taglines etc.; (3) typography along with usage guidelines and font family licences information; (4) and a colour palette that includes both digital and print colour codes. (Sb.)

A brand identity system should also always be accompanied by a style guide; a document and a reference tool designed to maintain consistency. This document can be so influential that it is sometime referred to as the brand bible. The purpose of using a style guide is insuring that no matter how many different people are involved in creating brand materials, the results are always dependable. (Chan 2017.)

A company brand guide can include: (1) a mood board with pictures that express company values; (2) a brand story with a simple summary of the organisation's vision and mission; (3) a logo with examples of how it should and should not be used; (4) a colour palette of the main colours used and their exact hues; (5) typography and selected typeface families with their preferred alignment and spacing; (6) an imagery which includes photos and illustrations that have performed well for the brand; (7) and a voice section where writing style is discussed and examples of words/adjectives that do and do not describe your brand well are given. (Sb.)

# Modular design

Sanches and Mahoney (1996) define modularity as a system that prioritises the need for flexibility. Therefore, a modular design is a design type that deliberately supports a high degree of autonomy and independence. This is achieved by standardising all the comprised components. These components then serve a very specific purpose within the system and together they make up the end product. (Sanchez & Mohoney 1996.)

The utilisation of a modular design does not only increase the flexibility of the product design, but also allows for a flexible organisation structure. In result, this encourages cooperation and also reduces the need for authority supervision. This flexibility is especially relevant when materials are shared with a larger number of independent participants, and their varying needs are taken into consideration, as is the case in the context of this thesis. (Sb.)

### 3 FGJ AND ITS STAKEHOLDERS

Global Game Jam as an organization was founded in 2008, with its first annual event held in January 2009. The event usually starts on Friday with introductions, keynote videos and the theme announcement. The theme is always kept secret and all participants are asked to not share it publicly until jamming has started at all the locations across all time zones. All attendees are then challenged to create a game (mostly digital, but physical games like board or card games can be also created) based on their interpretation of the theme in the next 48 hours. GGJ is not a competitive event. Anyone can decide to host a jam site, they only need to pre-register a public venue with internet access. (Global Game Jam 2019.)

The first GGJ event held in Finland was in 2010, and since then Finland has grown to be one of the most active countries participating (games per capita). From the beginning all Finnish sites have been working together, and this collaboration later resulted in the creation of Finnish Game Jam (FGJ) as an organization. The centralization also helped with sharing resources between local site organizers, having national-level sponsors, creating a common portal for

registering jammers and using a unified set of graphics across all the locations in the country. In 2013 Finnish Game Jam became a registered non-profit, striving to support the game creation hobby in general, organizing smaller and differently themed jams across Finland, in addition to the main GGJ associated event every January. (Kultima et al. 2016.)

### Finnish Game Jam and its activities in 2018

Finnish Game Jam as an organisation continues to grow every year. At its core, there are currently eight Board members (with the president of the organisation Annakaisa Kultima, and vice president Timo Nummenmaa), six deputy board members, performance auditor and a deputy performance auditor. These people are the main driving force behind every event organised by Finnish Game Jam. (Finnish Game Jam 2018.)

In 2018, Finnish Game Jam organised 14 events – 12 game jams, a festival, and an award show. The biggest event of the year was #FGJX, a Global Game Jam event with 27 jam sites all over the country. Other jams organised during that year included: Edu Game Jam #1, Seittemätunnijamit at SuomiAreena, ASM Game Jam 2018, Pocket Jam #3, Pikku Kakkonen Game Jam and Museo Game Jam, among others. All of these event attracted more than 1200 participants, and together they made more than 270 game jam games. (Figure 7.)



Figure 7. FGJ: 2018 in Numbers (Finnish Game Jam 2018)

Other events organised by FGJ in 2018 included Jam Jam – a festival and retreat for game jam organizers, and Finnish Game Jam Awards – a Christmas Gala where the best games created during the previous years are awarded. In 2018, Finnish Game Jam also received a prestige Suomi-palkinto award from the Minister for European Affairs, Culture and Sports, Sampo Terho. (Finnish Game Jam 2018.)

# **FGJ Participants**

Since the first FGJ event in 2010, the number of participants continues to rise steadily (Figure 8), as a direct result of more events being organised and because of increasing popularity of game development and the game creation hobby in Finland in general. The numbers keep growing after 2016 as well, in 2018 reaching over 1200 (Figure 7).

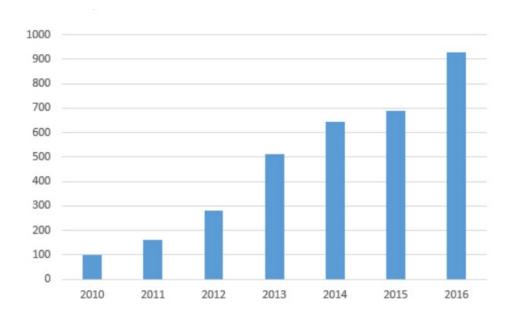


Figure 8. Number of jammers participating in FGJ from 2010-2016 (Kultima et al. 2016.)

In the context of gender ratio, game jam events in Finland are mostly male dominated, as it is the case for the rest for the game development industry as well (Figure 9). But the situation seems to be slowly improving, in 2016 female participation reaching about 20%. This may be a result of more women being visible in organising roles, and the fact that the president of the organisation is female as well.

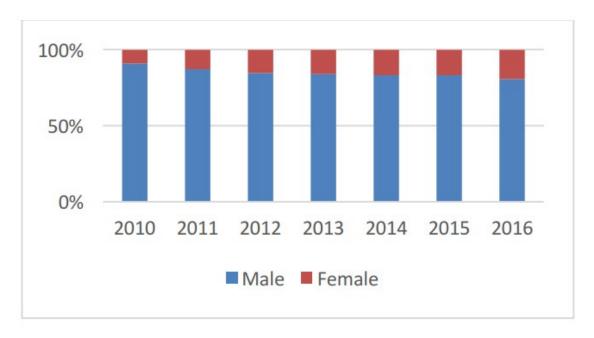


Figure 9. Gender division of the jammers from 2010-2016 (Kultima et al. 2016.)

This opinion is shared by Cecilia D'Anastasio as well. In her 2016 Kotaku article, she writes that one of the main issues women face in the industry is the lack of other women working in it already, despite the fact that they make up about half of all gamers. In many cases, women already on the industry decide to leave due to variety of reasons including the imbalance of wages, incidents of harassment and the reoccurring instances of toxic company cultures. (D'Anastasio 2016.)

## 4 BRANDING #FGJ19

The main idea behind the new #FGJ19 branding was to create something visually cohesive with the GGJ graphics, while incorporating subtle references to Finnish culture. This was achieved by choosing a color palette which ties back to colors used by GGJ every year, and by creating a set of fun character illustrations inspired by Finnish traditions and positive stereotypes.

The pre-production on the visual assets and overall design started already in the early autumn of 2018. After establishing the general style and visual elements, first a few essential marketing digital images were designed to be used for announcing the dates of the event to the general public. Later, designating the print materials (t-shirts, stickers and badges) took priority, due to the time restrictions connected to printing, manufacturing and shipping the physical items to all locations on time. Lastly, a set of individual assets, guidelines, and templates was created to be shared with the regional organizers and used according to their individual needs. A package of all the character illustrations was also shared with all the jammers attending the event, to be used as game assets in their projects if they wished to do so.

Overall, the schedule was more or less followed and everything was finished and delivered on time. Nevertheless, for future editions a longer time frame would be beneficial and recommended. Mainly to be able to share the organizer asset packages sooner, so there would be more time for utilizing them. On the other hand, sharing the character illustrations with all the jammers is recommended by including them in the main info email sent a day before the event starts.

# 4.1 Previous branding of #FGJ events

The first event under the Global Gam Jam umbrella in Finland was organised in 2010. At the same time, the first version of the FGJ logo was designed (Figure 10) and used for promoting the event. It consisted of a typographical combination of the letters F, G and J – bound together on a background shape resembling a speech bubble. This logo (with some minor adjustments) was later used as a base for creating the visuals for years 2011 (Appendix 4/1), 2012 and 2013 (Appendix 4/2).



Figure 10. First version of the Finnish Game Jam logo (Finnish Game Jam 2010)

In 2011 (Appendix 4/1), a set of appealing flat art vector-style illustrations in pastel colours were added. It was also the first introduction of the cute monster-like character mascots, whose overall design was based on the silhouette of the speech bubble in the logo. In 2013 (Appendix 4/2), the rendering and overall art style changed, but the characters were based on the same shape.

In 2014, the logo had undergone a more significant redesign (Figure 11). The letters F and J formed a rounded edge square together, with G in the middle as a nearly full circle. This version of the logo was used between the years 2014 (Appendix 4/3), and 2015 (Appendix 4/4).



Figure 11. Second version of the Finnish Game Jam logo (Finnish Game Jam 2015)

The foundation of the 2014 branding (Appendix 4/3) featured a combination of very saturated monochromatic shades of pink. The characters keep the same overall shape, but are rendered in only their silhouette. All of the silhouettes printed in bright pink are then used as a design for the attendee t-shirts. The 2015 branding (Appendix 4/4) uses a monochromatic set of colours again, but this time in shades of green and teal. Only one character mascot is featured this time (octopus), but it retains a similar shape.

The final version of the FGJ logo (Figure 12) was introduced in 2016, and it continues to be used to the present day. It consists of a lettermark (a combination of the letters F and J aligned in a square with G in the middle resembling a hexagon, and bound together on a black background) a logotype with the words

FINNISH GAME JAM in a sharp boxy font, and the tagline "Make games – Challenge yourself". Three different versions are in use – a full signature one, one without the tagline, and lettermark only version. Inverted (white) variations are also available for use on darker backgrounds.



Figure 12. Current version of the Finnish Game Jam logo (Finnish Game Jam 2016)

The 2016 branding (Appendix 4/5) featured a large typographical letter *F* with text and decorative ornaments on the inside. Varied in different bright colours, a combination of these letters was then used to create a pattern. A group of monster-like characters was also designed to accompany the typography. They were used only sparsely on the digital materials, but all of the characters were featured on the premium attendee t-shirt. They no longer carry a resemblance to the original logo silhouette. In 2017 (Appendix 4/6), the only character is an octopus again (similar as in 2015). The main colours used are a complimentary combination of green and orange. 2018 (Appendix 4/7) is the only year where no mascots of any kind are used. The branding of this year consists of bold typography, brush-stroke like textures and a main colour – bright pink, accompanied by white, black and gold.

Overall, the event branding has evolved and improved over the years since the first event in 2010. Despite being designed by different artists, it retained a consistent playful quality, representing the atmosphere of the game jams well. Every year except 2018, it also always featured some form of a character/mascot.

### 4.2 Visual elements

The main elements created for the #FGJ19 visual branding included an identity design, selected typography and fonts, restricted colour palette and set of character illustrations. The goal was to design a system of assets and elements which can mixed and matched together, in order to create a variety of visually cohesive materials and deliverables. At its core, this system must be accessible and functional for different skill levels and various needs. It has to allow for more advanced customisation from the more experienced users while being simple enough for those less experienced with visual editing programs. Mainly, the board members and main organisers creating digital marketing materials and print swag, and the local regional organisers creating materials specific to their location and community needs. The character illustrations were also designed to be shared with all the jam attendees before the event, free to be used in their projects.

# **Identity design**

For this project, an identity design in a form of a logotype with a customized typeface was created. When designing a logotype, one of the post important aspects to keep in mind is simplicity. Uncomplicated and adaptable solutions are usually the most powerful ones, because a simple logo is so much more versatile. Therefore, it can be used on a range of different print and digital media, from website icons to billboards. Simple design is also more easily recognised and remembered by potential customers. The design also must be constant with the expectations of the client and relevant to the industry. (Airey 2010.)

Since both the organisation and the main event of the year share the same name, Finnish Game Jam, since approximately 2016 the event has been strongly branded with only the current year's hashtag (see evolution of the FGJ branding in chapter 4.1). The hashtag is usually build with the acronym of the organisation and event name, FGJ, and the end digit of the year. For example #FGJ16, #FGJ17 and #FGJ19. The only exception has been the year 2018, when the hashtag used was #FGJX.

The hashtag then serves as a logotype, distinguishing between the event and the organisation. It also reminds participants to include it when posting content and pictures from the event on various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. It also helps to spread awareness of the event to friends and followers of the participants.



Figure 13. #FGJ19 Identity Design

The identity design for 2019 (Figure 13) consists of a purple rectangle with rounded edges and the letters #FGJ19 in bold white custom font. It can be used independently, with or without the rectangle in both white (for use on dark backgrounds) and black (for use on light backgrounds). Most often, it is also accompanied by another dark purple rectangle with the dates of the event in white. The logo version with both the hashtag and the date was used mostly for creating materials associated with the event promotion before the jam. The version with only the hashtag was then mainly utilised for print materials and deliverables available at the event itself.

# **Typography**

Type, and typography, can be taught of as the medium by which languages and concepts are written down and given visual representation. Most typefaces in use today still build on designs created generations and sometimes even centuries ago. The current abundance of high-resolution printing and advancement of

various types of digital media increased options, but also challenges and demands designers are faced with when creating new materials. (Ambrose & Harris 2006.)

In everyday use, the terms font and typeface are interchangeable. Typeface families include all the variations of a specific font, like different widths, weights and italics. These are a very useful design tool. Generally, designers restrict themselves to using a maximum of two type families per project in order to keep everything clean and consistent. Therefore, variations are very important and valuable for establishing visual and typographical hierarchy. Hierarchy keeps the layout understandable and organised, while establishing the relative importance of various text components. (Sb.)

To accompany the custom bold letters #FGJ19, a round san-serif typeface family Quicksand was chosen (Figure 14). It is part of the Google Fonts project, therefore nearly universally free for any purpose and easily distributable between team members and other users. Quicksand is available in four different variations – Light, Regular, Medium and Bold. It was originally designed as a display font, but its simplicity makes it legible even in smaller sizes. (Paglinawan 2016.)

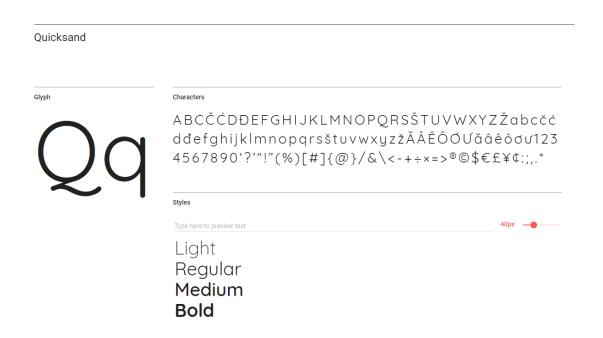


Figure 14. Quicksand Typeface Family (Google 2016)

This particular san-serif font was chosen because of its round shapes, which relate well to the rest of the graphics – especially the vector character illustrations. It makes the whole visual seem friendly and approachable. That fact that it is available on the Google Fonts platform makes it work well with the rest of the modular system, and everyone involved can easily access in anywhere. It is also easy to implement it in external documents as well, for example Google Slides.

# Colour palette design

In the field of visual communication, colour has never been more important than in the last few decades. Print takes advantage in the recent development of more advanced printers, and their affordability makes it accessible to most. Colour can help to organise elements hierarchy, attract attention, group elements of similar nature, and provides an added dimension. (Ambrose & Harris 2003.)

The two main techniques for colour reproduction we use today are both based on the three-colour vision of the human eye. Each of the three receptor types are sensitive to one of the primary colours – red, green and blue (RGB). These are also called additive primaries, because their combination produces white light. This system is used in most types of digital media. On the other hand, subtractive primaries use cyan, magenta and yellow ink (CMY), and their combination produces black. This is most commonly used in modern printers. However, due to printing ink pigment limitations, black (K) is usually added separately at the end of the printing process. When designing for a specific medium, it is important to keep this in mind and choose a corresponding colour system accordingly (RGB vs. CMYK). (Sb.)

In the context of this project, exact RGB Hex codes were provided together with all the other assets. This was done in order to ensure colour consistency throughout all the digital files. For the print deliverables, files in the CMYK colour mode where shared with the printing house.

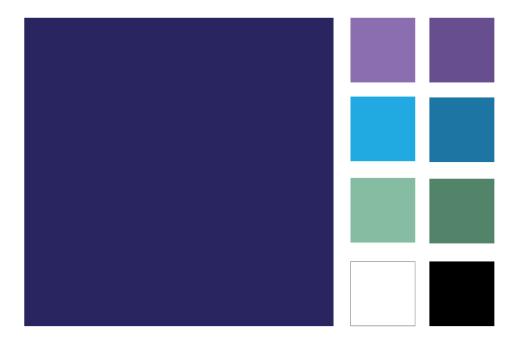


Figure 15. #FGJ19 colour palette

The #FGJ19 colour pallet (Figure 15) is directly related to the general Global Game Jam colour palette which establishes a visual connection, while being more restrictive in order to be different enough and work as a separate entity. The darkest and lightest blue, both purples, and the light green share the exact same values with the original GGJ colour palette. The rest of the colours (medium blue and dark green) are added for convenience when creating digital illustrations and other assets.

# Character design

Using characters as part of the visual branding of the #FGJ events has been a constant for Finnish Game Jam nearly every year, except 2010 and 2018 (see 4.1 Previous branding of #FGJ events). At the beginning, they shared the same silhouette with the original FGJ logo (Page 19) but later they evolved to other shapes as well. Thematically, they either resembled an octopus, included a set of delightful monsters, or both.



Figure 16. #FGJ19 character illustrations

There were nine character mascots originally designed for #FGJ19 (Figure 16). Three in each main colour form the colour palette (Figure 15), purple green and blue. They are each build using one main colour, the accompanying darker shade for details, and white. Their designs take inspiration in various popular aspects of the contemporary Finnish folklore and other aspects of the culture, like Ice Hockey, Heavy Metal, Saunas and more. Separate .png files of each character were shared with all the organisers in the asset pack, and with the participants of the game jam as well. An original vector .ai file was also included, inviting more experienced users to mix-and-match parts or create new monsters entirely.

# 4.3 Deliverables

Using the combinations of the above depicted visual elements, various different deliverables were created. Below, they are described in more detail together with examples, split into two main categories – print and digital deliverables. Due to time restrictions connected to manufacturing, printing and shipping of the physical materials, some of the print deliverables had to take priority during the designing process.

### **Print**

Physical materials created for the event included a poster, name badges, stickers, and premium t-shirts. Editable poster template (Appendix 5/1) was created in both vector .ai and a bitmap .psd file, and shared with the local organisers. They were responsible for printing as many copies as needed, and distributing them around their local area. Apart from the character mascots, the poster included the city name, venue location, GGJ logo, main sponsor logos (Supercell, Veikkaus game studio) and the FGJ logo.

Stickers, attendee name badges and t-shirts were all ordered from a printing company. The company then sorted them and shipped them to individual locations. The sticker sheet (Appendix 5/2) included seven of the mascot characters from the #FGJ19 branding, three circle stickers representing some of the main disciplines of game development (code, art and sound/music), Global Game Jam logo, Finnish Gam Jam logo, #FGJ19 identity design and main sponsor content (logos and other marketing graphics).

Attendee name badges (Appendix 5/3) were printed double side on a durable laminated paper size A6. The front side included some character graphics, a white rectangle where participants could choose to fill in their name and/or a nickname, and a light purple circle marking an area for one of the discipline stickers form the sticker sheet. The back side of the badge featured a FGJ logo, #FGJ19 identity design and both logos of the main event sponsors (Supercell and Veikkaus game studio).

Participants could choose to order a premium event t-shirt (Appendix 5/4). Both Classic and Lady fit cuts where available, and the cost of one t-shirt was 17.50€. The t-shirt was made out of dark blue cotton and the print featured five of the event characters together with the #FGJ19 identity design / event hashtag.

# Digital

Digital materials created for #FG19 included Facebook and Eventbrite headers, images to accompany some social media posts (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter), and "Made at #FGJ19" overlay images shared with participants to be included in their jam games. Two types of social media headers were designed (Appendix 5/5). A main header for the Finnish Game Jam Facebook page, and a location specific headers for Facebook event pages and Eventbrite ticket listings. The main header included some of the character illustrations, #FGJ19 identity design with the date of the event, and a black "next" overlay with the FGJ logo and the two main sponsor logos. The location specific headers included some of the character illustrations, #FGJ19 identity design, GGJ and FGJ logo and a location name in big bold white letters on the left bottom corner of the image.

A few deferent marketing images were designed (Appendix 5/6) to accompany some of the social media posts to help them with increasing visibility. The post varied in content, for example event date enouncement, call for local organiser or Christmas post with some statistics about the organisation from the previous year.

Lastly, a three overlay images (Appendix 5/7) were made and shared with the attendees during the event. They could choose to include them in their games to indicate that their game was made during the #FGJ19. Two of those featured a character on a dark circle background with the words "*Made at #FGJ19*", and one smaller one with only the text.

# 4.4 Feedback from jammers and organisers

In their 2015 article *Customer brand co-creation:a conceptual model*, France, Merrilees and Miller stress the importance of brand engagement, and its effects on the customer-brand relationship. Customers who consider brands as an expression of themselves tend to have more positive brand associations, and also express pride and carry more loyalty towards the brand. Brands that are

interactive also provide more opportunities for the audience to collaborate with the brand. (France et al. 2015.)

Building a stronger customer-brand relationship was especially relevant in the context of this thesis. One of the main goals of creating a modular and by extension more interactive visual identity was engagement and community building. Interaction and collaboration with the brand elements gave the participants a stronger sense of inclusion. Bellow, a few examples and results of this interaction are discussed in more detail.

All of the visual elements and templates created for #FGJ19 were shared with the regional organisers before the event. They then had the opportunity to interact with them according to their own needs and create materials specific to their location/situation. For example, the AV team behind the 24-hour live stream of the event used some of the assets as overlays during their broadcasts and interviews (Appendix 6/10). Some sites have also used the character mascots to indicate and mark different areas of the venue. For instance the info desk poster at the Kymenlaakso site, or a whole system of room markers - indicating different computer classrooms, auditorium or a sauna - at the Rovaniemi site (Appendix 6/2).

The nine different character illustrations together with the vector source file were also shared with all the attendees the day before the event, as a part of the info package email. Some participants than choses to include them in their games, such as the game Monster Labyrinth (Appendix 6/3). This game was created at the FGJ Oulu location and used mostly the #FGJ19 graphics.

Overall, the feedback from regional organisers and jammers have been very positive. It allowed them to create materials specific to their needs and helped to produce constant results. And in case of the participants, the assets provided additional inspiration.

### 5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to research modular visual identity systems used for branding events, specifically game jams. The project part included crating one of these systems for an annual game jam called #FGJ19, which took place during January 25 - 27, 2019. This event was organised by Finnish Game Jam, under the umbrella of Global Game Jam, and included 26 physical locations all around the country.

When creating all the relevant promotional and other materials for #FGJ19, a modular approach was utilised, which resulted in a customizable asset pack/image library. This was then released under the CC license (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0), free to use for both the local regional organisers (for customising event related materials) and attendees (as graphics in their jam games). The main challenge came with the decentralised nature of constructing the end materials, therefore a special attention was given to ensure the final result was always compliant with the set visual identity and overall branding.

Overall, the feedback received from both regional organisers and attendees have been very positive. The one aspect of the process that could be improved upon in the future is scheduling. Sharing the finished assets pack and templates with all the organisers sooner would give them more time to interact with them and create more end materials as a result. Following a similar structure and a schedule every year would also beneficial, since participants would get accustomed to the system and come to expect it.

In the context of the case study of Global Game Jam branding (see 2.2 Case study of GGJ branding and its interpretation by sites worldwide), the visuals used in Finland this year are inspired by the GGJ colour palette and general style. They do not follow it too closely, but are visually related and compatible nevertheless. Similarly as Mexico or Hawaii – the examples given in the case study – the #FGJ19 branding also takes inspiration form the local culture and incorporates various aspects of the popular contemporary Finnish folklore.

Regarding the research part of this thesis, only two case studies and one indepth design case were analysed. One of the case studies was an independent game jam, the other one centred on the GGJ parent umbrella brand, and the indepth design case concentrated on the institution organising the #FGJ19 event. According to Yin (2003), at least six to ten case studies predicting similar results should be conducted in order to offer support to the initial proposition.

Therefore, more research in the future would be recommended to draw more concrete conclusions on how modular branding can be used effectively. But regardless of the limited amount of cases studies in the thesis, we can conclude that in this particular case this approach was successful and beneficial, and thus it can be recommended to anyone designing branding in similar circumstances.

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Figure 15. #FGJ19 colour palette

Figure 16. #FGJ19 character illustrations



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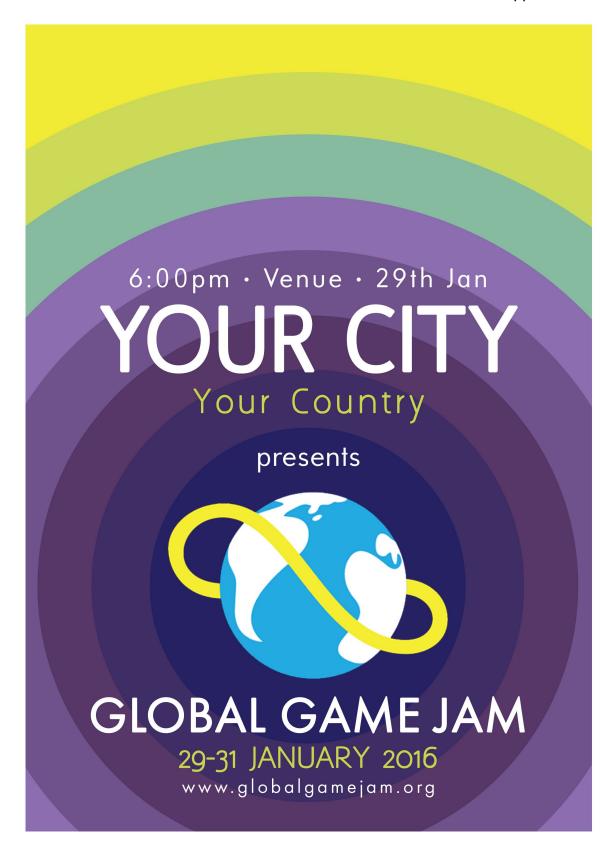
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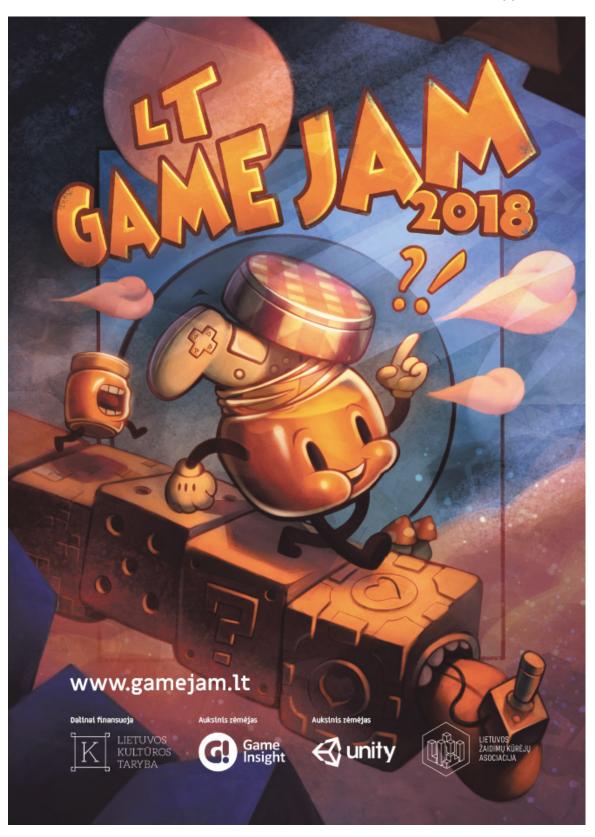
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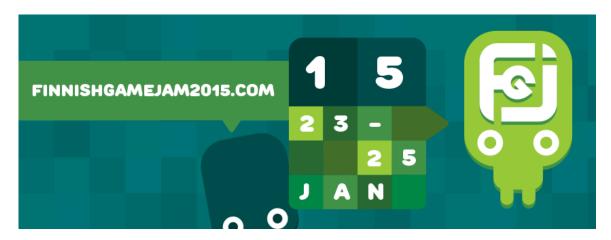
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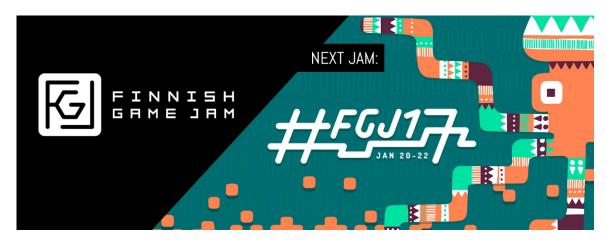
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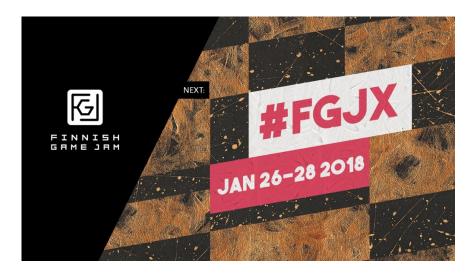
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Tickets available on EventBrite





















FGJ Online Stream (Joensuu Jam Site)



FGJ Kymenlaakso



FGJ Rovaniemi

# **Monster Labyrinth**



#### Team









Monsters need to find their match in a maze. Match same type of monsters in a 5x5 maze by pushing one row to left/right or up/down. Trick is to remember where the monsters were, you can only see their whereabouts when you move a row. Make sure not to drop the GQJ Globe out of the maze or you lose the game! So it's a memory card game meets moving labryinth... and maybe some type of match-3 vibe to it. Made with Finnish Game Jam 2019 open-source monster graphics, Unity, some minor graphics added (made with Inkscape) Neea - Graphics, design, presentation materials Timo - Programming, design, presentations Arto - Music and sound effects.

Jam Site: FGJ GGJ19 Oulu Game LAB

Jam Year: 2019

### Diversifiers:

Use the Source, Luke (Sponsored by GitHub)

Puzzle design challenge (Sponsored by Red Bull Mind Gamers and The Tetris Company®)

Language-Independence (Sponsored by Valve Software)

Platforms: MS Windows

### Technology Notes:

Unity 2018.2.14f1 Inkscape 0.92 FL Studio

### Installation Instructions:

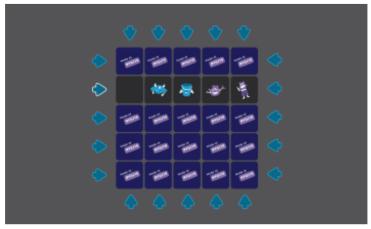
Unzip files, play the .exe file

Force quit = Alt+F4

### Credits:

Finnish Game Jam ry, monster graphics Global Game Jam, logo freesounds.org, trumpet sound effects

## Game Stills:



Global Gam Jam. (2019). Monster Labyrinth. [online] Available at: <a href="https://globalgamejam.org/2019/games/monster-labyrinth">https://globalgamejam.org/2019/games/monster-labyrinth</a> [Accessed 4 April 2019].