

THE ROLE OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION IN COMMUNITY IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

The thesis investigates how visual communication contributes to the identity and cohesion of communities. A new visual identity is developed for Dreamers Club, an international community of entrepreneurs and freelancers based in Málaga, Spain, to explore the topic through a practical design project.

The work combines background research, a case study, and a structured design process. Key methods include benchmarking, visual strategy tools, and iterative development of brand elements such as a wordmark, typography system, color palette, and image style. The outcome is compiled into a brand guideline.

The findings indicate that a consistent and thoughtfully designed visual identity enhances community visibility, recognition, and communicates shared values. The results also suggest that involving community members more directly in the design process could further support engagement and inclusivity, offering potential directions for future research and development.

KEY WORDS

Graphic design, visual communication, visual identity design and community identity

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Topic overview	2
1.2 Methodology and Objective	2
2 VISUAL IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY	3
2.1 Visual Identity	4
2.2 Community	5
2.3 Community & Visual Identity design: Case Study	7
2.3.1 Introduction to Case Study	7
2.3.2 Visual Identity and Community Building	8
2.3.3 Key findings	10
3 PROJECT DEFINITION	11
3.1 Community Introduction	12
3.2 Initial Meeting and Creative Brief	12
4 DESIGN PROCESS	13
4.1 Benchmarking	14
4.2 Establishing Visual Direction	20
4.3 Current State of Visual Identity	23
4.4 Updated Visual Identity	25
4.4.1 Process	25
4.4.2 Final identity	30
5 CONCLUSION	35
5.1 Summary	36
5.2 Refelections	37
References	38

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 TOPIC OVERVIEW

This thesis explores the relationship between visual communication and community identity, focusing on how graphic design can strengthen a community's sense of cohesion and visibility. The central question guiding the work is: **How does visual communication contribute to the identity and cohesion of a community?** Based on the understanding that visual design plays a role in influencing and guiding emotions and actions, the assumption is that a well-crafted visual identity can increase recognition, foster belonging, and encourage active participation within a community.

The practical aspect of this thesis centers on updating the visual identity of Dreamers Club, a community of international entrepreneurs and freelancers based in Málaga, Spain. The project aims to create a cohesive and flexible brand identity that reflects the club's values, look, and lifestyle. The final outputs include brand guidelines and examples for use in social media, print, and merchandise. This topic brings together both personal and professional interests: a background in visual identity design, and a curiosity about how communities are formed, sustained, and visually communicated. The work is grounded in the idea that design can serve a greater purpose by enabling connection, supporting shared values, and contributing to a stronger sense of belonging.

1.2 METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVE

The methodology combines design work, a case study, and a literature review to examine the role of visual identity in community building. The primary method is the design and implementation of a new visual identity for Dreamers Club. The design process includes benchmarking, concept development, and the creation of deliverables such as a logo, typography system, color palette, tone of voice, and brand personality. This work follows established branding and graphic design practices drawn from relevant theory.

To support the design project, the thesis also includes a case study. This study serves as a comparative lens for analyzing how visual identity can support community building in a real-world context. It involves a review of branding materials and observation of implementation. The insights gathered provide reflections on design decisions and help draw parallels between different community-based visual identities.

The theoretical framework is informed by community theory, branding literature, and visual communication research. Sources include *Rethinking the Concept of Community* by John Walsh and Steven High (1999), *Designing Brand Identity* by Alina Wheeler (2018), and *Identity Designed* by David Airey (2019). These works offer insight into the evolving role of community and the strategic use of visual elements in creating cohesive and meaningful identities.

The main objective is to design a visual identity for Dreamers Club that aligns with the vision of its founder, Sophie Winterer, while also providing materials for future use. The aim is to enhance the community's visibility and recognizability, particularly in digital spaces like Instagram. More broadly, the thesis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how visual communication can be used as a tool for community-building.

2 VISUAL IDENTITY & COMMUNITY

2.1 VISUAL IDENTITY

Visual communication has long served as a powerful tool for expressing identity, values, and a sense of belonging. From ancient cave paintings and tribal markings to flags and symbols, humanity has relied on visual identity to express unity, convey meaning, and connect with others since the beginning of time (Airey 2019). Visual elements such as symbols, tags, and logos often emerge organically within communities to reinforce a shared identity and communicate belonging.

Visual identity design emerged from the growing need to identify ownership and origin, eventually evolving into modern branding practices. As businesses grew and competition increased, this design approach became a relevant tool for creating differentiation and building recognition. (Airey 2019.)

Visual identity refers to the visible parts that represent a company or product, such as its logo, color palette, and typography. David Airey, in his book *Identity Designed*, highlights this by stating that *a visual identity is to businesses what faces are to people*, an essential component for recognition and memorability. It is a visual way to create a purposeful brand image and to stand out from competitors. (Pohjola 2019; Airey 2019.)

A well-designed identity helps express a brand's goals and values by making them concrete, visible, and memorable in a controlled and consistent way. This is achieved by combining elements such as colors, materials, symbolism, forms, and typography. These components come together to form logos, layouts, websites, packaging, and even physical spaces like stores and offices. These elements are flexible, functioning across various forms and media, from physical spaces to digital platforms. (Pohjola 2019.)

Take Coca-Cola, for example, the red color and signature script font (Figures 1 and 2) form a visual identity that is recognised by billions, making it one of the most well-known brands in the world. These simple yet confident elements communicate the brand's personality with clarity, contributing to its long-term brand recognition and success. (Wheeler 2018.)

Visual identity and the elements it encompasses have the power to express not only what a brand is, but also who belongs to it. These visual strategies become more than just a tool for recognition; they become a bridge between people, values, and shared meaning. In this way, this design approach becomes a modern tool for cultivating community. Viewing identity design in this way offers designers new opportunities to influence and shape brands with a human-centered approach, creating a more sustainable, community-driven approach to success.



Figures 1 & 2. Coca-Cola logos (Coca-Cola 2025)

2.2 COMMUNITY

Community is a concept that is both fundamental and complex, often difficult to define and ever-evolving. For as long as humanity has existed, so too has community. It is central to human existence, providing both physical survival and emotional well-being.

Historically, communities have played an essential role in ensuring the survival of individuals. Early humans relied on each other for safety, shelter, and hunting company, with collective effort increasing chances of survival. Cooperation beyond family members may have allowed for activities like hunting for bigger, more dangerous animals. This collaborative effort could have increased success rates and thereby encouraged food sharing and exchange within a broader community. (Groeneveld 2016.) This highlights how community supported not only physical survival but also the exchange of resources in early communities. Older definitions of community have been strongly defined regionally, as a shared place, something that is based on a physical location and is fixed, like a village or a workplace (Walsh & High 1999).

The definition, however, has evolved; societal challenges like loneliness and isolation are emphasizing the need for connection beyond just physical proximity. Belonging to a community is now less about physical survival and more about mental and emotional well-being, helping decrease stress, depression and poor health and improving life satisfaction, longevity and even career and academic performance (Office of the Surgeon General 2023).

Given the evolving nature of community, new frameworks help define its key characteristics. Nina Simon, in her book *The Art of Relevance*, identifies four attributes that connect individuals to a community: place,

identity, affinity, and affiliation, highlighting the different ways individuals form and maintain communal connections. Place remains as one of the most organic ways for people to connect, whether through shared spaces like neighbourhoods, workplaces, or hobby groups. Identity, which includes characteristics like race and religion, helps connect through shared experiences. Affinity, on the other hand, is built around common interests and values that can lead to shared action. Lastly, affiliation is attachment or connection through an organization, shared experiences, or values, that can begin anywhere. (Simon 2016.) These attributes showcase the natural tendency of humans to seek and create social connections. People gravitate toward others with whom they share common ground, seeking understanding and belonging.

Expanding on this idea, researchers from the American Journal of Public Health suggest community as *a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings*. This definition incorporates characteristics such as common interest and activities, true connection, and place, complementing Simon's attributes. (MacQueen et al. 2001.) Ultimately, both definitions emphasize the natural human need to belong and form meaningful, long-term connections (Beutel et al. 2017). The drive to connect and appreciate communal values not only fulfills individual needs but also strengthens the broader community, enhancing public health, safety, and overall prosperity and resilience (Office of the Surgeon General 2023).

Living up to its ever-evolving nature, community has now expanded beyond physical proximity. Rapid digitalization has led to the rise of

virtual spaces and communities that challenge traditional boundaries, providing alternative ways for social interaction, participation, and maintaining communication anywhere (Office of the Surgeon General 2023). These digital spaces not only offer new ways of connection but also reinforce the fundamental human need for belonging in an increasingly interconnected world.

2.3 COMMUNITY AND VISUAL IDENTITY DESIGN: CASE STUDY

2.3.1 INTRODUCTION TO CASE STUDY

To introduce the connection between visual identity and community, this section presents a case study of Vilpas, a professional basketball team based in a small town, known for its consistent visual identity and loyal local following. While the team and its audience differ from those of the Dreamers Club community, sports organizations offer a clear illustration of the importance of visual identity in fostering recognition, cohesion, and a sense of belonging. The intention is not to directly compare communities with different goals and audiences, but to demonstrate broader design principles that are transferable across various types of communities.

Sports teams rely heavily on visual elements, such as logos, colors, and uniforms to create clarity, structure, and unity. Without these, following a game would become visually chaotic. Similarly, communities and brands require a coherent visual identity to stand out and engage their audiences. They depend on recognition, interest, and memorability to attract members or customers. Without effective design, the broader landscape, whether commercial or communal, would resemble a game without visual structure: confusing and lacking differentiation.

Basketball teams also demonstrate how visual identity can support community building. A sports community includes not only players, but also staff, sponsors, and fans, many of whom actively choose to identify with the team by wearing merchandise or participating in events. A strong visual identity helps communicate the spirit of the community beyond the activities themselves, reinforcing a shared sense of belonging. These practices show how design can extend a community's reach and promote engagement.

The visual elements of the Vilpas brand, such as the logo and color palette, will be referenced throughout this case study. Notably, Vilpas gathered input from fans and local residents during the design process, with the goal reflecting shared values and strengthening the connection between the team and its community (Vilpas 2023; Advertising agency 4D). This highlights the importance of considering the audience during a design process, not only in terms of visual preferences, but also as active participants whose identity, values, and input shape the outcome.

2.3.2 VISUAL IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Within a visual identity, the logo stands out in importance, as it compresses the brand's or community's philosophy and values in a simplified, recognizable form. It is often the most memorable element, aiding in brand recognition and leaving a lasting impression on the viewer. (Huang 2022). In community context, the logo frequently becomes a shared symbol of identity. For example, in the case of Vilpas, the logo (Figure 3) plays a central role on player uniforms, supporter merchandise and staff clothing as a symbol of belonging.

Colors are among the most visible aspects of a visual identity and can communicate key brand attributes such as creativity, quality, innovation, or values (Wang 2024). The Vilpas color palette (Figure 3) consists of red and white. Red conveys strength, energy, ambition, and power. It is also considered a stimulating color, provoking emotions and raising blood pressure, making it well suited for a sports team. White, often associated with simplicity and trustworthiness, brings balance, keeping the overall appearance fresh and timeless. (Singh & Srivastava 2011). Consistent use of these colors across both digital and physical touchpoints reinforces recognition and supports the visual cohesion of the brand.

Typography that aligns with brand or team values and intended image also helps to further unify the overall visual identity (Tafà 2024). A bold, simple, and strong typeface reflects excitement and strength, qualities that suit the sports context and align well with Vilpas' brand image. At the same time, it ensures readability and impact in a action-oriented setting.

Visual imagery, and the way it is used, also contributes to brand building and the look of a community. Vilpas regularly uses high-quality professional photographs (Figures 4-5 adapted from Moisiso 2025), shared

publicly. These images promote the team while also reinforcing a sense of community, as members can access and share these photos. The content often includes both players and supporters, visually representing the broader community. It is important for the intended target audience to see their values and lifestyles reflected in the content they choose to engage with. This audience-centered design approach helps strengthen emotional connection and inclusivity.

When implemented effectively, these visual elements increase brand recognition. One important method of implementation is active engagement on social media, which plays a key role in modern marketing strategies. According to Gruss and Abrahams (2019), fostering community belonging through relevant language and references enhances engagement, which in turn supports visibility and cohesion. Vilpas applies this by sharing timely information, behind-the-scenes content, and posts that highlight the surrounding community and local partners. Their content follows a structured and templated format that suits the basketball context while maintaining clarity and brand consistency.

Beyond digital platforms, visual identity is also expressed through physical elements such as uniforms and merchandise. In the article *Clothes Make the Fan* – published in the *Journal of Global Sports Management*, Woratschek & Durchholz (2017) examine how merchandise can strengthen team loyalty, reinforce shared identity, and even enhance satisfaction in fans and members. In a community setting, this becomes particularly significant, as genuine engagement from members improve their experience and positively shapes the perception of the brand.



Figure 3. New Vilpas logo (Vilpas 2025)



Figure 4. Imagery, players (Moisio 2025)



Figure 5. Imagery, supporters and merchandise (Moisio 2025)

2.3.3 KEY FINDINGS

The case of Vilpas highlights how visual identity and community engagement are deeply interconnected. Through deliberate design choices and active audience involvement, the team has cultivated a recognizable brand that strengthens cohesion and appeal. Their visual identity is not only functional, offering clarity on the court and across media, but symbolic, representing shared values and collective pride.

What stands out most in the Vilpas example is the intentional balance between professional design and genuine community interaction. From the team's consistent use of logos and color schemes to its openness to fan input, every element reinforces a sense of belonging. This cohesion extends beyond the court to online platforms, merchandise, and events, giving fans multiple ways to participate and identify with the team.

While Dreamers Club operates in a different context, many of the same principles are applicable. A clear and consistent visual identity can help make the community more visible, memorable, and accessible, especially in digital environments where first impressions matter. Branded merchandise can further strengthen this identity by giving members a tangible way to express their connection to the community. Similarly, involving the audience in the design process, even in small ways, can increase emotional investment and promote long-term engagement.

Vilpas shows that visual identity is not only about aesthetics; it can actively support community building. When supported by traditions, interaction, and thoughtful design, visual identity becomes a unifying tool that

bridges diverse backgrounds and fosters shared purpose. These insights will guide the visual direction for Dreamers Club, where the goal is to build a meaningful, inclusive presence that resonates with its members and reflects their values.

3 PROJECT DEFINITION

3.1 COMMUNITY INTRODUCTION

Insights from the case study will help guide the practical design process of this thesis: updating the visual identity for Dreamers Club. Dreamers Club is a community based in Málaga, Spain, established in 2021, that provides a supportive environment for international entrepreneurs, freelancers, and expats to connect, share experiences, and foster professional and personal growth. Founded and led by Sophie Winterer, Dreamers Club was born from her personal need to connect with like-minded people, others who run their businesses and live abroad. Dreamers Club's key selling point is its unique approach to networking. Unlike traditional professional gatherings, it fosters a relaxed, social atmosphere that encourages deeper, more meaningful connections, increasing the likelihood of forming genuine friendships, both professionally and personally. The community organizes events and activities every month, including co-working sessions, business brunches, and wellness-focused gatherings. Dreamers Club also hosts a podcast, Dreamers Unplugged, aimed at sharing members' stories to inspire others and offer insights into their experiences of living abroad and starting businesses.

Málaga is a popular destination for international residents, digital nomads, and entrepreneurs. According to a recent study by the Savills Executive Nomad Index, Málaga was ranked as the third most attractive city globally for remote workers. According to this study, Málaga holds this high place due to factors like climate, quality of life, safety, and connectivity. (Chilton & Sellers 2024.) Málaga's high ranking as a remote work hub reinforces the need for communities like Dreamers Club, which provide structured networking opportunities and support for digital professionals new to the area. Dreamers Club primarily serves this demographic, with most members typically between 25 to 40 years old.

3.2 INITIAL MEETING & CREATIVE BRIEF

The goal of this project is to update and redesign some elements of Dreamers Club's visual identity. To begin this process, I met with Sophie Winterer, the founder of the club, to define the direction for the work and clarify what the new identity should express. This first meeting helped set the tone for the entire project, allowing us to outline key objectives and explore the tools that would guide the design process.

Together, we discussed the brand's core purpose, future aspirations, and the desired feeling the visual identity should evoke. While a more in-depth analysis of the mission, vision, and final design decisions will follow in Chapter 4.2, this initial conversation laid the groundwork for the creative direction.

To support this, we used tools such as a visual slider to map stylistic preferences and a brand personality worksheet to define tone of voice and brand values. These exercises helped clarify what Dreamers Club should look and feel like visually. The outcome pointed toward a visual world that is light, bold, and approachable, paired with a tone of voice that is encouraging and clear. The brand personality was defined as courageous, friendly, and real.

Based on these findings, we identified a need to refine the color palette, choose a new typeface, and establish a consistent image style. These choices will be compiled into brand guidelines, a practical tool that supports the clear and cohesive use of Dreamers Club's visual identity moving forward.

4 DESIGN PROCESS

4.1 BENCHMARKING

To begin the design process, it is essential to examine what other similar organizations are doing in the field and what kinds of strategies they use. Benchmarking refers to the practice of studying other organizations to identify which elements or approaches are effective and which are not. These insights can then be used to inform and inspire new approaches within the same area of practice. (Lankford 2002).

In the case of Dreamers Club, this involves analyzing organizations that also offer events and activities for internationals in Spain, both from social and entrepreneurial perspectives. Understanding how other organizations operate helps us identify opportunities for differentiation and support the development of a strategic approach that fits Dreamers Club's identity, while remaining relevant and competitive within the local landscape.

To provide relevant comparisons, the selected communities for benchmarking include Guiris de Mierda, Wavey, Digital Marketing Málaga, and The Living Room. These communities were chosen because, like Dreamers Club, they offer events and spaces for internationals in Spain, either with a social or entrepreneurial focus. This benchmarking focuses on two key aspects: the logo and Instagram presence of each community, as these are the central visual elements for Dreamers Club's identity.

GUIRIS DE MIERDA

Guiris de Mierda is a humorous and self-aware community built around the shared experience of being a foreigner in Spain. (The name roughly translates to “foreigners of shit,” an ironic and provocative expression that many internationals have reclaimed with humor.) Through social events, trips, and sports activities, they create casual and fun opportunities for people to connect. The name itself, bold, ironic, and playful, immediately communicates the tone of the brand and sets them apart from more conventional communities.

Their logo (Figure 6) is a simple wordmark in a serif font, used in either black or white. The design is minimalistic but intentional, aligning well with their laid-back and neutral-toned visual identity. While they do not rely on a defined color palette, their strong and consistent use of photography and video establishes a clear brand aesthetic. Their content features dim lighting, cozy settings, and an overall warm tone, creating a sense of intimacy and authenticity. (Figure 7).

On Instagram, Guiris de Mierda has built a content strategy that highlights their community members more than the events themselves. Interview-style videos, event announcements, and spontaneous photos from gatherings are posted regularly, often generating strong engagement through likes and comments. This member-driven content approach strengthens the feeling of belonging and encourages participation. They have also extended their brand through merchandise, offering physical products that reinforce their identity and allow members to proudly represent the community.

For Dreamers Club, a key takeaway from Guiris de Mierda’s strategy is the power of a strong and consistent image style, it works well even without relying on a fixed color palette. The use of mood and tone in imagery communicates just as clearly. Additionally, involving members directly in the visual content helps to reinforce community values and build long-term engagement.



Figure 6. Guiris de Mierda logo (Guiris de Mierda 2025)

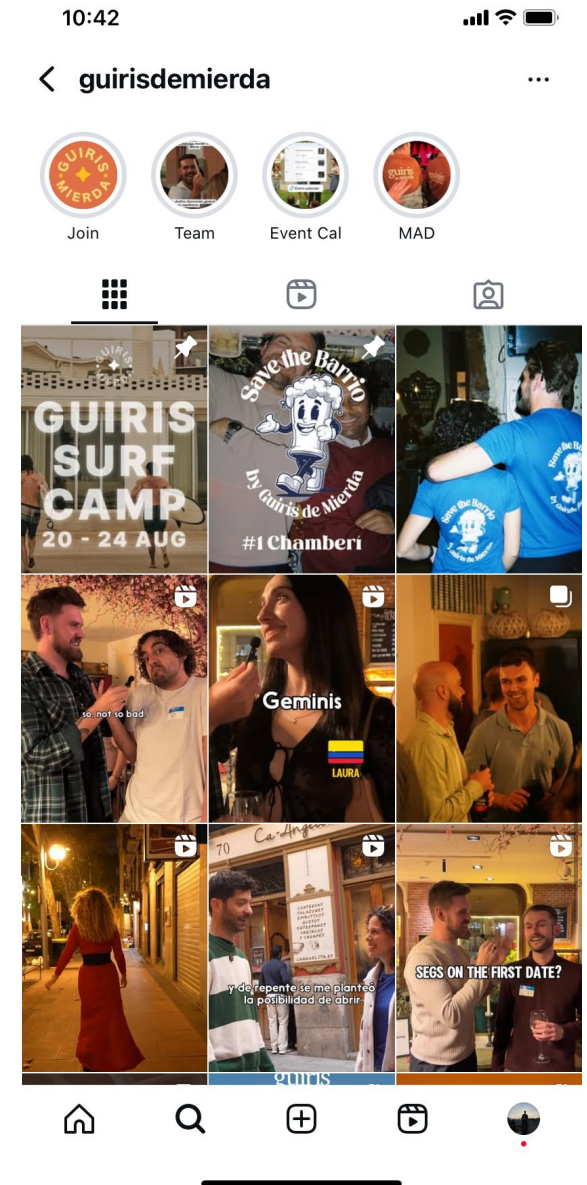


Figure 7. Guiris de Mierda color, image & feel (Guiris de Mierda 2025)

WAVEY

Wavey is a community focused on health, creativity, and connection for women in southern Spain. Their events center around food, movement, crafting, and wellness, offering a supportive space for new experiences and friendships. The brand positions itself as approachable, and empowering, aiming to foster a sense of belonging among young international women.

Their logo (Figure 8) features an organic, hand-drawn style that aligns with the community’s gentle and natural tone. The name “Wavey” combined with a soft blue color palette suggests calmness, and a coastal lifestyle, visual cues that reflect both their geographic context and mindful branding. The wave theme is subtly carried into their wider image style, which is bright, and airy.

On Instagram, their visual content strategy reinforces this identity through clean, softly lit photography that often features community members in candid or collaborative settings (Figure 9). These images highlight movement, creativity, and shared moments, reinforcing the brand’s focus on experiences and aesthetics. The consistent palette, natural lighting, and soft textures create a calming and cohesive visual identity.

Their posting frequency is moderate, yet engagement remains steady. This indicates a strong connection with their audience.

A key takeaway from Wavey’s strategy is how they cater to a specific demographic and use softness as a strategic strength. For Dreamers Club, this raises interesting questions about how tone, aesthetic, and targeted content can shape a strong connection and lead to engagement.



Figure 8. Wavey logo (Wavey 2025)

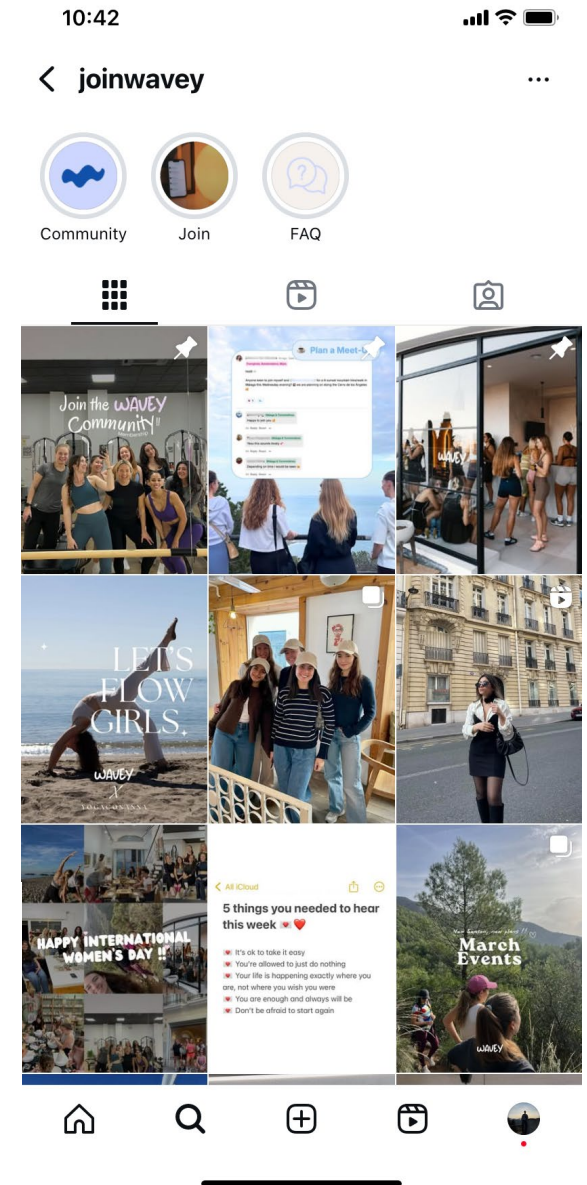


Figure 9. Wavey color, image & feel (Wavey 2025)

THE LIVING ROOM

The Living Room is a co-working community for creatives, freelancers, and remote workers. Located in Málaga, they emphasize knowledge-sharing and collaboration through a shared workspace, while also offering after-work gatherings, sports activities, and networking opportunities. Their mission is to create a supportive and productive environment where independent professionals can connect both socially and professionally.

Their logo (Figure 10) is the simplest among the four benchmarking examples: a minimalist lettermark using the community's initials in a clean sans serif font, placed on a yellow background. This bold use of yellow is carried across their entire visual identity and serves as a distinctive brand anchor. It conveys energy, optimism, and warmth, qualities that align with the brand's focus on making remote working fun and shared.

The Living Room's Instagram presence includes a mix of photos from events, co-working spaces, and community moments (Figure 11). The imagery is casual and friendly, often featuring natural light and spontaneous snapshots. However, the casual tone and posting style do not generate particularly strong engagement. Their use of icons in the Instagram Highlights is clear and practical, reinforcing a sense of clarity.

This suggests that while the brand has established a consistent aesthetic, the current strategy seems to lack depth and direct interaction with its audience. For Dreamers Club, this raises an important consideration: consistency and relatability are key, but so is content that invites engagement, both are essential in building a strong online presence that supports community building.

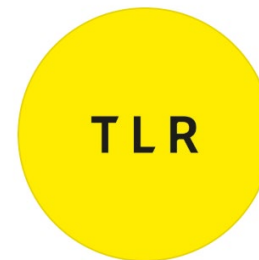


Figure 10. The Living Room logo. (The Living Room 2025)

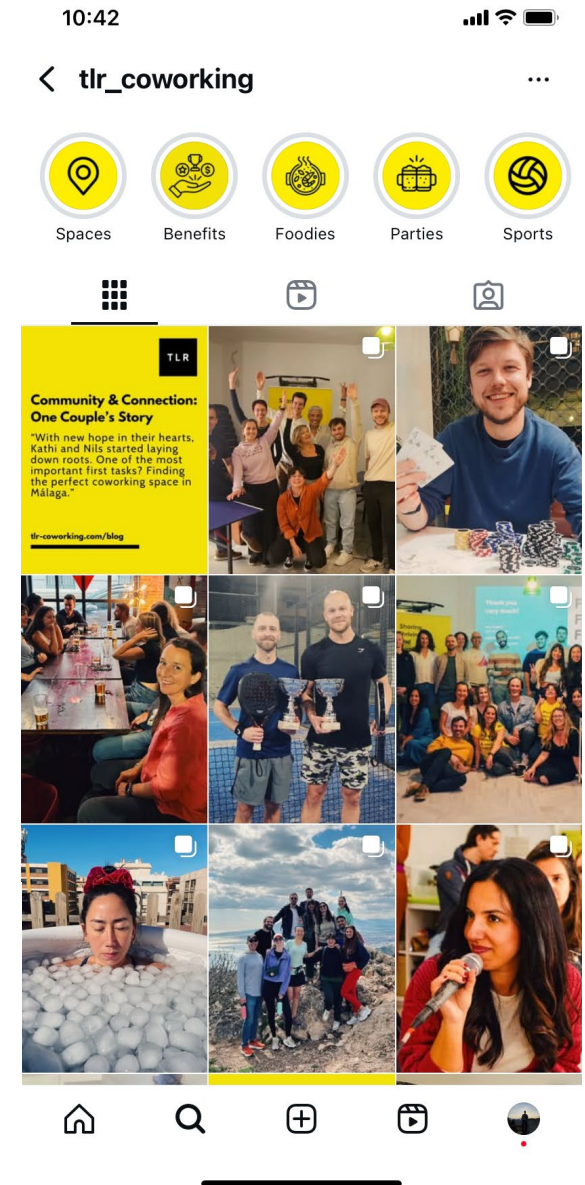


Figure 11. The Living Room color, image & feel (The Living Room 2025)

DIGITAL MARKETING MÁLAGA

Digital Marketing Málaga is a professional network that offers events and talks for digital marketing professionals and entrepreneurs in Málaga. Its audience is more business-focused, with an emphasis on networking, knowledge-sharing, and professional development. The community positions itself as a hub for learning and connecting within the local environment.

Their logo is a wordmark (Figure 12) using a serif font, paired with a wave-like icon that visually echoes the symbol used by Wavey. The design strikes a balance between professional and dynamic, suggesting movement and innovation. While Digital Marketing Málaga does not maintain an Instagram page, their website is their primary visual platform.

The website features a clean and structured visual identity, with a consistent color palette of blue and dark grey. These colors support a technical tone. Visual content includes photographs of speakers and members participating in events, often set against a patterned background (Figure 13).

Compared to the other benchmarks, Digital Marketing Málaga’s identity leans more towards a traditional corporate tone, with less emphasis on emotional connection or community-building. For Dreamers Club, this highlights the importance of standing out with a warmer approach to business and networking. While a clear and structured visual identity builds credibility, emotional engagement and storytelling are essential for fostering a sense of community and encouraging participation.



Figure 12. Digital Marketing Málaga logo (Digital Marketing Málaga 2025)

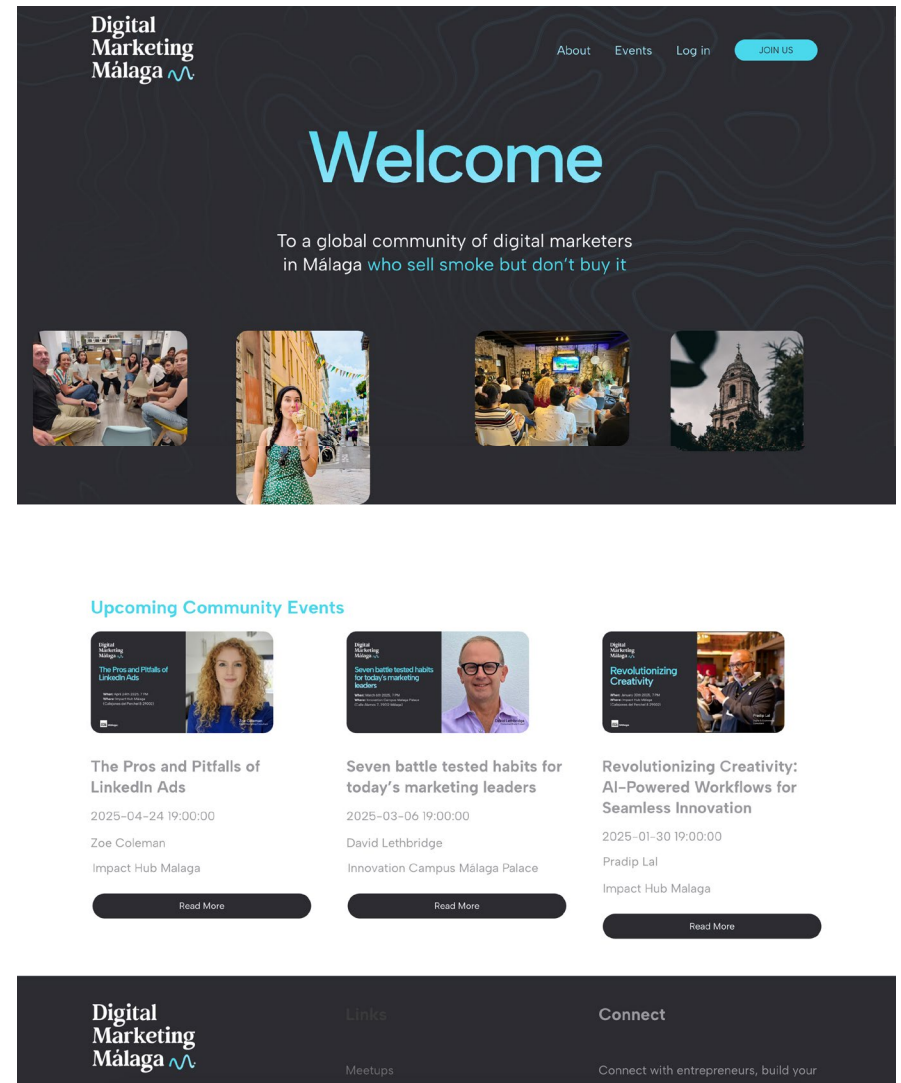


Figure 13. Digital Marketing Málaga color, image & feel (Digital Marketing Málaga 2025)

By analyzing these four communities, a few key themes stand out. Most use simple wordmarks or letter-based logos, favoring clarity, easy-to-read fonts, and neutral or minimal color palettes.

Key learnings from these benchmarking examples include the importance of intentional image selection, especially on an image-driven platform like Instagram. A well-curated image style significantly shapes the overall atmosphere and communicates the brand's message. The content of images and videos also matters: the more relatable the posts are to members, and the stronger the sense of connection they build, the better the engagement, ultimately boosting the club's visibility and appeal. A consistent and intentional visual identity supports recognition, trust, and memorability.

Dreamers Club is a mix of these communities, offering both networking opportunities as well as social and wellness-related events. These themes should be connected in an open and approachable way, while still reflecting the values and lifestyle of its members.

The challenge, and opportunity, lies in combining professional clarity with emotional warmth. Dreamers Club's identity should visually convey a balance between ambition and community, standing out with a style that feels authentic, engaging, and meaningful to its audience. Drawing from the strengths of the benchmarked examples while avoiding their limitations will guide the creation of a visual identity that not only looks cohesive but also invites participation and belonging.

4.2 ESTABLISHING VISUAL DIRECTION

The early design phase focused on defining the core values of Dreamers Club by using different tools to determine its visual direction. We used a combination of methods to guide this process, including brand development tools and a mood board, which helped translate abstract ideas into tangible outcomes.

A natural starting point is crafting the vision and mission statements, which form the foundation of a strong and credible brand. A vision statement outlines the organization's long-term goals, what it wants to achieve, and acts as a guide for strategic decision-making. A mission statement supports this vision by identifying the necessary steps to reach those goals. It answers the questions: what, how, and for whom? (Foster, 2024).

For Dreamers Club, the vision is to become a go-to place where dreamers can find support and opportunities for personal and professional growth. This encompasses both the physical activities, as well as the emotional benefits of belonging to a like-minded community. The mission narrows the focus to creating a safe space and connecting freelancers and business owners through fun and engaging activities in Málaga. Winterer envisions a space rooted in openness, warmth, and genuine connection, valuing authenticity and realness.

To begin planning visual preferences, we used a visual slider, a tool that maps aesthetic preferences across opposing concepts. It allows the brand to be placed along a spectrum, such as light vs. dark or colourful vs. neutral. As shown in Figure 14, Dreamers Club leans toward the "light" side of the spectrum, reflecting a bright and approachable visual identity. We discussed eight opposing concept pairs and how they can be implemented. This tool not only sparked conversation but also deepened the designer-client understanding of the visuals.

Another useful tool for the early branding phase was the brand as a person exercise. This method identifies the brand's tone of voice, core message, and goals. Every brand has a personality that influences how it communicates about its services or products. This brand personality is being evaluated by the consumer during deciding whether to use or buy the brand. Tone of voice is referred to as the brand's way of communicating this personality by creating a strategic output. This goal-oriented way of communicating ideas and notions can be created through images, color, typography, sound, and copywriting. (Ojapelto 2021). The core message supports the vision by projecting it consistently, from social media captions, websites, and beyond. (Wheeler 2018). Figure 15 shows the selected traits for Dreamers Club: courageous, empathetic, curious, and positive, traits that support its role as a welcoming space for community-building.

We also discussed the desired image style, considering atmosphere, subject matter, and practicality, and defined key words for the wanted feel: vivid, real, and bright. Since photos will mainly be taken on a phone and feature club members and events, it's important that the images feel natural and authentic. The location of Málaga offers a vibrant backdrop that supports the brand's emphasis on vibrancy and warmth. As learned from the benchmarking, establishing a clear and curated image style helps set a desired atmosphere and maintain visual consistency across platforms.

Based on these decisions, I created a mood board (Figure 16), a visual collection of reference images, styles, textures, and forms that capture the intended aesthetic. These tools help designers gather inspiration and communicate a vision with a client or a colleague. Mood boards act as an approachable way to express moods, emotion and style. (McDonagh & Storer 2004).

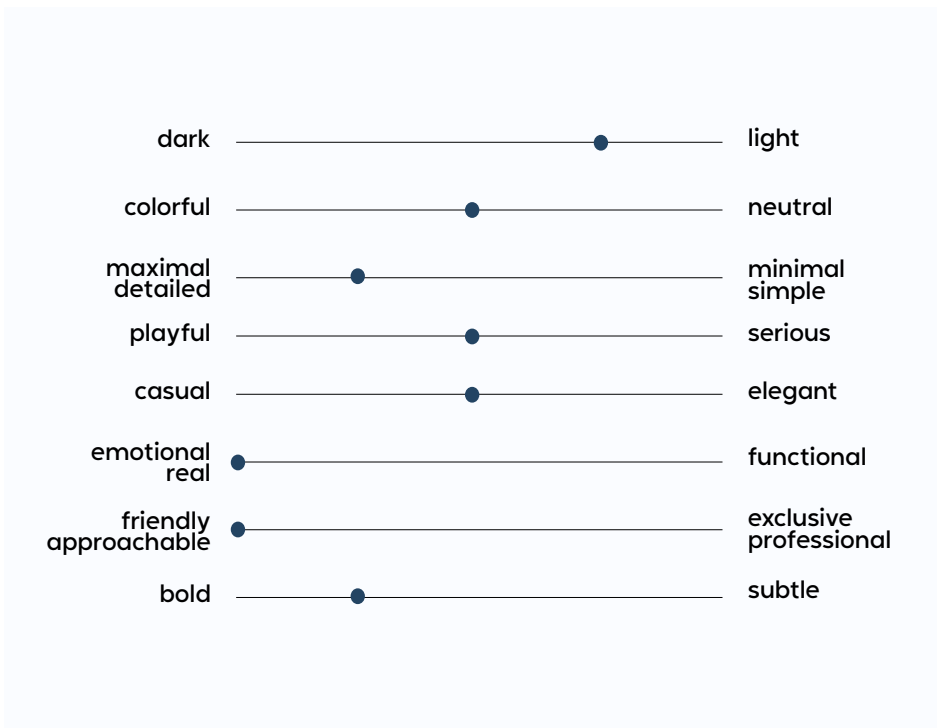


Figure 14. Visual slider

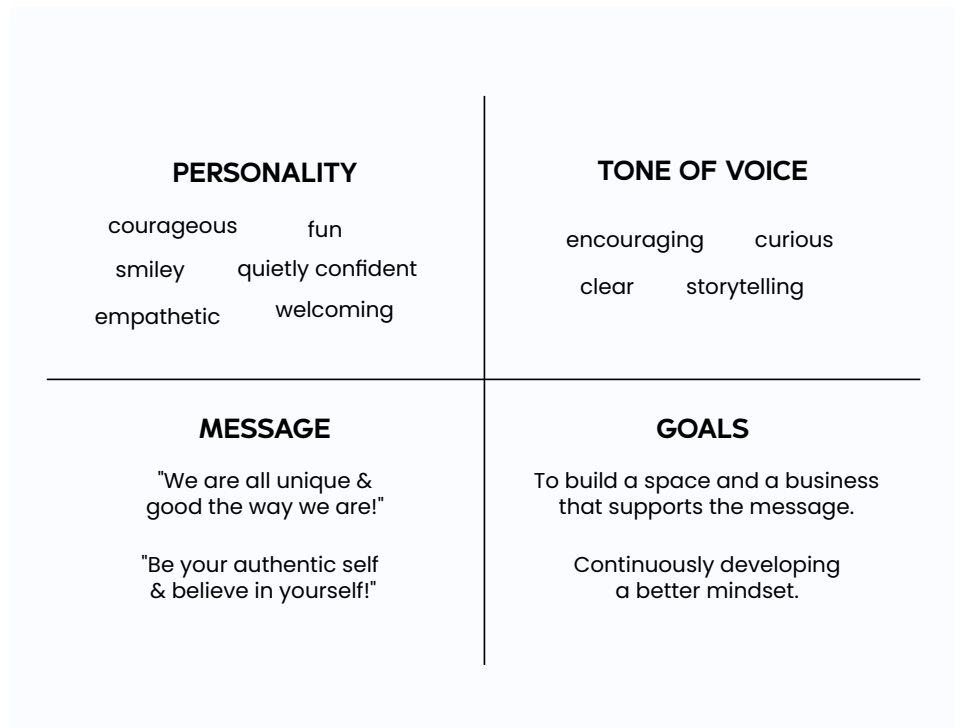


Figure 15. Brand as a person



Figure 16a-f. Mood board

4.3 CURRENT STATE OF THE VISUAL IDENTITY

Dreamers Club promotes its events and activities through several channels, including a social networking platform called Heartbeat.chat, Instagram, and a WhatsApp community page. Its current visual identity includes a logo, typography, and color palette, however, its inconsistent application suggests a need for refinement to better reflect the founder's vision and the community's core values.

A cohesive and consistently applied visual identity is essential to a successful brand, as it strengthens recognition and communicates confidence (Budelmann et al. 2010). With the visual direction now clarified, this section examines the current brand elements and evaluates how well they support the club's values and goals.

One of the key elements of Dreamers Club's current visual identity is its logo (Figure 17). It is a wordmark logo that consists only of text, using an uppercase sans serif font with two letters replaced by decorative script-style characters. The word Málaga is also integrated into a curve below the main text. Dreamers Club also has a submark (Figure 18) used for example, as an Instagram profile picture. According to founder Winterer, the script elements are meant to *break the norm*, reflecting the real and warm nature of Dreamers Club as a networking community. However, a concern with the logo is its readability due to these abstract forms, as well as its overly playful and feminine feel, which does not cater to the full range of Dreamers Club's target audience.

The logo, as well as the rest of the visuals, uses Mangrove Sans and Mangrove Script as the typefaces. The script font (Figure 19) is decorative and only used for selected letters, while Mangrove Sans (figure 20) is a modern, readable

sans serif that works well for headings and titles. Dreamers Club's visual identity currently lacks a designated body copy font, something essential for longer texts in smaller sizes. Adding a secondary font would improve readability and create better typographic hierarchy.

The original color palette included four colors (Figures 17, 18, 20 & 21): a signature Dreamers Club blue, a soft black, as well as a purple and yellow. While the palette conveys a friendly and vibrant tone, this approach felt slightly too immature for the direction Dreamers Club wants to take. During the initial meeting, we discussed adjusting the palette to better reflect the club's evolving identity, one that still feels approachable but carries a more refined tone, keeping the target audience in mind.

Current images already showcase the community aspect well, featuring members and the club's activities in an authentic way. However, the style and lighting are a bit mixed and would benefit from a slightly more consistent approach.

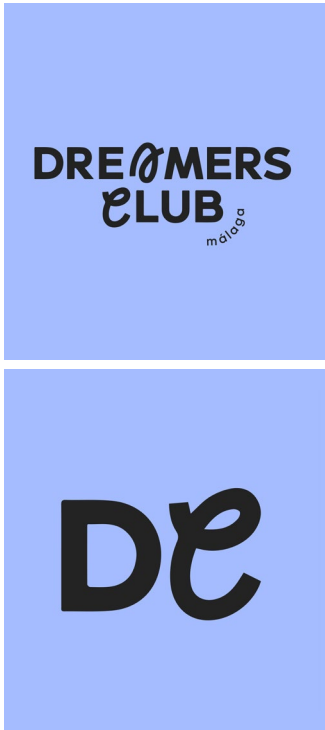


Figure 17. Dreamers Club wordmark & signature blue (Hamel 2024)

Figure 18 . Dreamers Club submark & soft black (Hamel 2024)



Figure 19. Mangrove script font (Dreamers Club 2024)

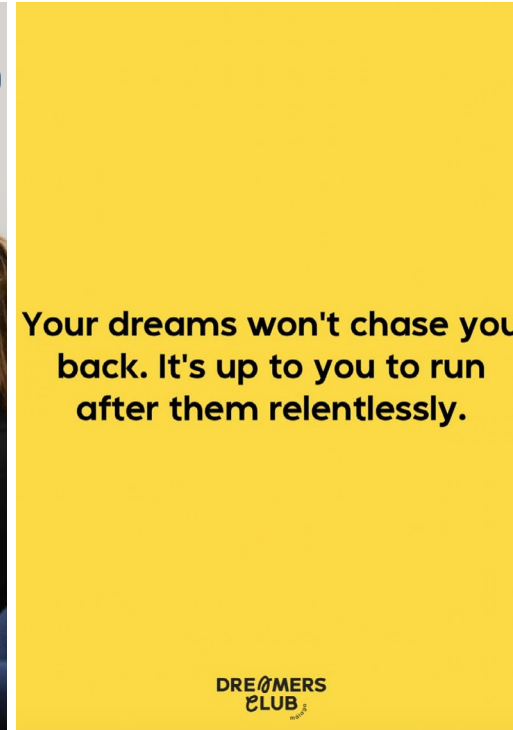


Figure 20. Mangrove sans font & yellow (Dreamers Club 2024)



Figure 21. Purple (Dreamers Club 2024)

4.4 UPDATED VISUAL IDENTITY

4.4.1 PROCESS

An effective brand strategy begins with a deep understanding of the organization's values, vision, culture, and the needs of the target audience. With these elements now clarified, they act as a roadmap that guides all communication and design decisions (Wheeler 2018).

The first step of the brand update was to redesign the logo. The goal was to improve readability and shift the tone to be more balanced and inclusive. To maintain brand recognition and continuity, we decided to keep the logo as a wordmark, not deviating too much from the original concept. The design process began with exploring new typefaces (Figure 22), focusing on bold, legible options that still offered personality.

Together with Winterer, we selected Unbounded as the primary typeface for the new logo and other materials. It is a sans serif with a few distinctive characters, which aligned with Winterer's wishes for bold with some detail, an idea expressed earlier during the visual slider exercise. This font will often be used in all capital letters to highlight the distinctive forms while maintaining legibility. The logo is center aligned, and the letter spacings are slightly adjusted to ensure a balanced look.

To add hierarchy and improve font usability, I added a secondary typeface. After reviewing a few options (Figure 23) with Winterer, we selected Poppins. This sans serif has a wide range of weights, making it highly versatile. It complements Unbounded well with its clean, modern look and works especially well for secondary information in both printed and digital forms. Also used in the visual element from the original logo, the

word Málaga is presented in a curved form. This element was kept to soften the logo, while grounding the brand locally. The podcast logo was also updated with the new font pair to match the identity.

By building on the answers from the tools earlier, this logo update reflects the evolving character of Dreamers Club. It captures the brand's bold and clear yet courageous and inclusive tone. The redesigned logos were created in the Dreamers Club's signature blue, along with black and white variants to ensure flexibility.

Moving on to the color palette (Figure 24), the yellow and purple shades from the original identity were completely removed. The blue and the black stayed, with blue continuing as the primary brand color. This shade of blue has become a recognizable element of the Dreamers Club identity, aligning well with the club's values by evoking feelings of trust, confidence, and calmness (Singh & Srivastava, 2011). The original black remains as a practical choice for conveying information clearly, ensuring both accessibility and legibility.

Additionally, a darker shade of blue was added, for contrast and visual hierarchy, as well as an orange to bring in a sense of happiness and approachability, supporting Winterer's desire for the brand to convey warmth and authenticity (Singh & Srivastava, 2011). In practice, the orange is primarily used in imagery, while the blues are applied to elements such as typography, backgrounds, and merchandise. Together, the cool and warm tones contrast effectively, creating a balanced, inviting, and friendly visual atmosphere.



Figure 22. Primary typeface tries



Figure 23. Secondary typeface tries

Both an RGB palette for digital applications and a CMYK palette for print were developed using the same color values, allowing for consistency and flexibility across media. This ensures that the visual identity remains cohesive whether used online, in print, or on merchandise.

When defining the image style (Figure 25), authenticity was key. Dreamers Club's visuals aim to capture real moments from events and activities, focusing on people and utilizing natural lighting. Most photos are taken with a phone, the focus is on genuine interactions and relatable scenes rather than polished imagery. This approach reinforces the club's message of openness, warmth, and authenticity. The overall goal is to create an inviting visual atmosphere in which both current and possible future members can see themselves as part of the community. To support visual consistency, a subtle orange-toned filter will be applied to each image, creating cohesion despite natural variations in lighting or composition. The images should convey a sense of belonging and vibrancy.

Alongside these primary visual elements, a simple pattern (Figure 26) was created as an optional design asset for backgrounds. Inspired by Winterer's ideas on growth and the entrepreneurial aspects of Dreamers Club, the pattern features fluctuating, upward movement symbolizing progress. Its minimal design ensures that it does not distract from core content. The pattern uses brand colors and can be adapted in scale or transparency, allowing for flexible application across various materials.

Lastly, a small set of icons (Figure 27) was created to support the visual identity, primarily intended for use on platforms like Instagram, for example, as Highlight covers. Designed in both the primary blue and black from the

color palette, the icons follow a minimal, line-based style. Their simplicity ensures clarity even at smaller sizes, while offering design elements to expand on in the future if needed.

All elements of the updated visual identity were compiled into brand guideline document, a structured and visually documented guide outlining the design choices, supported with explanations and imagery. The guide serves as a practical tool for ensuring consistent application of the identity over time. It is accessible to both designers and non-designers, helping anyone contributing to the brand's communication to follow the same visual guidelines.



Figure 24. New color palette



Figure 25a-g. Image style





Figure 27. Icons

4.4.2 FINAL VISUAL IDENTITY

The final visual identity brings together all previously developed elements into a unified and coherent system. It reflects both the practical needs of the Dreamers Club and its values of connection, growth, and inclusivity. The updated logo (Figure 28), color palette, typography, image style, pattern, and icons were designed to work together, forming a consistent yet flexible brand language.

The updated visual identity brings together earlier design decisions into a cohesive and flexible system. The bold but approachable wordmark, set in Unbounded, is complemented by Poppins for hierarchy and clarity. A refreshed color palette builds on the club's signature blue, adding depth and warmth through a darker blue and an orange accent. The image style captures authentic moments with a unifying orange-toned filter, while supporting assets add flexibility.

To demonstrate how the visual identity functions in practice, it was applied to a few formats. An Instagram feed mockup showcases how elements like the logo, icons, and imagery work together to communicate tone and feel (Figures 29-30). Physical applications were also explored: merchandise (Figure 31), such as hoodies and t-shirts, were developed to help strengthen the internal sense of belonging, an idea drawn from the Vilpas case study, where merchandise was seen as both unifying and outwardly communicative. A window decal (Figure 32) tested how the logo holds up at a larger scale, and a business card (Figure 33) and a poster (Figure 34) were used to evaluate the system in a tangible format.

Feedback from Dreamers Club founder Sophie Winterer was collected to confirm if the visual identity aligned well with her expectations and vision. She noted that the new identity *is very clear but still special* and that it *represents the values and goals of Dreamers Club very nicely*. In particular, she felt that the consistency of fonts and recurring elements such as event recap posts on Instagram and merchandise would help reinforce the brand and make it more recognizable. Winterer also emphasized that the cohesive visual language would make it easier for people to identify and feel connected to the community.

The updated identity was compiled into a brand guideline document designed to be accessible to both designers and non-designers. This guide includes structured documentation of all design decisions, visual examples, and usage recommendations. Its purpose is to ensure that the identity can be applied consistently over time, regardless of who is creating materials.

**DREAMERS
CLUB**
Málaga

Figure 28. New logo

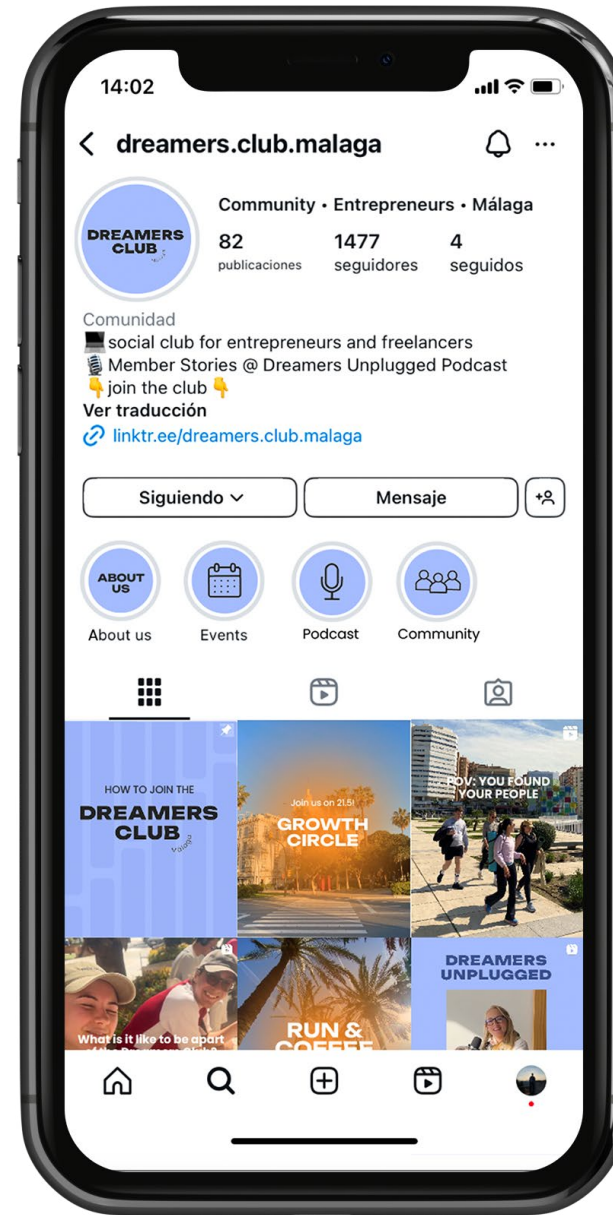


Figure 29. Instagram mockup (Skovran)



Figure 30. New color, image & feel



Figure 31a-e. Merchandise (Mockey)



Figure 32. Window decal (Mockuptree)



Figure 33. Business card (Mockups-design)

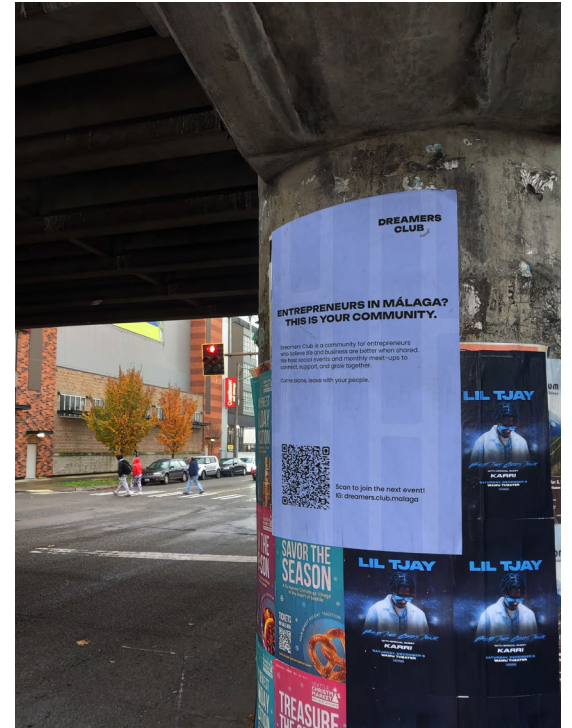


Figure 34. Poster (Mockupworld)

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 SUMMARY

This thesis examined how visual communication contributes to the identity and cohesion of a community. The main objective was to redesign the visual identity of Dreamers Club, a community of international entrepreneurs and freelancers based in Málaga, Spain. The aim was to develop a cohesive and meaningful brand identity that reflects the community's values and supports connection among its members.

The methods included a literature review, a case study, and the design process itself. The literature provided theoretical grounding in community theory and visual identity design. The case study of Vilpas offered a concrete example of how branding can reflect and strengthen community engagement. The design project for Dreamers Club followed established design methods, including conceptual development, benchmarking, and visual exploration, resulting in a revised identity including a wordmark, typography, color palette, image style, supporting graphics, and usage examples.

The results suggest that a thoughtful and consistent visual identity can help strengthen community visibility and shared identity across various touchpoints. The new identity for Dreamers Club brings greater clarity and cohesion to the brand, offering usable tools for both present and future applications, including social media, printed materials, and merchandise.

In terms of usability, the new identity is structured to function across platforms, from social media to print and merchandise, making it a flexible for the community's ongoing development. The design decisions were rooted in both research and collaborative feedback from the community founder, ensuring relevance and authenticity. While the process lacked direct

feedback from community members, efforts were made to understand the vision and values of the group through the founder's perspective.

Suggestions for further development include testing the visual identity in practice and gathering feedback from the community itself. Involving members more directly could strengthen both the effectiveness and emotional impact of the brand. Further research could also explore co-design practices that actively involve community members in the development of the visual identity.

5.2 REFLECTIONS

Reflecting on the development process and final outcome, the project met its objectives in terms of delivering a functional and consistent visual identity for Dreamers Club. The design reflects the founder's ideas and provides a system for future visual communication needs. However, from a personal and professional standpoint, the process revealed limitations and areas for growth.

The final identity leans toward a safe and simple aesthetic. While this approach serves the needs of the community and ensures wide usability, it does not fully showcase the range of creative possibilities that could have been explored. The outcome lacks boldness and experimental visual elements that could have made it more distinctive or provocative. As a designer, this has prompted reflection on how to balance functionality with creative risk-taking, especially in community-centered projects where personality and emotion are essential.

Another important limitation was the level of community involvement in the process. Although collaboration with the founder provided valuable direction, the inability to include community members directly was a missed opportunity. Co-creation could have strengthened the emotional and cultural relevance of the identity and offered deeper insight into how members perceive and relate to their shared space. Future work could benefit from designing in dialogue with the people the brand represents.

Despite these challenges, the process has been highly educational. It reinforced the value of strategic design, collaboration, and research-informed practice. It also highlighted how thoughtful design choices can contribute meaningfully to how communities express themselves, connect with others, and grow stronger together.

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BRAND BOOK

DREAMERS CLUB

Málaga

TABLE OF CONTENT

ABOUT DREAMERS CLUB

Vision & mission	5
Personality & visual style	6

BRAND IDENTITY

Logos	8
Color palette	9
Typography	10
Image style	11
Pattern & icons	12

BRAND IN USE

Instagram	13
Merchandise	15
Others	16

ABOUT DREAMERS CLUB

audience relate to their pain points or desired
they address the audience?

as with your statements

erent stages of their customer journey?

**A SAFE SPACE FOR DREAMERS
TO CONNECT AND GROW.**

VISION

To be a go-to place where dreamers can find support and opportunities for personal and professional growth.

MISSION

To create a safe space and connect freelancers and business owners through fun and engaging activities, in Málaga.

TARGET AUDIENCE

25+, entrepreneurs and freelancer.

Dreamers Club organizes social events like brunches, walks, runs, and sports activities—because networking should feel natural and enjoyable. During events members create connection and expand the community of shared visions and values.





Dreamers Club is friendly, approachable and encouraging, offering a safe space for entrepreneurs, business owners and expats alike.

This is represented by a light, bold and approachable visual identity, with an encouraging and welcoming tone of voice.

BRAND IDENTITY



**DREAMERS
CLUB**
Málaga



**DREAMERS
UNPLUGGED**
Podcast

Logos used for both Dreamers Club and Dreamers Unplugged are wordmarks that use a bold font and a curved text.

These logos come in blue, black and white for flexible usage.

UNBOUNDED

Poppins

The font *unbounded* is used for headlines and titles, in **bold and uppercase**. The font is bold and readable with a few unique characters, offering some detail.

Poppins acts as the secondary font, used in different weights for informative texts, captions and body copy.

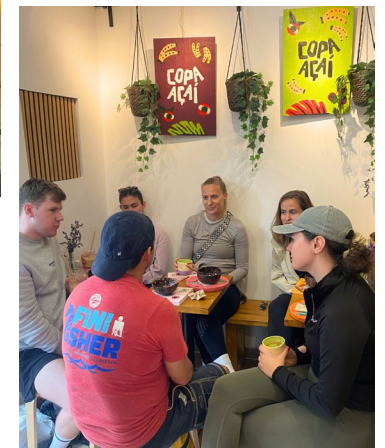
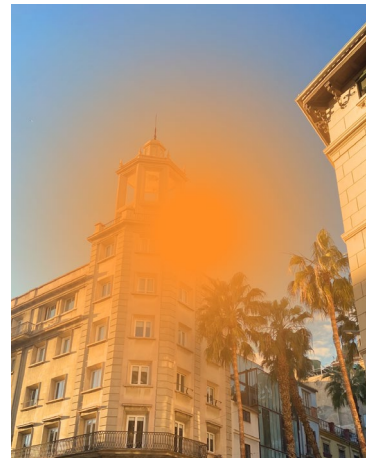
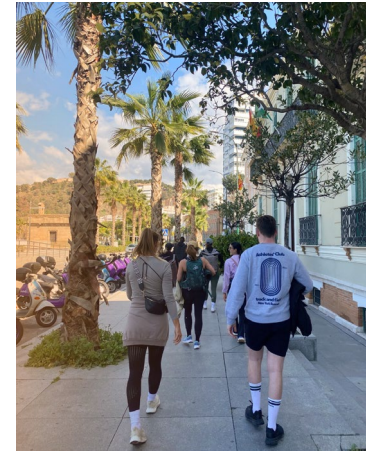


The primary color is *Dreams*, *Shadow* acts as a secondary color, used to create hierarchy and contrast, and in situations where the primary blue is too light.

Instead of using a normal black, this *soft black* offers a slight softer and friendlier look. All blacks should be used in this shade.

Light acts as an accent color, mostly in pictures, to bring a warm and friendly overall atmosphere.

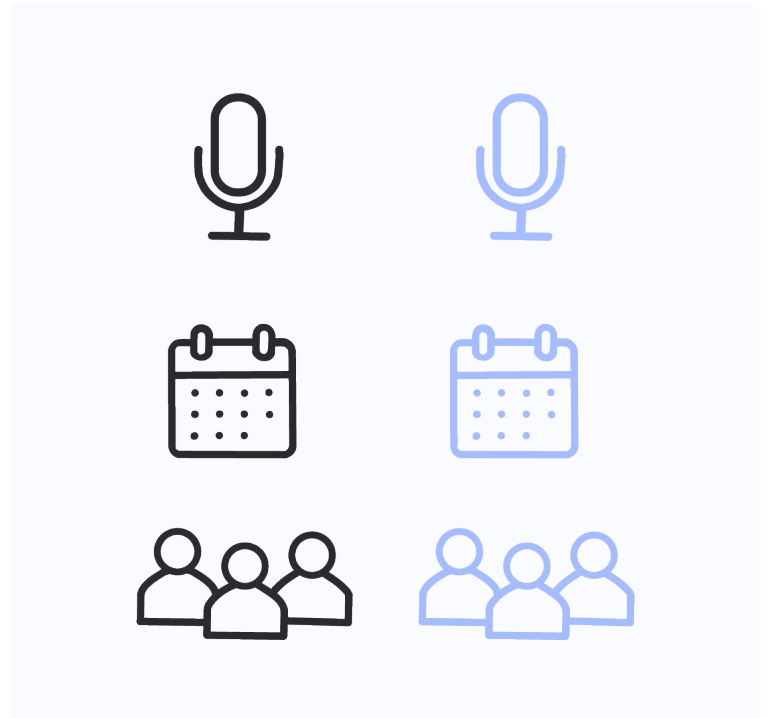
DREAMS #A5BCFF RGB: 165, 188, 255	#A7B9E0 CMYK: 39, 23, 0, 0
SHADOW #384D8C RGB: 56, 77, 140	#374E8D CMYK: 89, 73, 15, 2
SOFT BLACK #232323 RGB: 35, 35, 35	#222323 CMYK: 74, 64, 59, 77
LIGHT #FF8D24 RGB: 255, 141, 36	#F36145 CMYK: 0, 52, 77, 0



The image style is warm and approachable, showcasing members and real situations. To guarantee a unified look, a slight orange tone is edited to all pictures.

Canva image editing instructions:

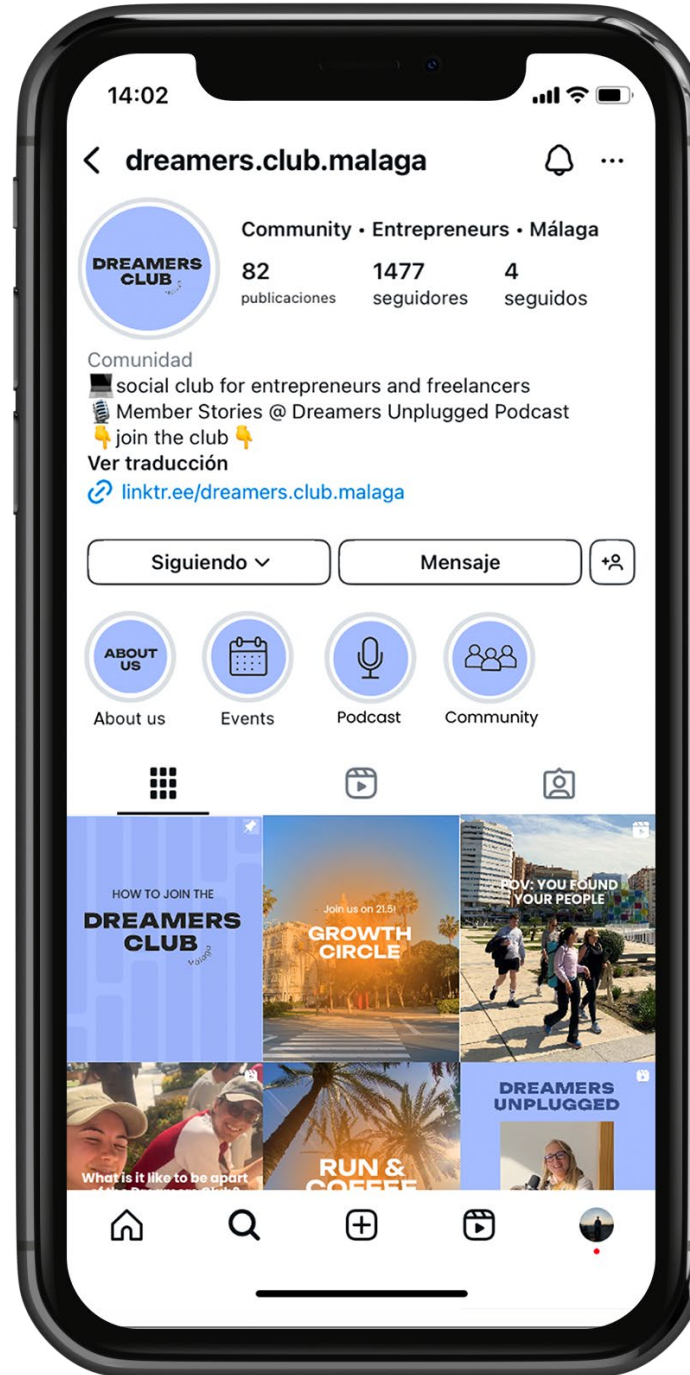
- White balance, temperature (warmth): between 20-40
- Tone, brightness: 15
- "Round gradient shadow" element in orange behind info posts
- Orange gradient can be put on some images



A pattern, inspired by graphs and growth, is an optional design asset that can be used as a background. It uses the color *dreams* with #9AB2FA for the blocks on top.

A few icons were created to be used in Instagram Highlights. This set of icons can be expanded on.

BRAND IN USE









Dare to dream.