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Auli Lämsä

THE MANAGEMENT OF CORPORATE VISUAL IDENTITY
Designing corporate identity for a mechanical company

Thesis
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Author(s) Auli Lämsä	

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Abstract

This thesis investigates corporate visual identity management. This is a functional thesis approaching the subject through a project for an Australian mechanical company. The project was part of the company's establishment: it was put into practice with the founders and the future employees. The company is called Matt's Mechanical and will be located in Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia.

The thesis explores the different aspects of visual identity management, such as: typography, colors, logo- and website design. I have searched information about the different aspects from highly recommended books about the subject as well as internet resources. Choices were made by putting the theory into practice, which is also used as a tool to explain made decisions.

The thesis also considers Australian driving culture and the differences it has compared to that of Finland. I have approached this part through my own experiences and observations. All the observations have been made in Australia's state of New South Wales and might differ in different parts of Australia.

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Karelia
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Tekijä(t)
Auli Lämsä

Nimeke
Yrityksen visuaalisen ilmeen hallinta

Toimeksiantaja
Matt's Mechanical

Tiivistelmä

Tämä opinnäytetyö käsittelee yrityksen visuaalisen ilmeen hallintaa. Tämä on toiminnallinen opinnäytetyö ja lähestyy aihetta käymällä läpi projektiani Australilaiselle auto-alan yritykselle. Projekti oli osa heidän perustamisprosessiaan, se toteutettiin yhteistyössä sekä perustajajäsenten, että tulevan henkilökunnan kanssa. Yrityksen nimi on Matt's Mechanical ja se tulee sijaitsemaan Newcastlessa, Uuden Etelä-Walesin osavaltiossa, Australiassa.

Tässä opinnäytetyössä käydään läpi visuaalisen ilmeen hallinnan eri puolia, kuten esimerkiksi: typografia, värit, logo- ja nettisivujen suunnittelu. Olen etsinyt tietoa näistä graafisen suunnittelun eri osa-alueista erilaisista alan arvostetuista teoksista ja nettisivuilta. Tämän jälkeen olen soveltanut näitä tietoja käytäntöön ja pohjannut niillä tekemiäni valintoja.

Tämä opinnäytetyö käsittelee myös Australian autoilukulttuuria ja sen eroavaisuutta Suomeen. Olen lähestynyt tätä aihetta omien kokemusteni ja havaintojeni kautta. Kaikki paikallista autoilua koskevat havainnot olen tehnyt Australian Uuden Etelä-Walesin osavaltiossa ja ne saattavat poiketa tavoista muualla Australiassa.

Kieli Englanti	Sivuja 46 Liitteet

Avainsanat
Visuaalisen ilmeen hallinta, Yrityksen visuaalinen ilme, Graafisen suunnittelun prosessi, Graafinen design paketti, typografia, logo suunnittelu

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1   PREFACE

During the year of 2013 I worked with a mechanical company, in Newcastle Australia. It all started when I was approached by a friend of mine, Matthew, asking whether I could help him by designing their graphic look: logo, typography, colors, print ready products and even website mock-ups. In this project I was in charge of their company's visual identity management. This was a perfect opportunity for me to put all I have learned in graphic design courses and graphic design related practical trainings into test in real life. Even though this tested my abilities as a professional it was not as hard as it could have been since Matthew is not a complete stranger to me, it was sort of like a soft landing to the reality of what graphic designers do every day. It was a very different project since I did it in Australia, for Australian company and also it was my first project I was in charge of the whole design process.

I started the process during July 2013 by writing a plan and going around the city of Newcastle gathering information about Matt's Mechanicals competitors and their visual identities. I gathered the information by taking pictures and also browsing the websites of other mechanical companies in the area both with Matthew, who showed me their main competitors, and alone. After the brief background research we had a few meetings about what they are looking for and what they think about their identity should be, we discussed mainly about colors and the logo, Matt already had some ideas for it. The need for visual identity management seems to be high in mechanical industry, both in Australia and Finland, but for some reason people don't see it as an important part of their business. I think it might be mainly because using designers cost.

In this thesis I will be reporting my design process and give information about corporate visual identity and its different aspects. The goal of this thesis is examining the management of corporate visual identity and its importance. I will write about colors, typography and website design, the basic principles in all of them and what to remember when working with a client. After that I will explain the process and what the reasons behind the decisions I made were. At the end of this thesis I will write about the feedback and what were the final conclusions of this process. The product is a look-book for the company to use, print ready products and also webpage mock-ups that are meant to be gone through with a web designer and web developer later on this year.

2   FRAMEWORK

2.1 Content and approach

This is a functional thesis: it is a report of real life process and how I deliver the work from start to finish. I will evaluate myself as a professional, by asking constant feedback from my client and also by evaluating how well I am able to explain my decisions based on the theory I have learned in the past and also during this process. This thesis is about corporate visual identity management and different variables related to it looked through the eyes of a graphic designer.

In the background research part I will familiarize myself with Australia's driving culture and how it differs from Finland, especially in Newcastle and its surrounding regions. I will also look into the existing companies and their visual identities when

trying to provide a graphic design solution that stands out from the crowd. I will base my design choices on existing literature and web publishing and their guidelines and tips and also what I have learned in my two practical trainings in the past.

I will write about corporate visual identity and its management as basis of the process and go through its aspects individually. I used both internet and books as resources in this part of the thesis, the corporate visual identity as concept was harder to find information about. However it was easier to find out about the individual aspects in corporate visual identity and what it stands for.

2.2 Starting point

The idea for this thesis came from a friend of mine who needed assistance with designing a unified visual identity for their new company; he didn't want it to be traditional mechanical company, which tends to be messy, cheap looking and usually mix of colors, such as blue, red and white, or on the other hand very plain. This is why he wanted somebody design it for him, but as cheap as possible. He wanted it to be simple and effective and most importantly: stand out from the crowd. It was a perfect opportunity for me to put my knowledge into practice and also give Matt a bit of assistance with the basics of design and what works and what does not.

The goal of this project was to deliver as good product as I can, meet client's needs and learn about corporate visual identity management. Also if this project would have an effect on people around Matt's Mechanical and they would realize how important corporate visual identity management is for business, it would be

excellent, but only time can tell if I managed to make that change in their minds.

At the beginning I thought it would be the best for me to get to know how the mechanical companies look like in general, especially in Newcastle area. To map out what we are dealing with, what are the trends, how they try to stand out from the crowd and what could we do to make Matt's Mechanical to look different. I walked through Newcastle to see different mechanical companies and their visual identities and familiarized myself with the existing and with that knowledge I went to talk to Matthew about what they are looking for and what thoughts they have. Matthew also showed me some of their competitors around the area, which are show in the pictures 1 and 2.

Generally the look of a mechanical company in this area is messy and very basic; sometimes even non-existing, just a plain logo and maybe some listings of what the company is offering. Some companies are messier looking and more restless than others: there is not really anything the eyes concentrate on, except the logo which usually stands out from the background to some degree. When one looks at a mechanical company, usually, it is as if it is an advertisement for a warehouse selling cheap goods or just reading a statement from a book.

However there are some with a specific look and they are, design wise, the highest competitors of Matt's Mechanical. The ones with more specific look have used colors, mainly from their logo, usually on their shop front quite effectively as seen in the picture 2, Newcastle Tyrepower. I thought that I will approach the matter from similar aspect, but try to use the simple designs and colors in an effective manner and try to be more clean and minimalistic at the same time.

The typography of the mechanical companies is usually quite simple as well. It is mainly used to tell the customers what they do, not really for anything else. Of

course telling something is the main reason for using typography and fonts, what I mean by this is that they haven't really used typography as means of drawing attention or design.

The websites are not top of the line either, if the company even has a site. Some even have only one main page that tells the opening hours and phone number. I think this area of business lacks in design in every aspect, or it is not seen as such a big issue for marketing the business.

Picture 1. Some mechanical companies in Newcastle area.

Picture 2. Some mechanical companies in Newcastle area.

2.3 Newcastle region and the Australian driving culture

Australian driving culture is very different from the Finnish one and there are more cars there than in Finland, driving is more common than walking or biking even in small distances. Matt's mechanical is to be set up in city of Newcastle.

Newcastle is a city located in the east coast of Australia. The city is part of New South Wales and belongs to Hunter region. Newcastle is located 163 kilometers from Sydney and in 2011 the population was 308,308 people. (Wikipedia, 2013.) Newcastle greater metropolitan has population of 540,796 people (Wikipedia, 2013).

In Australia people generally drive more than e.g. in Finland. This is my own observation. Normally there are at least two cars in one household, usually there are more. One of the hobbies in Australia is to drive around in the bush and on the beach with a 4wd drive; therefore it is not uncommon for people to own a 4wd drive amongst a regular car. Especially in Newcastle area which is surrounded by beaches, people are not allowed to drive on all of them, but the most popular beaches e.g. Redhead in the south and some parts of Hundred Mile beach in the north are open to public to drive on. Some people, mostly men, also own an UTE (utility vehicle), which they drive to work with. Owning this many cars creates the need for more mechanical services in the country, there are plenty of companies in Newcastle area.

There are also many companies that provide mobile services in Newcastle area. They all have what is needed in a car and they drive where the service is needed. One of the most common is dog grooming. There are several other companies in the area too, who drive a little van e.g. mobile coffee companies that can be hired for special events: they come with an experienced barista and full café equipment

including an espresso machine. There are also several different catering companies in the area and the biggest supermarket chains provide home delivery for everyone with even the smallest amount of shopping, even if one lives right next to the supermarket, many organic stores do that as well.

The lack of sidewalks tells its own story about the driving culture: in the suburbs it is common that the sidewalk, that is very narrow to begin with, stops all of a sudden or there are bits and pieces of the walk every once in a while. The maintenance of the sidewalks seems to be the choice of the home owners, in the suburbs, and apparently so is whether to put it there at all. Also biking is very uncommon and fairly dangerous on the point of view of an European. Bikers have to drive in between parked cars and the rest of the traffic, even on bigger roads, there are normally even less bikers than pedestrians.

2.4 Matt's Mechanical

This project is for a company called Matt's mechanical, which provides mechanical services, as well as sell tools and spare parts, in Hunter Region, New South Wales, Australia. The main clientele will be from Newcastle city area and maybe from the closest suburbs, it is also a possibility that some of the clients might come from such cities as Maitland, Lake Macquarie, Cessnock and Port Stephens. Newcastle area has a lot of different kinds of automotive related companies from washing to spare parts and brand services; Matthew and his co-workers have experience from brand services, but at least for now their company will work on cars in general and not focus on brand services since it will narrow down their clientele, which is not essential at the start. They intend to move towards brand servicing later on once they have gathered clientele.

I worked with the company as an independent designer and mostly communicated with the owner Matt. I got first-hand information about setting up a company in Australia, which differs from Finland, but also has its similarities. The state of New South Wales is the state with most rules and regulations in Australia, which had an effect on the process. The biggest difference, however, was the laid back attitude, but that might be because the company is set up by people who have been working together for quite some time and there wasn't a set date when everything needed to be ready, just approximate timetables.

In the beginning they will have three mechanics and the owner and also one secretary who run the spare part shop and the office for bookings, one person in charge of washing cars and one driving the company's complementary vehicle. All the mechanics are able to do annual registrations of motor vehicles as in Australia one needs to register their car every year.

The company is going to be located somewhere near the center of the city of Newcastle due so many old abandoned buildings, which are for lease and free to be renovated and also easy access and easy to find locations. There is going to be office and shop for spare parts, Matt's office as well as the actual workshop in the premises and of course staff areas, also preferably yard space for the cars waiting to be fixed and waiting to be picked up.

Their target market is anyone owning a vehicle, basically, since they are at the start of their process and try to get a name for the workshop. Given that all of the mechanics come from brand concentrated workshops it might be that they start concentrating certain brands, but then again they should be able to sell cars and only certain parts for certain brands and that minimizes their market.

2.5 Reliability and Ethics

I have done background research about the look as the idea is to stand out from the crowd: not copy already existing look. Since the mechanical companies usually have out dated graphic looks or very plain and simple ones, and since the idea was to go to a different direction with the colors and logo, copying someone else's look was not that big of an issue.

I have approached the subject first through background research and during the project I used theory for guidance and also to help me to explain my choices in this report. My main sources have been highly recommended design related books, one of which was published by TAIK (Taideteollinen Korkeakoulu), others recommended me by either teachers or designers I have worked with (e.g. Kuvat Havaintojen Maailmassa by Harald Arnkill, 2011, and Elements of Typographic style by Robert Bringhurst, 2012). I have based my choices on the guidelines I have found from the books, been taught before or found online. I have carefully chosen online sources, based on their reliability, content and amount of information. Online sources were very limited or repetitive, but I found the core information well

.

I have also used my own knowledge on the base of the thesis and it is based on my own observation or something that has been taught to me by other designers in the practical trainings I have done. I have also consulted other designers and will continue to do so as this process is still partly on going.

When it comes to my actual product, I have had constant conversation with the client throughout the project and also asked constant feedback. We have worked as a team designing a product that meets their needs. I have also done self-

evaluation throughout the process: evaluating myself as a growing professional and my already existing skills, also the skills that need developing.

3   CORPORATE IDENTITY

"Global companies are increasingly emphasising their corporate and brand identities in trying to project a favourable image and reputation. Ongoing trends such as globalisation, mergers and acquisitions, deregulation and privatisation have accelerated the need to coordinate and harmonise companies' disparate global identities and images." (Melewar & Hussey & Srivoravilai, 2005.)

3.1 What is corporate identity?

The concept of corporate identity is what people refer to when they talk about the identity of a corporation, the specifics that differentiate the business from others. It is the personality and character of the business that maintains its individuality. A business makes itself distinct through the image that it presents to the world, through collateral such as business cards and brochures. It is a physical expression of the company's brand, an extension of the culture that is already expressed through communication style and behavior exhibited to maintain the image of the business. (Williscroft, 2014.)

When we meet another person, it is the first impression that counts. People tend to gather cues from what they see and feel, then interpreting the impressions to form their opinion about the person. It is the same way how people treat businesses and their products. To stand out from the crowd every business and corporation needs a good brand image: to create that image and make a positive impression the appearance and identity need to be unique and pleasing. (Williscroft, 2014.)

The consistent design of a corporate identity upholds and reflects the culture, principles and future ambitions as well as visionary goals of the business. Customers who find this to be in accordance with their own philosophy and feel

connected to the image are more than likely to be loyal to the company. Personal experiences with the identity influence consumers and their purchasing decisions. A corporate identity with a strong and positive impact creates positive mental image of the business. (Williscroft, 2014.)

Over time the world and target audience changes and it is time to update the corporate identity. Then the design professionals can help, the image should develop trust, sense of value and long lasting connection with the customer base. (Williscroft, 2014.)

3.2 Why is corporate identity important?

The success of the iconic corporate identities, such as Coca Cola and IBM, was mostly driven by advertising messages that were reflections of the boom in consumer-driven economies after World War II. In the middle of 20th century, the development of visual identity systems became mainstay in almost all branding initiatives. Corporate organizations realized that their visual identities should become an emblem of their businesses through communication that was simple, powerful and easily reproduced and recalled by general audience. Visibility and stability of the industrial glory were the hallmarks of visual expression of the time. (Charya, 2013.)

In the late 20th century the world changed: the Internet and subsequently the social media forever altered how brands express themselves and who they are, what they stand for and why they matter. The shift from the "organization" to the "individual" became the new order. The "always-on" world brought a new value system based on the velocity of change. This created a new generation of digital brands, such as Netflix and eBay, which are embodiment of disruptive innovation and a need for constant, rapid change. Speed and readiness to embrace change are the essence

of these new brands. (Charya, 2013.)

In an increasingly digital and connected world, where rules are constantly reinvented, visual identities can no longer be static visual markers. Instead the visual identities and design vocabulary have evolved to reflect the philosophies of the new generation of business leaders. To create an emotionally powerful, highly valued brand, there must be an emotionally powerful idea beyond the product. (Charya, 2013.)

Organizational identities are becoming increasingly complicated: companies enter into alliances to deliver products, projects and services blur the boundaries of their unique identities. Alliances are most common in the new companies involving innovative collaborations, partnerships and networks. Many companies have several licensing arrangements with other companies as channels to market. Many of the companies use alliances between different organizations to produce a consortium of skills that in alliance can do what none of them can do independently. None of these types of organizations have a clear-cut identity that maps out to a legal identity. (Klegg, Kronberger, Pitsis, 2011, 14.)

Strong corporate branding is essential because it subconsciously shapes consumers' feelings about an organization and its services or products. In short corporate identity is the visual manifestation of the brand. It includes letterhead, business cards, websites and guidelines. The guidelines dictate how the identity is applied and approved for printed pieces, color palettes, typefaces, page lay-outs, uniforms, store furnishing and so on, so that the visual continuity and recognition is maintained. In today's competitive markets it is imperative to establish corporate identity standards, so that the service and the representation of the company remains similar all around the company. (Charya, 2013.)

4   VISUAL MANAGEMENT

There are many guidelines and books for graphic designers to help them design different products for companies. There are standard measurements for e.g. business cards and the information about preparing the documents for printing can be found there as well. The printers have lists of different specialties the client can choose to be done to their products, such as: matte coating and die cutting. Since the measurements, PDF settings, color settings and bleeds vary in between the printers, it is essential to decide who to work with and set up all the prints in the beginning rather than start changing everything individually e.g. after everything is done with 3 millimeter bleeds and it turns out this particular printer needs 6 millimeter bleeds on the products due their different cutting system. Usually the PDF settings are on the printers website for everyone to download and all that needs to be done is to click the correct setting on when making the PDF.

In the designing process the designer works together with both the client and the printers, there might be that some of the ideas that the client has might not work when printed and some of the ideas designer has might be too difficult to produce. The designer is constantly making the designs better by listening the feedback from both sides and trying to work out a solution that suits everyone using their knowledge of design and design softwares. Other partners might be the web developers who code and establish websites, that are usually designed by a design company or the designer, the graphic designer works in between them and the client trying to find solutions that are good looking and also feasible. The situation varies with every client and also with the services the designer themselves offer, it might be only print design or only web design, but nowadays graphic designer should have knowledge on both of them and if not, they should establish rapports with people who have knowledge on subject they don't have so strong skills on.

4.1 Typography

"In a world rife with unsolicited messages, typography must often draw attention to itself before it will be read. Yet in order to be read, it must relinquish the attention it has drawn" (Bringhurst, 2012, 17).

One of the principles of typography is legibility, another one is interest that can give living energy to the pages. The interest can have various forms e.g. laughter. These principles apply in different ways and apply even on e.g. stock market reports. (Bringhurst, 2012, 17-18.)

Well-chosen words deserve well-chosen letters. Writing begins with leaving signs: it is natural act, like speaking. Typographer's job has been to add an unnatural edge to writing, originally to imitate the scribal hand in a form that permitted the exact and fast replication. Typography is idealized writing and its task is to create creative non-interference with letters, and in ideal conditions that is what typographers are asked to do. (Bringhurst, 2012, 18-19.)

The one essential task is to interpret and communicate the text: the tone, the tempo, logical structure and the physical size: determine all the possibilities. Also there should be a link between the text and other elements, such as pictures, diagrams and notes. (Bringhurst, 2012, 20.)

The typeface should be chosen to suit the task and the subject. The typefaces should be able to furnish whatever special effects chosen to be used: in example if the numerals are needed – a typeface with well-designed numerals should be chosen e.g. Palatino. When there are only a few typefaces available, the typographer should make the most of their qualities. The typography should be ordinary, so that the attention is drawn to the quality of the composition instead of the individual letterforms. (Bringhurst, 2012, 95-96.)

4.2 Colors

In arts and design colors have aesthetic and symbolic value, but they also serve in standard procedures and security. They act as signals that alert, warn or guide. With colors one can outline and highlight information. In print media, television and Internet the colors help understanding the message. (Arnkil, 2011, 138.)

Picture 3. Alarming colors in road signs.

One of the basic functions of colors is to make the target easier to recognize by making it stand out from the background. The difference can be made by only changing the lightness or darkness of the color, but usually color and other visual elements are needed to guide the eye to the right direction. The effectiveness of advertisement is based on rapid conceptualization. Effectiveness can be achieved with e.g. accents that work by drawing attention to themselves since they stand out from the background considerably. (Arnkil, 2011, 140.)

Without a contrast there is no color. The contrast develops when there are two different surfaces of color, either side by side or further apart. Human eye is build up so that it only reacts to these kinds of differences and changes in the field of vision. The differences the eye reacts to can be either spatial or secular, unless these changes happen the visual sensation disappears in a few seconds. (Arnkil, 2011, 94.) The contrast can be created with shade or light, with different shades of gray, with complementary colors or with black and white. Simultaneous contrast means seen color changing in effect of the color right next to it. When the darkness or lightness of two colors is exactly the same, but the shade difference is wider it causes colors to jump, move or shiver around the edges of the overlapping shapes. That happens when the simultaneous contrast is at its peak. (Arnkil, 2011, 94, 102-108.)

There is a lot of symbolism that is related to different colors such as liturgical colors and heraldic colors. Colors have been used throughout times as tools for symbolism in religious and social rituals. There have been thoughts that there would be colors that would universally, in every case, symbolize one specific thing, but when connecting colors to meanings one has to be careful since the meaning can turn out to be the opposite regarding to the situation, culture and context. Also shapes that are connected to the color can make the meaning differ. When right color is connected to the right shape, it can create same association regardless to

the cultural environment: sky is blue and grass is green. (Arnkil, 2011, 146.)

Throughout times shape- and color harmony have been the key elements in teaching in art schools, even though the disharmony is alive in the most famous masterpieces we love till this day. It is not clear whether color harmony is the same thing as the beauty of colors and color combinations. It might be that the dynamic color combinations might be more aesthetically pleasing than the dead harmonious color combinations. (Arnkil, 2011, 121.)

Even when making a simple decision one has to think what color combinations are likely to produce the desired effect. Since the early years the color compatibility has been compared to composing music due to which it has also been called color harmony. Matching colors are referred to as natural colors and many artists and designers draw their inspiration from the nature. Nature is said to be artist's greatest teacher. (Arnkil, 2011, 119.)

4.3 Logo

When designing a logo the key is to remember to combine effective typefaces to effective colors; that attracts attention and guides viewer's eye. In my practical training I was taught by another graphic designer that when designing logo for a company, which is not well known or just being established, the logo should consist of the name and a possible shape or picture. One should not design a logo with just a picture on it since that will not create any associations given that the general public is not familiar with the corporate identity yet.

The logo is most effective when it is simple and makes a clear statement. Black logo on white background is the most effective graphically speaking, but colors bring distinctiveness to it (Arnkill, 2011, 146).

The logo, its shapes and colors, should work in different sizes and the changes in size should be taken into consideration especially when thinking about the colors and how their effectiveness might change when the size changes. (Arnkil, 2011, 147.)

Apart from the typeface and its size, also the ratio of the texts color to its background affects the readability of the text. The key factor in text outlining is sufficient difference in luminosity between the text and its background. According to the ISO standard the difference in luminosity should be at least 1:3 cd/m^2 (candelas per square meter), but 1:10 cd/m^2 is more recommended contrast ratio. The smaller the size of the typeface is, the bigger the contrast ratio should be.
The readability is as its best when there is black text on white background, but also white text on black background has been said to be the best combination to read. One and two color logos and traffic signs are said to be the best ones to print and most effective and distinguishable. (Arnkil, 2011, 146-147.)

Picture 4. Two-color logos used by FedEx.

http://graphicdesign.stackexchange.com/questions/8111/different-logo-colors-for-different-uses-appropriate. Read 11.10.2013.

Logo's should also have different variations, at least the basic which is color and black & white versions of the logo to be used in different situations, e.g. if the company wants to be able to print the logos with their black & white printer on letters they send. That of course is chosen by the company itself, but designer should always remember remind them about that when talking about the logos.

Often there is a picture on the background of the text. Colorful or vivid background affects the readability of the text in almost all of the cases and it should be avoided if possible. The luminosity differences on the background make it difficult for designer to find right brightness or darkness for the text. Especially difficult cases are those where the pictures resolution is almost or exactly the same as the texts. If the picture is necessary on the background the luminosity difference should be clear, minimum of 1:3 cd/m^2. (Arnkil, 2011, 148.)

4.4 Website

The design principles between electric and print Medias are quite the same but there are some differences when it comes to colors that affect the readability of the texts. The contrast ratios of a normal computer screen are weaker than a well-lit paper's, but the situation changes when one watches the monitor in the dark - the depth of black deepens. On the other hand the screen saturation is better since the colors are produced by additive mixtures, as pure light, which means that the blue and red color aberration is more real than in the printed media. Therefore red on a blue background, or vice versa, should be avoided to prevent the jumping and shivering of the color lines. (Arnkil, 2011, 148.)

The pure white background is not recommended either since human eye senses the pure white light differently when it is projected oppose to watching it on paper. Even if the luminance of the screen is not brighter than the paper would be, it is

thought to be more stressful for the eyes. (Arnkil, 2011, 148.)

5 WORKING WITH A CLIENT

5.1 Gathering the right core information

Depending on who contacts the designer about the job, they will either be given all the information needed at once, or will have to listen and ask questions relating to the various points they need information about. The core information consists on questions such as: deadline for rough sketches and deadline for the final product. The secondary information consists from such questions as: is there a contract relating to the job and, if so, what does it presume?

All the information is generally delivered either over the phone or via email, PDF's are sometimes sent over. (Rees, 2008, 68.) One also needs to know what their delivery options are. Due the file sizes the most convenient option, emailing, is not always possible. In that case the designer needs to discuss about alternative ways to handle the sending of ready product. Before one starts working with the project, of course, they have to assess whether they are able to engage effectively with the subject. (Rees, 2008, 68-69.)

Understanding the job and the brief, a letter describing the project and what the client wants, are key factors of the design process. That's what I was taught in my practical trainings. Usually the designer will get the job throughout their portfolio, but one has to remember that the client is not necessarily looking for the designer's style to be used in their products. The designer has to understand what the client wants: what's their style. The portfolio is the sum of ones best works and

everyone has certain style, but one has to be comfortable to step out from their style and adapt what the client wants.

Normally the process is emailing back and forth with the product and clients changes, but it can also be that e.g. fax is used or they can even come and see the product, depending on what is agreed on. This changing of information is crucial and sometimes frustrating and time consuming, because usually people don't know what they like the best and after many changes they decide that they want the first idea after all. This is why it is important to save all the versions separately on the computer: if one has changed the product completely and the client wants to go back to the first one: it is easier to go back and start again when the first version is saved as it was.

This process worked out well with Matt's Mechanical because Matt was usually there when I started designing something and then I just finished it on my own time. I either showed him a print of the work done so far or showed it on the computer and made required changes there and then. In the past, especially when I did my practical training in a newspaper, the communication was handled via email and on the phone, which was exhausting because emailing back and forth to see what works and what doesn't is a lot more time consuming than talking and figuring changes out together with the client when physically in the same space. I prefer discussing as much as I can face-to-face rather than having the biggest conversations over the phone or via email when we are making the last changes.

5.2 Timing

When one accepts the job based on the subject matter, the next question is crucial: how long one has to do the job and are they able to do it in the time given.

Whatever the deadline is it is more than likely to be a challenge. If one struggles to meet the deadline they can come up with simpler solutions, but at this stage they should give the commissioner the choice to proceed or cancel. It is better to let them cancel and turn to someone else than let them wait and be disappointed with the outcome. (Rees, 2008, 71.)

Sizing is also part of the timing, the size often plays a crucial role when deciding the deadline. If it is a big, detailed piece, it is more than likely to take more time than smaller, simpler one. (Rees, 2008, 71.)

The best way to handle the deadlines is to make a timetable and stick to it. Also being organized is one of the key factors, since then one has all they need in hand and they don't have to spend time looking for things needed every time they want to start working.

5.3 Rights of the designer

Generally the contracts are written so that the designer is providing a product used by certain client, in certain situations: e.g. quarter-page artwork for a particular magazine, which is published in certain area at a certain time, and that should be written on the contract. As the designer retains copyright, they extend to the magazine an exclusivity period of usually 90 days from the date of the first publication, after which time the designer is entitled, if they so wish or have the opportunity, to license this work to another publication. (Rees, 2008, 76.)

Usually, in real life, the contracts stipulate the reproduction rights that are far more extensive. The client often pushes to get the first rights, for the 90 days, and after that have exclusive rights to use the product e.g. in other editions and also sell the product further to third parties. Sometimes the designer has the copyright, but the other party has the exclusive right to publish the work, which makes the designer's

right nothing more than nominal ownership. Alternatively the client gains the copyright, but the designer still has rights for the artwork, once they hand it in. (Rees, 2008, 76.)

In my practical training here in Australia, I learned that at least in here the designer loses their right for the artwork as they hand it in to the client. Of course that might be case sensitive and have a lot to do with the contracts, but in many cases that seemed to be the case. The designer was requested to provide all the files, even the ones editable, for the companies and after that they were able to make alterations if they so wished.

Contracts need to be set in stone. It is important to know that the designer might be required to sign a contract when they agree on doing the job. It might be that the designer is requested to sign the contract, they have never seen before, long after the time agreeing about the job. It is therefore the best to ask early whether there is a contract and, if so, request that can it be seen it immediately or be sent with the brief. It is always worth reiterating that the copyright remains the designer's, and that any additional usage would need to be negotiated and agreed on. The designer can't then be accused of not being clear about understanding of the job they agreed on. (Rees, 2008, 77, 79.)

6 MY PROCESS

6.1 Ideation

The only guideline I had in the beginning was that there needs to be a spanner in the logo and maybe a simple design. Matt didn't know about what colors should there be or what colors he wanted. I used a website called COLOURlovers and

browsed through different pallets and ideas to find something I could narrow the possibilities down with. I also used the book Värit Havaintojen Maailmassa by Harald Arnkil to help me; especially the chapters about color effectiveness were really helpful.

I usually do sketching on computer and make different ideas with it rather than draw it on paper. After talking to Matt for the first time I came up with the idea for the logo on the first day and he was pretty happy with one of the first ideas I got. He was there for the whole design process and had his input on the design as I worked on the computer.

Matt relied on me a lot during the process and asked me what could work and what not, I used all the information I have and could possibly gather and showed him examples of what I thought would be something to use as an inspiration. Doing minimalistic designs is not always easy and it is surprisingly hard to find a way to design something that is at the same time simple, but effective. The websites were a great help throughout the whole process, but most of all the clients input because I was designing for them, not myself.

6.2 Typography

When I started to think about the typography, I did what I usually do: tried to find a typeface that is simple and narrow, as I think it makes the best statement. I did that after I designed the spanner as typography is key part of the logo. I wanted the typeface to say that this is Matt's Mechanical, nothing more, nothing less and have aspect to it that makes it a little bit more special than plain text, which can be seen in the picture 5, which shows two versions of the logo. I wanted the text in the logo to be minimalistic and consistent with the other typefaces I would use in the other designs.

I also chose typefaces for their publications, mainly letters, as well. I chose the font Euphemia to be used in the logo and on the back of business cards and handouts and Plantagenet Cherokee to be used in letters.

I got to know to the book called Elements of Typographic Style by Robert Bringhurst and learned basics of typography through that, it didn't really give me a lot of inspiration but it was a good book to use as a basis of the theory part of this thesis. I looked for inspiration from the Internet, mainly logos because I wanted the typography be consistent with the whole look.

6.3 Colors

From the beginning I thought that the background color should be black, in general. Of course the logo is designed so that it works on both black and white, but in business cards and handouts background should be black. Black is clean, always stylish and even expensive looking, it calms all the other colors down. I also used Color Lovers website for browsing through different color palettes and combinations and found that very helpful in the process. I chose 80 % and 30% grays, green that has 100% yellow and 50% black and full black to be used as the color palette. Black is used as the background, the logo and font colors are the grays.

Different idea websites, such as Creattica, were also helpful when looking both color ideas and logo ideas: they gave good ideas on what works and what not. They were very helpful when talking to Matt and showing him what I am thinking that could be the direction to go to. Of course that approach can have opposite

effect too: one finds a lot of "cool" ideas that would not serve the purpose, would be too expensive or complicated and narrowing new ideas down after showing them to client can be exhausting. Guiding their thoughts towards more rational ideas can be a challenge if one offers them too many different types of ideas that are more to be an inspiration, than an actual look that one is aiming for.

I thought about green or yellow for the highlight color that guides the eye. But since the green on black reminded everyone a bit of a spa or something similar to that, I thought about going a bit more to the direction of more yellowish green, which might remind of a drop of oil that it was initially used for in the logo. I personally am a fan of retro colors and I think that might have had an effect on this decision. Also going towards the basic green, to me, seemed a bit too easy solution and reminded me too of a spa or a beauty therapist or something similar.

6.4 Logo

Matt wanted the logo to have a spanner on it, which both helped me and also didn't. I didn't know where to put it and whether to make it as one letter or a part of the letter. Matthew was working with me on the day I started designing the logo and had his input on whether it worked or not, we got the final form of the logo done on the first day, which actually has the spanner in it.

I went through different sites with example logos, such as Creattica. I looked for minimalistic logos and tried to draw inspiration from there. I also read articles from the blog Spoon Graphics; there are articles and tutorials about minimalistic design and especially minimalistic poster designs were helpful.

I have always wanted to design minimalistic logo and it was surprisingly hard. How to make it so effective that it makes a statement with just a few details? It is easier to make something with a lot of details at first, then to remove some of them.

I wanted to use the high light color in more than just the text itself to bind the text "Mechanical" to the rest of the work. The drop as an apostrophe that is the same color as the word below it binds the two words together and also guides the viewer's eye so that first they are more than likely to read the word mechanical, and then aware of what this company is about, then look up and read the whole name.

I wanted the logo to be something that will, in the future, create associations and even if one would only see the word "Matt's" or just the spanner and the drop they would already know what it is about. I also wanted it to be stylish and neat, something that people will take seriously and I wanted to work when printed out on an official paper, such as letters or an envelope.
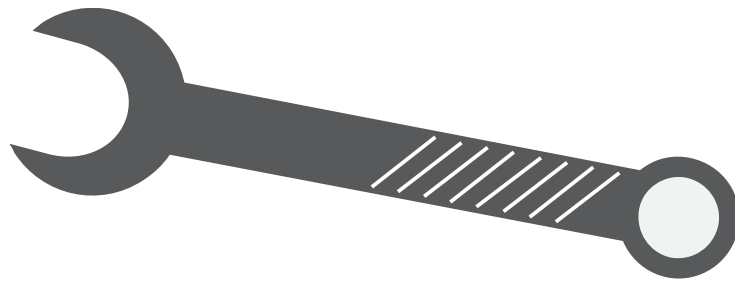
Picture 5. Two versions of the logo.

6.5 Website

I wanted the website to follow the clean and calm look. The mock-ups don't yet look exactly as I hoped as I don't have professional and real pictures to use and I only used what I had at that time.

In the beginning of the design process the mock-ups looked completely different and I was very unhappy with them. They looked very outdated and unprofessional, but after seeking for inspiration I finally found some designs to draw inspiration from and I hope that in the future, after consulting the web designer, I will be able to make them look as good as they do in my head.

I am planning on making changes to the header and some minor changes to the lay-out and this I will do together with the web designer as he/she is able to help me with what works and what not. I will change the header an image that changes according to what section one is looking at and I will use pictures that are relevant to the company: their office, yard, shop front, workshop etc. I might change the drop down menus to go on the side of the page and add more color to the page, also social media buttons will be added on according to what social media they will use, if they will use any. Since it is a small company, there will also be introduction pages of other workers and what they specialize on in the workshop. That is still to be done during the beginning on the year 2014 as it is then when Matt's Mechanical is meant to be opened and the website to be launched. I will more than likely to be working with a company who has a web developer who will, together with me and the web designer, help with the coding and launching of the website. Until then this part of their process is put to hold.
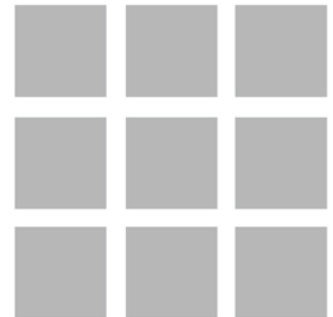
Picture 6: Raw version of the website.

6.6 The final product

The final product consists from colors, typefaces, logo, business cards, hand-outs and website mock-ups, all of which are both printed out and also gathered in a look-book. The handouts and business cards are meant to be printed on a recycled and organic semi glossy black paper, since the sustainability is a growing trend. Even though it is not yet so big in Australia as it is in e.g. Europe, I wanted to help Matt's Mechanical to lead the way in this matter. Even though automotive industry is not that sustainable, even though it is getting towards it, there are little things everyone can make towards sustainability.

The original Illustrator and Photoshop files are handed out to the company, in case they need modification in the future. Also high quality PDF, JPEG and TIFF files are provided for them. All of the products will be sent to printer eventually by me.

The process is still on going and the products have only been printed on plain paper, since there have been delays in their opening process. The products are to be sent to printer, once I find good deal with a printer. I intend to use a printer specialized in sustainable printing, there are couole of them in Australia closest of which is in Sydney, otherwise I will have to order the special paper and have it printed somewhere else.

The biggest part of the design was the logo as they didn't have one. The only guideline was that there should be a spanner in the logo. I came up with two different logos, other one having the spanner in it and the other having only the text and the drop of oil. They are planning to use both of them and I think it works well since they are not actually totally different, but the other just have the extra addition to it.

Picture 7. Final products. Above: business card, below: office handouts.

7   CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Feedback

I got good feedback from Matt and we were thinking alike for most of the project. It is still ongoing project and my designs might face some slight changes in the future, but so far the final products have been approved and at least the logo, which is the main part, will stay intact.

The only negative side was my lack of web-design knowledge which I have to concentrate on in the future. But since the budget allowed it they are able to hire a web designer to help me with delivering the best possible website I can. I will still do the main work but will be working with the designer and consult them with all the issues that there might be, he/she will also go through my designs before handing them over to the web developer to prevent possible delays in the launching process.

I managed to deliver the products in the time frame set for me, but will still keep developing the ideas in case there are some new ideas that arise or some changes to be made. The other negative feedback I got was that I wasn't fully organized during the process and I think it was due me stressing about all the different designs meant to be made by the due date. I started doing multiple designs at once and it was very stressful approach for me: it is better to start one thing and get it done and then move on to the next one.

7.2 Issues in the project

The biggest problem was the website mock-ups. I didn't really have anything to work with, such as pictures from Matt's Mechanical, since they are planning to have a photographer go and shoot the premises when everything is ready. I had to find a car related picture from my own pictures and I think the picture from front yard with two cars on the top of the page makes the mock-ups look very unprofessional. I also don't have experience in web design but I have thought that if they are to launch their website I will turn to a web designer I know and ask some tips to make the website look consistent to the rest of the look and also more professional.

Also there were some issues when it came to writing the report: the lack of books in the local library. Most of the books were about running Australian businesses, franchising in Australia and different designers in Australia, rather than being just general information about design or managing corporate identity. I had to rely on Internet in many occasions, but I had some books of my own to use as well.

I think working on my own on the other side of the world created issues on it's on, especially in time management. I started working while writing the thesis and it took some time off from my writing, and not every time after work I had the energy to proceed with the writing. I noticed it is pretty much like a second job: if I really want to get the whole project done in certain time but it is also rewarding when I sat down and actually got something done, even if it was just a few paragraphs of text.

Working on the other side of the world made it hard to get feedback and help needed sometimes: due time difference I wasn't able to get real time feedback or

help on my issues, but usually I was able to manage with the help of internet, Matt and the thesis guide. I also wasn't able to follow my classmates' progress in their projects and get peer support, but I read other thesis reports.

7.3 Summary

This project with the starting mechanical company Matt's Mechanical was very rewarding and I learned a lot from it. Due the time difference to Finland, all of the conversations with school were by email, I had to solve problems by myself and with the help of Matt and I think I did well.

This is my first complete project delivered to a company and it is still alive and changing as the establishing process is still on going and at least the web design part has not been completed yet, my current designs are just mock-ups to be updated with another designer or web developer.

I started the project when I was approached by Matt asking whether I would be interested in helping him with a start-up process of his company. In the beginning I went through some of the competitors around Newcastle area to see what their graphic looks are like. After that I started to design the logo with Matt being there giving his feedback instantly as I came up with the first idea. I also started thinking about the typefaces as I wanted them to go hand in hand with the logo I designed. After that I continued to make the business cards and handouts, the last being the website mock-ups. I used a few books as my guidelines: Värit havaintojen maailmassa by Harald Arnkil and The Elements of Typographic style by Robert Bringhurst, as well as the knowledge I've gotten from my practical trainings. I also

looked through websites for information, inspiration and color palettes; I went through web pages such as: Behance Network, ColorLovers and Creattica.

I got to know other thesis projects by reading reports on the online thesis database, Theseus, and got a lot of help from them as I saw what other people have written about and how have they structured their work. This was a big help as I wasn't able to be in contact with our school all the time I was working on the report.

After the project I started planning my report and the contents. I started writing and searching for information and found that the city library here in Newcastle doesn't have many books that would support the theory parts of the report, that's why I had to rely on the Internet many times whilst writing the report. I used the thesis guide and other thesis reports as guide in the writing process and it was very helpful.

There are many good sites and lot of information available and it was fairly easy to narrow down the information. However information about the corporate identity and management was hard to find and usually it was the same phrases on all the websites I found, also literature about the subject was hard to find, still, I think, I was able to gather a good package of information that has all the key aspects of corporate identity – corporate identity in short are visual ways to achieve the company's identity and how it wants to look in the eyes of the consumer. Corporate identity is an important part of creating long lasting customer relationships and establishing beneficial associations between the ideologies of the target market and the company's name and logos.

8   FINAL CONCLUSIONS

This thesis taught me what it is like to work as an independent designer for a company. I have had clients before and I have gotten to know this side throughout my practical trainings, but this is the first time I have worked by myself and been completely in charge of everything from time management to meeting client's needs. This is also my first complete design package I have delivered. Time management was a bit difficult, but I relaxed and got more organized when the project went on.

I learned that the design process has many layers and it is easiest when one deals with smaller amount of people, because the more people there are involved, the more difficult it is to narrow down ideas and the instructions become more complex as one should find a solution that makes everyone happy. I mostly worked together with Matt and he had the final say on everything, so it made the project simpler for me and prevented delays.

I also learned that as a designer, especially when working independently, one is expected to have a broad knowledge on what they are doing. I think nowadays it is easier as one can always try and look for answers to the questions online, but one also has to read and educate oneself constantly, if there is nothing interesting to learn about then they should at least have some knowledge of current trends and styles that are popular. Also to get to know to the area one is designing for: e.g. I designed for mechanical company: styles vary according to the client and also according to what profession are they representing – mechanical companies are colorful: primary colors, lots of advertisement and things that fight for one's attention where e.g. medical companies are harmonious: light colors, minimalistic

design, guiding colors/forms and calming colors such as green.

Designer also has to remember what the core message they are trying to bring out is: is the company trying to be funny/serious/ecological/respectful etc. Most useful tool for this, I found, is to ask the client to list words that comes to their mind when they think about their company. I didn't use this method in this case as Matt had quite clear ideas about what he wanted, but have been using it in the past and have found it very helpful.

When it comes to visual identity, businesses in this field usually don't really have one, but I think that the issue is the same with all the smaller businesses. Good visual identity is not an important aspect of doing business, and people probably don't see how important a unified, clean look can be and what it can do for the business. Graphic design is also seen as high-end and expensive service that has something to do with only the high-class and modern businesses. This is my opinion only and I base it in my own observations, but I think that in the future there could be work for graphic designers that work with smaller businesses and help the owners to realize what a decent look, made by a professional, can do for their company.

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