Branding: From Brief to Finished Solution

Mono

Inside Branding: From Brief to Finished Solution there are fifteen chapters that explore the creative and technical process behind a range of international branding projects. Covering brand identity, development, extension and on-screen treatment, these highly original and innovative solutions have been drawn from around the globe to give a picture of contemporary branding practices.

About the Authors: Mono is a contemporary design and art direction practice based in London.

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BRANDING

From Brief to Finished Solution

Design Bridge
Imagination
Browns
Atelier Works
open: a design studio
Wolff Olins
the Kitchen
Imaginary Forces
NB: Studio
PCI LiveDesign
Summa
Grupo PROCOR
KesselsKramer

RotoVision

25 Helvetica UltraLight
26 Helvetica UltraLightItalic
35 Helvetica Thin
36 Helvetica ThinItalic
45 Helvetica Light
46 Helvetica LightItalic
55 Helvetica Roman
56 Helvetica Italic
65 Helvetica Medium
66 Helvetica MediumItalic
75 Helvetica Bold
76 Helvetica BoldItalic
85 Helvetica Heavy
86 Helvetica HeavyItalic
95 Helvetica Black
96 Helvetica BlackItalic
B Franklin Gothic Demi
Bauhaus Bold
Bauhaus Demi
Bauhaus Heavy
Bauhaus Light
Univers 55 Oblique
Univers 57 Condensed
Univers 57 CondensedOblique
Univers 65 Bold
BO Univers 65 BoldOblique
Univers 67 CondensedBold
Univers 67 CondensedBoldObl
Blk Univers 75
BlkO Univers 75 BlackOblique
Cochin
25 Helvetica UltraLight
XB Memphis ExtraBold
AdLib BT
Apollo MT
Apollo MT Italic
Zapf Chancery
Trebuchet MS
Helvetica
B Aachen Bold
BellBottom
Swing
Rockwell ExtraBold
Rockwell Italic
Oxford
Hoefler Text
AGaramond
AGaramond Italic
Plantin
Plantin Bold
Gadget
Galliard
Georgia
Geneva
Albertus MT
Albertus MT It
Albertus MT Lt
Anastasia
Apollo MT
Apollo MT Italic
Akzidenz Grotesk BE
Akzidenz Grotesk BE Bold
Akzidenz Grotesk BE BoldCn
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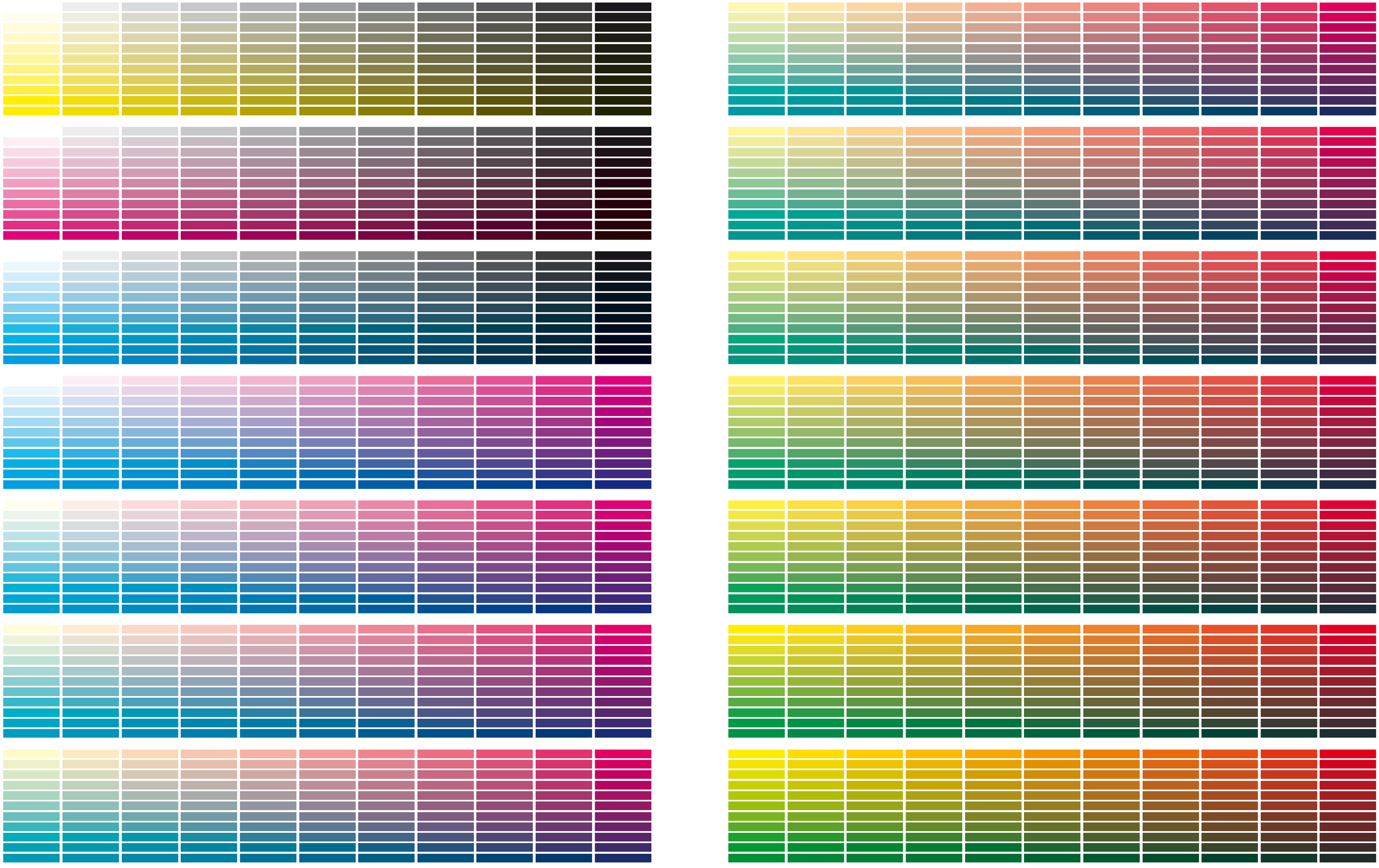
BellGothic Blk BT
Bembo
Bembo Bold
Bembo BoldItalic
BI Cheltenham BoldItalic
BI Cochin BoldItalic
BI Courier BoldOblique
Akzidenz Grotesk BE Md
Akzidenz Grotesk BE MdCn
Akzidenz Grotesk BE MdCnIt
Akzidenz Grotesk BE MdEx
Akzidenz Grotesk BE MdIt
H Franklin Gothic Heavy
Charcoal
Impact
AG Book Stencil
B Goudy Bold
Optima
Optima Bold
Optima BoldItalic
Univers 45 Light
Univers 45 LightOblique
Univers 55
Akzidenz Grotesk BE Super
RotisSansSerif
RotisSansSerif Bold
RotisSansSerif ExtraBold
RotisSansSerif Italic
RotisSemiSans
RotisSemiSans Bold
RotisSemiSans ExtraBold
RotisSemiSans Italic
RotisSemiSans Light
RotisSemiSans LightItalic
RotisSerif
FrenchScript
Zapf Chancery
AGaramond ItalicOsF
EgizianoClassic-BlackTextOL
Bigband
Futura CondExtraBoldObl
Blk VAG Rounded Black
Impact
JournalItalic
JournalText
JournalUltra
L Memphis Light
LB Helvetica Black
T VAG Rounded Thin
Trebuchet MS
XB Futura ExtraBold
Eurostile
Eurostile Bold
Eurostile BoldCondensed
Eurostile BoldCondensed
Hoefler Text
25 Helvetica UltraLight
Verdana
Wingdings
Sand
BlurLight
BlurMedium
Grotesque MT
Grotesque MT Bd
Grotesque MT Bd Ex
Grotesque MT Bl
Grotesque MT Cn
Grotesque MT It
Grotesque MT Lt
Grotesque MT Lt Cn
Grotesque MT Lt It
Grotesque MT X Cn
Meta-Bold
Meta-Normal
News Gothic MT
News Gothic MT Bd
News Gothic MT Cn
News Gothic MT Cn Bd
News Gothic MT It
Albertus MT
Albertus MT It
Albertus MT Lt
BC Folio Bold Condensed
BlurBold



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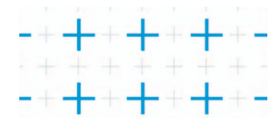
> 0.1 connexxion

> 0.2 Mazda



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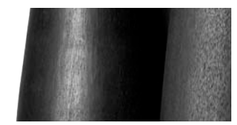

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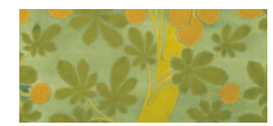
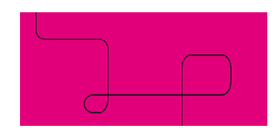


> 0.5 art:21



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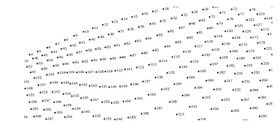
> 0.7 Levi's®

> 0.8 IBM

> 0.9 NIS

> 1.0 Knoll



> 1.1 Ford of Europe

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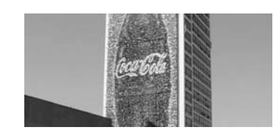
> 1.4 Coca-Cola



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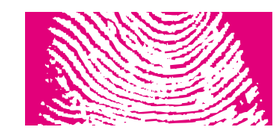


intro

Is a brand a product, a service or a company? Is it a logo, a marketing strategy or an attitude?

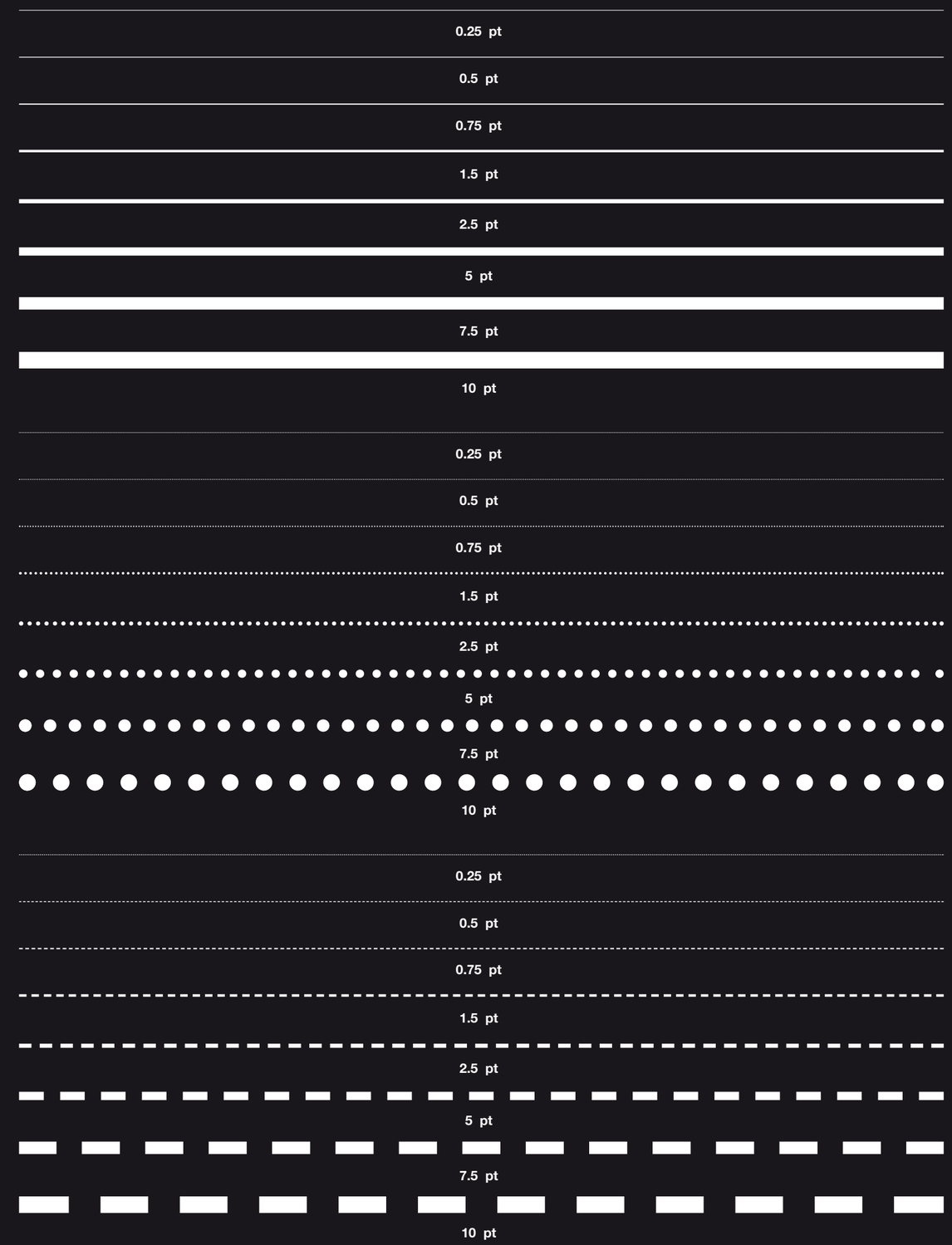
The definition of a brand is perhaps elusive because of semantic generality, where a brand can be ‘a particular product or a characteristic that identifies a particular producer’ (*Collins English Dictionary*). It is accepted that a brand can be both the producer and the product that is produced. We can assume that ‘product’ is not solely a physical, tangible entity, but can be a service, such as telecommunications, vehicle recovery or an internet service provider. In Per Mollerup’s *Marks of Excellence*, the distinction is made between ‘freestanding product brands and more generalised corporate brands’, assuming that the first definition is more relevant to the general perception of a brand. Naomi Klein’s *No Logo* provides a very different interpretation of the brand as ‘the core meaning of the modern corporation’. This more accurately reflects the nature of brands in today’s climate of globalisation, where a corporation must sell a product to potential consumers worldwide across the whole spectrum of languages and cultures. But the various interpretations of brand in media and design necessitate a broad definition of what constitutes a brand. The definition must respond to the general interpretation – as much because brand is an elusive concept, as to the fact that it is constantly developing and redefining its boundaries.

The power of brands has effected the absorption of successful brand names into everyday parlance: Hoover has become a noun for any brand of vacuum cleaner; Tannoy has become a general term for public address systems; Walkman is synonymous with portable sound systems, regardless of whether the manufacturer is Sony, the proprietors of the brand name. But brands can be more than manufactured products. Madonna has been consistently packaged, branded and rebranded throughout her career. This has sustained a momentum that has cemented her position as the most successful female singer of all time. English football club Manchester United discreetly dropped the F.C. from their club badge when floated on the stock market. This signalled the establishment of Manchester United the brand, and intensive marketing and merchandising of the brand has enabled Manchester United to become the richest football club in the world. Upon taking office in 1997, British Prime Minister Tony Blair approached Great Britain as a marketable brand, generating the strapline of ‘Cool Britannia’ to promote the country’s image around the world.

‘Branding’ can be seen as the devolution of a set of core values to some or all of a person, company or thing’s products, assets and attributes, in the form of an identity. The identity can include the visual manifestation of these values, the embodiment of the desired personality, and can take many forms. Identity encompasses all the taxonomic aspects of a trademark – lettermark or logotype, picturemark, typefaces and colours. But it also involves the ethos, ambience and consumer perception surrounding the product. The Nike global website states that, ‘Our identity is more than a swoosh splashed on a product. Our identity is the relationship we have with the world we touch’. This is in accordance with Klein’s ‘core meaning of the modern corporation’ and encapsulates the almost spiritual resonance of many modern brands.

Throughout this book we will study a cross-section of contemporary brands, from the global ‘superbrands’ of Coca-Cola, IBM and Ford, to less well known, but no less compelling brands with more localised relevance. We will focus predominantly on the development of brand identity from brief to execution, and the means of communicating this identity through various media.

‘In its curious, direct way, branding is extraordinarily potent. It reaches beyond immediate commercial objectives and touches the soul – and don’t its practitioners know it!’ – *Corporate Identity – Making Business Strategy Visible through Design* by Wally Olins.



branding design bridge connexxion

project 0.1 connexxion

A climate of protest and reaction against globalisation and corporate power has arisen in recent years, which has offered an alternative viewpoint on the function and influence of branding. Voices such as those at *Adbusters* magazine, George Monbiot (*Captive State*) and Naomi Klein (*No Logo*), have raised awareness of branding's proclivity to homogenise and depersonalise. But whereas the anti-branding opinion may suggest that the uniformity engendered by branding can strip cultures worldwide of their individuality and diversity, we should not lose sight of the benefits of branding as a tool for unification, coherence and reassurance. The comfort through familiarity which branding affords, inspiring feelings of safety and loyalty in the consumer, cannot only be utilised for sales and profit but can also communicate vital information clearly and efficiently for the benefit of the public. This was the case with Holland's public transport system.

Like many industries in the 1990s the Dutch transport sector was deregulated, introducing competition from the private sector. As a result, existing operators were forced to reduce their market share, and the four regional public transport operators in central Holland (Midnet, NZH, Oostnet and ZWN, which operated most of the key bus, tram, ferry and taxi services), were brought together under the holding name VSN1 in order to form a new group that would be able to survive in a much more competitive market. The merger needed to be communicated to all external and internal audiences in the form of a comprehensive corporate identity. In 1998 the London- and Amsterdam-based corporate and service branding team at Design Bridge was appointed as branding consultant after winning a competitive pitch.

The client's objectives included raising the prominence of their position in mass market transportation, and the maximisation of passenger, client and employee satisfaction. In order to fulfil these aims and to gain an understanding of the job in hand, Design Bridge assessed the existing transport brands and their competition, the company culture and characteristics of each of the four transport operators, and the public's needs and perceptions of public transport in Holland.

The solution – connexxion – was built around the idea of 'bringing people together', and provided recognisability and expression within a unified and coherent corporate identity. The strength of connexxion lies in its 'modular' visual identity – it consists of several elements which interact coherently as a whole, but which can be disassembled into constituent parts for use in various contexts, without a loss of recognisability and legibility. The xx element is a visual 'hook', an instantly recognisable symbol which evokes connectedness and unity. Its interpretation as either interconnected x's or bi-directional arrows economically expresses both 'bringing people together' and total transportation. The scale of the design programme necessitated the creation of a flexible 'masterbrand' strategy. This helped to facilitate the communication of the identity across a number of specialist service brands and forms of media. This involved supplying brand guidelines to local design agencies whose task it was to apply the identity within their locale. Design Bridge orchestrated the initial implementation in order to establish the brand and maintain standards.

As a branding exercise, Design Bridge's solution encompasses all aspects of traditional corporate identity, and successfully provides the organisation with an individual and high profile identity. Connexxion has become a prominent feature of the Dutch landscape, and is a familiar and trusted brand for those with whom it has come into contact.

'Brands and marketing communication are part of (an) extended aesthetic experience. In a surplus society, in which people are condemned to freedom, brands reduce uncertainty.' – *Funky Business* by Jonas Ridderstråle and Kjell Nordström.

0.1 transport brands (before)

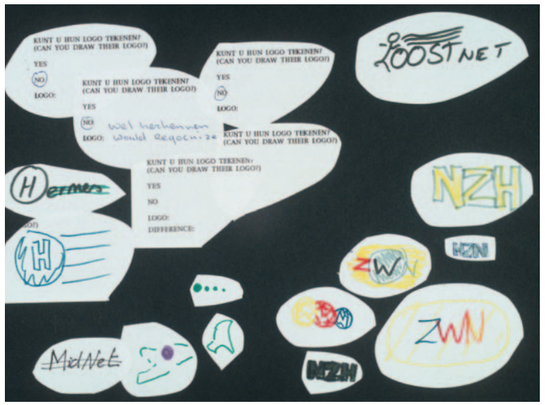
In the initial stages of such a complex branding project, Design Bridge compiled an overview of all regional Dutch transport companies. The findings demonstrate a variety of identities that were all functional, but had no coherent visual approach. Several of these identities are for comparable services, yet confusion within this merged group is caused through the many branding approaches taken by individual companies, with some concentrating on region and others focusing on services.

0.2 audit and initial research

An extensive brand audit was undertaken (by Nijkamp and Nijboer), documenting all existing brands and their applications. The findings revealed a lack of brand consistency, clearly demonstrated by the array of regional bus liveries. In conjunction with this audit Design Bridge researched European transport identities to identify specific successes, failures and general trends in transport branding. Key competitors were identified in Arriva and Hermes.

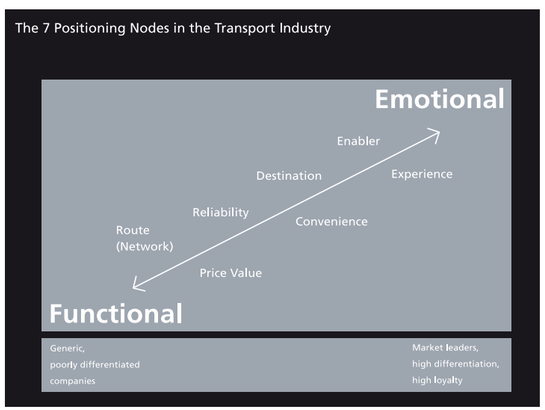
0.3 consumer research

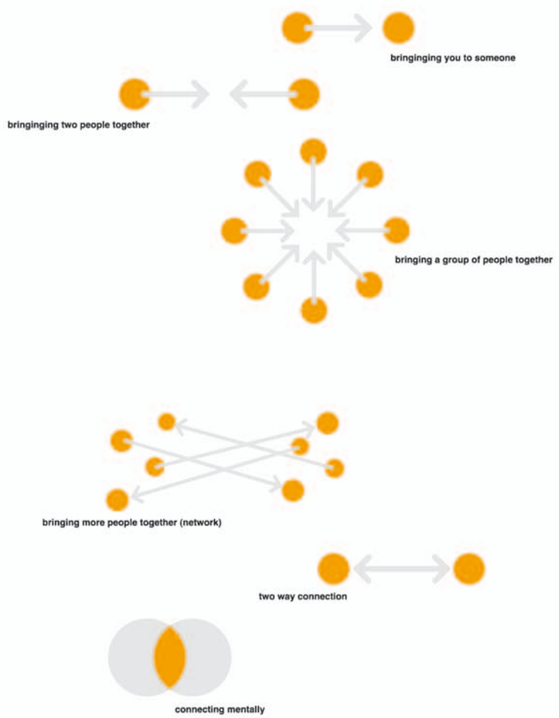
Street interviews were used to formulate a view of users' perceptions of public transport in their respective areas. In response, the public were able not only to name, but often accurately draw, their respective companies' identities. However, while these brands were distinctive 'stand out' marks, very few people had any inkling as to what they 'stood for'. Two major conclusions were drawn from this exercise: that the existing brands were highly generic, and perhaps more importantly, that using public transport was not seen as a positive activity.



0.4 positioning options

In order to differentiate the new brand from competitors, Design Bridge decided to focus on the primary benefits of public transport. Seven possible positioning themes were developed ranging from the functional (route or price specific), to the more emotional (the experience of travel). Design Bridge recommended that the focus of the brand be that of 'enabler', 'a service that allows you to do what you want to do'.





0.5 positioning and naming

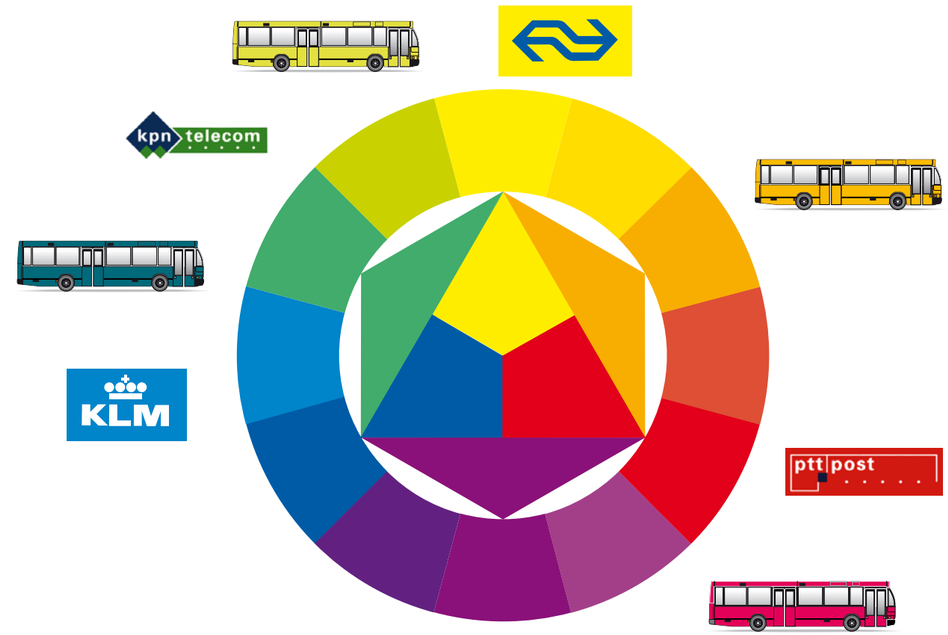
Based on the positioning of 'enabler', a statement was developed around which the brand would be built: 'We help you live your life by getting you where you want to be. Whoever you are, wherever you're going, you can trust our friendly, efficient and integrated transport service to take the hassle and frustration out of getting there. We are Bringing People Together.' The schematic above visually explores different interpretations of bringing people together, from a single user visiting another, to multiple users converging on a central location.

Together with Globrands in Holland, Design Bridge developed naming exercises, one of which involved an internal competition to involve staff at the newly merged transport company. 'Connexxion', a name selected for its emotional appeal, distinctiveness and relationship to the brand statement, was one such name submitted by a member of staff. It was felt that the name responded to the identified brand values – friendly, reliable, integrated, enthusiastic, professional, entrepreneurial and efficient – while the double xx spelling made the name more 'ownable'.

0.6 design concepts

The design team developed a number of design concepts for a connexxion brand mark based on the brand positioning and the brand name. Initial sketches included designs that were not based on the xx elements.

However, when combined with the brand name the xx in the logotype was so overpowering that any additional elements visually clashed. Design Bridge therefore concentrated on the x element as the key feature of the brand mark, as a stand-alone element or part of a logotype. All designs were presented in black and orange on boards, which served as a default colour before any decisions on colour had been made. The boards illustrated layout options for the elements as well as ideas for the visual tone of voice (e.g. hard or soft shapes, dynamic or static shapes).



0.7 colour wheel

In public transport identities one of the most distinctive design elements is colour – London buses and New York cabs are perfect examples of this. A public transport identity features prominently on a fleet of vehicles and therefore becomes a characteristic of a city, region or country's visual landscape. Colour also serves the function of differentiation. It is easier to see which company's bus is approaching if it features a distinctive colour.

The colour or colour combination needs not only to be different to other similar public transport brands, but also to well established national brands that would appear on a fleet of vehicles. In Holland for example, the KLM blue would not be used for another prominent brand in the public domain. The colour wheel identifies areas within the colour spectrum which can be owned by an organisation.

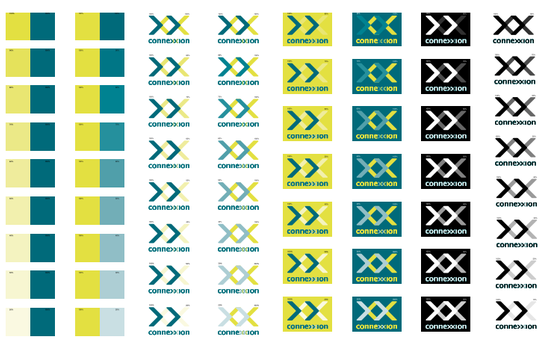
0.8 arrow system

Having decided on using the xx as a key feature in the identity, Design Bridge investigated the options of combining the two elements to express the essence of the brand. The xx as a stand-alone device, and as a component of a logotype, were both considered.

0.9 logotype and brand icon

The final logotype incorporates the xx as two sets of arrows moving towards each other and overlapping to create the letter x. The design reflects the idea of 'bringing people together'. It was important to safeguard legibility while creating a distinctive design feature within the logotype. The xx device can also be used separately from the logotype to act as a simple and strong icon employable in a similar way to the London Underground symbol. The icon acts as a beacon that can be seen from long distances.

The logotype design is based on the Lesmore font but redrawn to suit the concept. It is rendered in lowercase to emphasise the design feature of the xx, which would be incompatible with the logo if it had an uppercase C.



1.0 colour usage

Colour exercises led Design Bridge to choose a dark and a bright green. The colours are distinctive and differentiate the brand. They also have positive environmental connotations and fulfil a number of practical requirements: visibility on livery (safety), sufficient contrast between the two tones to allow the use of coloured type upon a background of another corporate colour, and parity with the screen-safe colour palette used on the worldwide web.

The brandmark was designed to work on white, dark and bright green backgrounds, as well as on a single-colour or black on white version.

The Sans ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

The Sans Bold **abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz**
1234567890

1.1 choice of brand typeface

A complex type exercise was conducted to test a range of selected sans serif typefaces for:

- legibility in small sizes (timetables) and from long distances
- typesetting qualities (lining up within timetables)
- legibility and design of numerals (mediaeval or upright)
- visual distinctiveness and personality.

Following these tests, 'The Sans' was chosen as the corporate typeface on all factual information, with its close relative 'The Mix' as a headline typeface for promotional messages. All non-factual body copy (e.g. editorial) was set in ITC Century, a serif typeface that sits well with 'The Sans' family.

'The Sans' combines extreme clarity with a distinctive, friendly personality. It features a comprehensive font family and has become a modern classic. It also works well in both printed and digital form. The fact that its designer, Lucas de Groot, is Dutch was positively received within the organisation.

1234567890 .--, ƒ [({})] !&?/§
abcdefghijklmnopqrestuvwxyz
ABCEDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVW

bold (Officina)

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abcdefghijklmnopqrestuvwxyz
ABCEDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVW

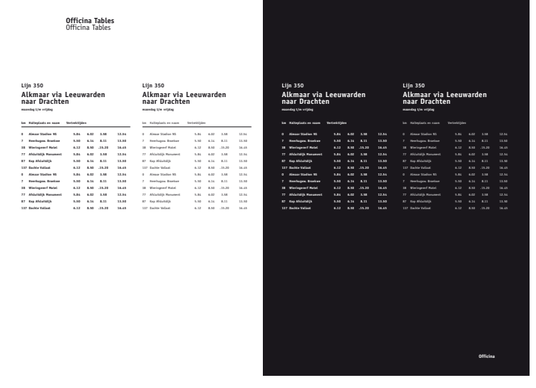
book (Officina)

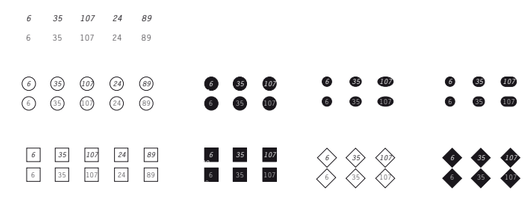
1234567890 .--, ƒ [({})] !&?/§
abcdefghijklmnopqrestuvwxyz
ABCEDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVW

bold (Letter Gothic)

1234567890 .--, ƒ[({})] !&?/§
abcdefghijklmnopqrestuvwxyz
ABCEDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVW

book (Letter Gothic)





12.30 uur *8:45* *17⁰⁰* *7h 50min*
12.30 uur 8:45 17⁰⁰ 7h 50min

ƒ 50,- *ƒ 3.50*
ƒ 50,- ƒ 3.50

1.2 contextualisation

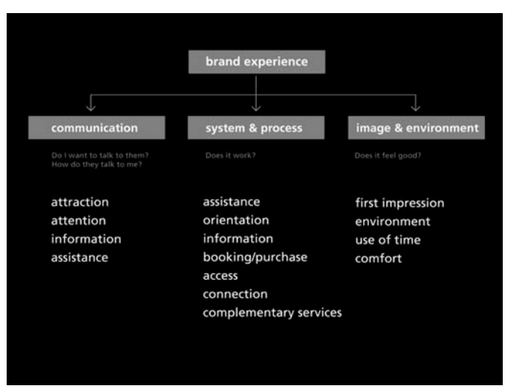
A brandmark alone does not make an identity. Therefore Design Bridge introduced a stage of work into the design process which they called ‘contextualisation’. The purpose of this exercise was to apply a brandmark to a diverse range of relevant applications in order to assess the strength and flexibility of the design. The contextualisation stage allowed the design team to explore the creative potential of an identity by simulating a branded world. The goal for the connexxion brand was to explore the versatility of the xx devices and to develop supportive design elements if necessary.

The chart above demonstrates the creative application of the xx elements: for layout in print; as speech marks for tactical messages and straplines; for information design purposes; within the taxi brand; and as dynamic devices on livery.

1.3 brand experience

A successful brand will extend well beyond its visual manifestation into the culture of a business (internal and external), and become the guiding principle for any form of customer interaction or service provision.

Design Bridge illustrated below the three key areas that will shape an audience’s perception of a transport service: communication, system and process, and image and environment. For example, if the system is not in place to consistently deliver a good service, then the best identity in the world will not change negative perceptions of the brand.



applying a brand language

function → tone of voice

signalling	informative	official	decorative	promotional
bus outside signage bus stops	timetables literature (travel info, how to book, ...) signage signoff on timetables and maps	literature (annual report) letterhead, stationary forms tickets	bus outside bus inside service counter uniforms tickets	advertising literature (leaflets, brochures) posters on bus shelters (i.e. nightbus ads)

1.4 building a brand language

All graphical and typographical elements of a brand identity need to support the positioning of a brand and fit with each other. If this is achieved the identity will be distinctive, relevant and flexible.

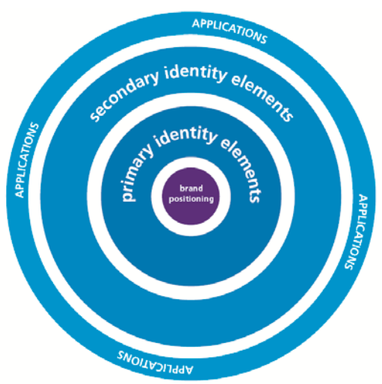
In the first stage the primary identity elements are designed (name, logo/logotype, colours). Then the secondary identity elements are developed (image style, type style, layout style, tone of voice, colour palette, brand hierarchy systems). These secondary elements are usually the ones that, when put together and applied creatively, provide the highest degree of differentiation.

While the logo provides a visual key to the brand world, the full expression of the identity only comes to life through the use of the secondary elements. A logo alone cannot do all the work. Once the brand elements are in place, they can be flexibly applied throughout various media to achieve the right expression and tone of voice for the brand.

1.5 applying a brand language

The different elements within the brand language fulfil different roles within the identity. For example, while type style provides a brand with consistency, image style is very much a carrier of emotional messages. The combination of these elements determines the tone of voice of a piece of design. Is it functional, emotional or decorative? What is the primary purpose of an application within the whole communication of the brand?

The diagram above demonstrates the different areas to be considered within a public transport brand and the tone of voice that needs to be applied to key carriers of the brand message. The connexxion brand elements have been applied following these principles. Using tone of voice correctly will result in a brand experience that is credible and consistent. The goal is to build trust in the service and capabilities of an organisation.



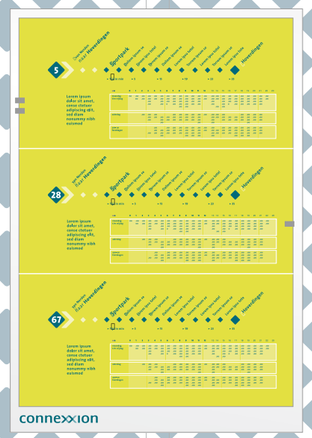
1.6 livery

The design of the livery is the most prominent manifestation of the brand. Initial branding activities focused on the bus fleet, both exterior and interior. Key brand elements are employed, particularly externally, to signal the brand. When applying the connexxion brandmark to the side of vehicles, the design of the xx is always adjusted to highlight the set of arrows which point towards the front of the vehicle.

Colour also needs to fulfil safety requirements – bright green is used across buses, on the front of trains and more prominently on ferry boats to achieve visibility. It is also used internally on handrails and bars. Brand elements are used internally on seat fabrics where the need for branding combines with decorative and aesthetic requirements.

1.7 information design systems

Maps, timetables and route-planners utilise the strong typographical style and the bold use of colours of the identity. A visually striking but immediately accessible information system is developed as an integral part of the identity.

To maintain an association with the masterbrand, all iconography that appears in the signage system is taken from the core elements of the logotype. The diamond shape derived from the centre of the xx symbol generates a map of Holland, that through its modular construction can be used to highlight specific areas and routes.

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