

Fairfaktor

Communication

Toolkit

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About this toolkit

This publication is part of a comprehensive set of toolkits for artisans, handicrafts organisations and Fair Trade producers in the textile and fashion industry. The toolkits have been developed for capacity building in the areas of market access and analysis, fashion design and communication to help small organisations build a strong business and realise their market potential.

This present issue is designed to support in building a strong brand communication in order to successfully address and reach existing and new target groups. This toolkit introduces the essentials of communication such as brand building including the creation of a (visual) brand identity, the determination of key values, and the definition of a unique value proposition. It also explains the development and application of a communication strategy step by step. It covers target group specific communication both in the B2B and B2C sector and includes practical information on the implementation of communication measures, such as online marketing and the creation of texts or visual material.

This toolkit mainly addresses you as general managers with strategic decision power, marketing and communication executives and all of you who contribute to and work with the company's external presence in any way. It serves as a guideline, providing instructions and tools for various business cases through a modular structure so that you can focus on the content relevant to your individual situation. It also includes examples, practical exercises and further references, all of which can be recognised by the symbols explained in the following.

All toolkits contain a lot of information on various topics and activities. We therefore recommend reading and working through the individual chapters one by one. It can also be helpful to distribute them among the relevant team members. If you want to work through all of the toolkits in order to gain a holistic understanding, we recommend the following order based on the content structure: Communications, Market Access & Analysis, Design. Of course, many of the topics are interrelated. You will therefore also find links between the toolkits.



Definition

Explanation of specific terms for better understanding.



Exercise

Possibility of practical application of the theory learned.



Example

Fictional illustration of the practical implementation.



Additional info

More in-depth insights on the topic.



Key takeaways

Highlight of the most important aspects.



Resource

Reference to further useful information or tools.

1. Brand building

1.1 Process



Brand building refers to the strategic development of a brand that stands for a company, a product or a service. A brand is a set of characteristic perceptions, associations and feelings that people have about your company or offer and that differentiate it from alternatives.

Brand building thus describes the active strategic process of creating a construct of characteristic elements that together form the brand identity and are specifically intended to influence the customer's perception and evoke certain associations, to

- create awareness
- establish a positive perception
- distinguish from other brands
- increase the recognition value
- build customer loyalty
- strengthen the popularity and position in the market
- and lead to significant competitive advantages.

The aim should therefore always be to establish a strong brand identity.

Brand building is not a nice-to-have but plays an essential role in a business. Therefore, this process should ideally be considered right from the start of a company's foundation. However it keeps remaining relevant through continuous monitoring and reevaluation. It is advisable to regularly compare the self-image with the external perception. So this chapter is also interesting for all those working for an established brand.

How to implement brand building

For the branding process, ask yourself:

- What do my business and my products stand for?
- What do I want to embody with my brand?
- How do I want to be perceived as a brand?
- What characteristics should be associated with my company?
- What differentiates me or my products from other competitors?

You should be clear about these aspects, because branding can only be successfully realised if you have a precise idea of this. In the following, we will take a step-by-step approach to answering these questions.



Essential steps of the brand building process

The brand building process essentially comprises the following steps:

1. Develop your brand identity: Capture who you are and what you stand for as a brand.
2. Extract your key values: Summarise this in a few guiding values.
3. Identify your unique value proposition: Elaborate the distinct value you are creating.
4. Create your visual identity: Express your internal brand identity to the outside.
5. Rebranding: Regularly review your brand identity and revise if necessary.

However, keep in mind that brand building is not a linear process, and iterations might be necessary at every step.

To make things clearer and easier to understand, and to explain the branding process as realistically as possible, we have developed a fictional company, which we present in the following profile. This fictional company serves as the basis for all other examples that are developed in the toolkits.



Example business profile: Fictional brand Ajala Threads



Ajala Threads is a female led artisan business for handcrafted Fair Trade fashion from the Indian region of Bastar in Chhattisgarh. The label produces high quality fashion and accessories for men and women in the upper price segment, focusing on sustainability, female empowerment and transparency. The aim is to preserve and promote traditional Indian craftsmanship and manufacturing techniques.

Ajala Threads aims at the European market and a target group of women and men aged 35-65. The target group is part of a well-situated but socially aware milieu, characterised by an affinity for a sustainable yet pleasure-oriented lifestyle. It consists of conscious shoppers aiming to make a positive contribution by buying socially and ecologically responsible brands and products (see more information in the Market Access Toolkit).

Ajala Threads offers timeless, casual and sophisticated styles with an individual touch. The product range includes clothing such as tops, shirts, jackets, dresses, skirts and trousers, as well as bags and accessories that combine traditional Indian crafting techniques with contemporary design. The company is committed to manufacturing high quality products made from selected, natural materials, impressing with an excellent finish and longevity.

Ajala Threads strives to be a socially and ecologically sustainable business. The production is based on the use of environmentally friendly methods and materials. As a business, they are committed to providing information about Fair Trade and sustainability, as well as ensuring transparency about the processes and impact of their production. Their endeavour is to remain open to new methods and technologies that improve sustainability and ethical practices while preserving craftsmanship and advocate for broader change in the industry. The business contributes to the empowerment of female artisans in India by promoting the economic independence and equality of women in the region and advocating for safe working conditions and respectful treatment of all workers in the fashion industry. In addition, Ajala Threads invests in a social development project that enables girls in India to go to school.

1.2 Brand Identity

Brand building comprises the creation of a brand identity. But what is a brand identity and what purpose does it serve?



The brand identity includes the central characteristic features of a brand and expresses what the brand specifically stands for. It is the comprehensive narrative that tells who you are and what makes you unique. Essentially it is the personality of your business.

Brand identity as the self-image is the starting point for all external positioning and communication. It is therefore essential for creating a clear and consistent image among consumers. In this chapter you will learn how to develop a strong brand identity and what this includes.

How to develop a strong brand identity

We've created a guide on developing a strong brand identity. In the following you will find the relevant steps and important aspects to consider.



Analyse your target group

As the brand identity always stands in interaction with the (potential) customers, the first step is to identify and understand your target group. You need to know who they are and how they are characterised. To learn how to analyse your target group, please see a detailed description in the Market Access toolkit. At this point, find a brief overview of the relevant dimensions to consider.



How is my target group defined in terms of demographic and psychographic characteristics?

What are the problems, needs and wishes of my target group?

Please note: For a comprehensive and relevant analysis, please head over to the Market Access Toolkit.

2 Determine your offer and benefits

Once you identified and analysed your target group, you should integrate these insights with your business. It is essential to understand the value you are creating for them. Determine your offer and the associated customer benefits. Try to specify particular features of your business and your products that might create unique benefits, both on a rational (functional) or emotional (psychosocial) level. Below, find some aspects to take a look at.



What do you do as a business?

How can you describe your key characteristics?

What are the products or services that you offer and their key features?

Which problems are you solving?

Which needs and wishes are you fulfilling?

3 Integrate into your brand identity model

Then, to bring all these insights together and put things into practice, you can make use of established brand identity models comprising the key elements of a strong brand identity. There are several models and approaches describing the various dimensions and aspects of a brand identity. Let's look at two of the most popular models to delve deeper into the topic and help you develop or capture your brand identity.

The brand identity model by Esch combines four dimensions of a brand, including factual and rational characteristics (hard facts) as well as emotional and visual characteristics (soft facts). The hard facts include the brand attributes and benefits, while the soft facts include the brand tonality and image. This approach offers a holistic perspective on brand identity and helps to clearly identify the various dimensions through central guiding questions. The brand identity is also condensed by focussing on particularly important aspects of brand competence.

Own illustration based on Esch¹

¹Esch. 2014. *Strategie und Markenführung* as cited in Esch & Langner. 2019. *Ansätze zur Erfassung und Entwicklung der Markenidentität*. In Esch (Ed.). 2019. *Handbuch Markenführung*. Springer Gabler Wiesbaden.

Brand identity model by Esch

**Brand benefits:
What do I offer as a brand?**

The brand benefit is determined by the question 'What do I offer as a brand?' and comprises functional and psychosocial benefits, however the benefit advantage based on psychosocial benefits usually is the main purchase argument. Customers buy benefits, not product features, so the separation of benefits and attributes is important.

- functional benefit
- psychosocial benefit

- personality characteristics
- relationship characteristics
- experiences

**Brand tonality:
How am I as a brand?**

The brand tonality describes the emotions associated with the brand and can include personality traits, relationships with the brand and brand experiences. It is determined by the question 'How am I as a brand?'. This is becoming increasingly important for differentiation from the competition, as rational features are interchangeable in saturated markets.

**Brand attributes:
What features do I have as a brand?**

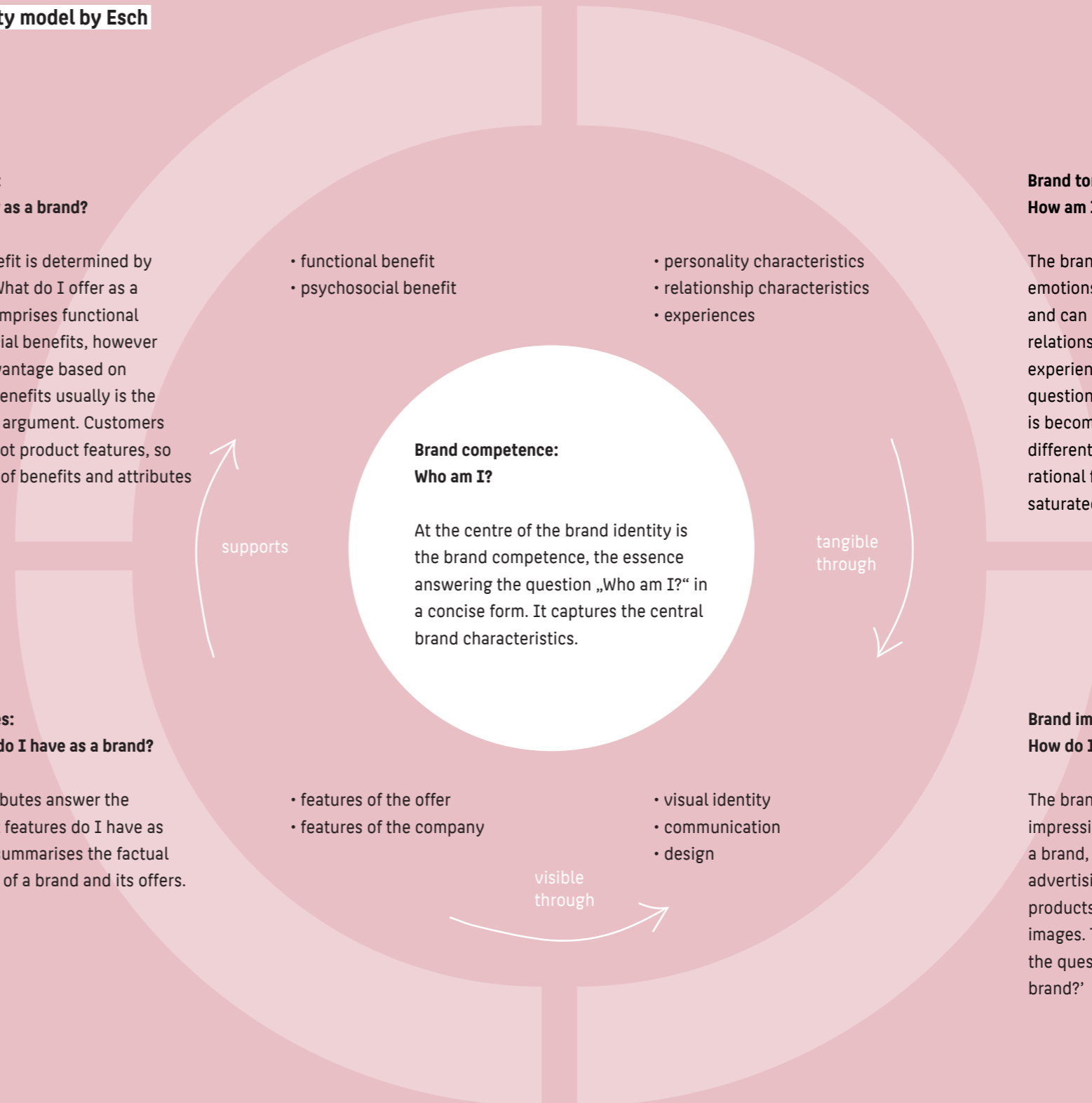
The brand attributes answer the question 'What features do I have as a brand?' and summarises the factual characteristics of a brand and its offers.

- features of the offer
- features of the company

- visual identity
- communication
- design

**Brand image:
How do I appear as a brand?**

The brand image comprises all visible impressions. All touchpoints with a brand, such as communication, advertising or packaging, and the products lead to the creation of inner images. The brand image thus addresses the question 'How do I appear as a brand?'





What features do I have as a brand? Think of what you do and how your activities can be described.

Horizontal lines for writing

What benefits do I offer as a brand? Reflect how you create value for your customers, both on a functional and psychosocial level.

Horizontal lines for writing

How am I as a brand? Capture what characterises you on a more internal, emotional or personal level in a figurative sense.

Horizontal lines for writing

Horizontal lines for writing

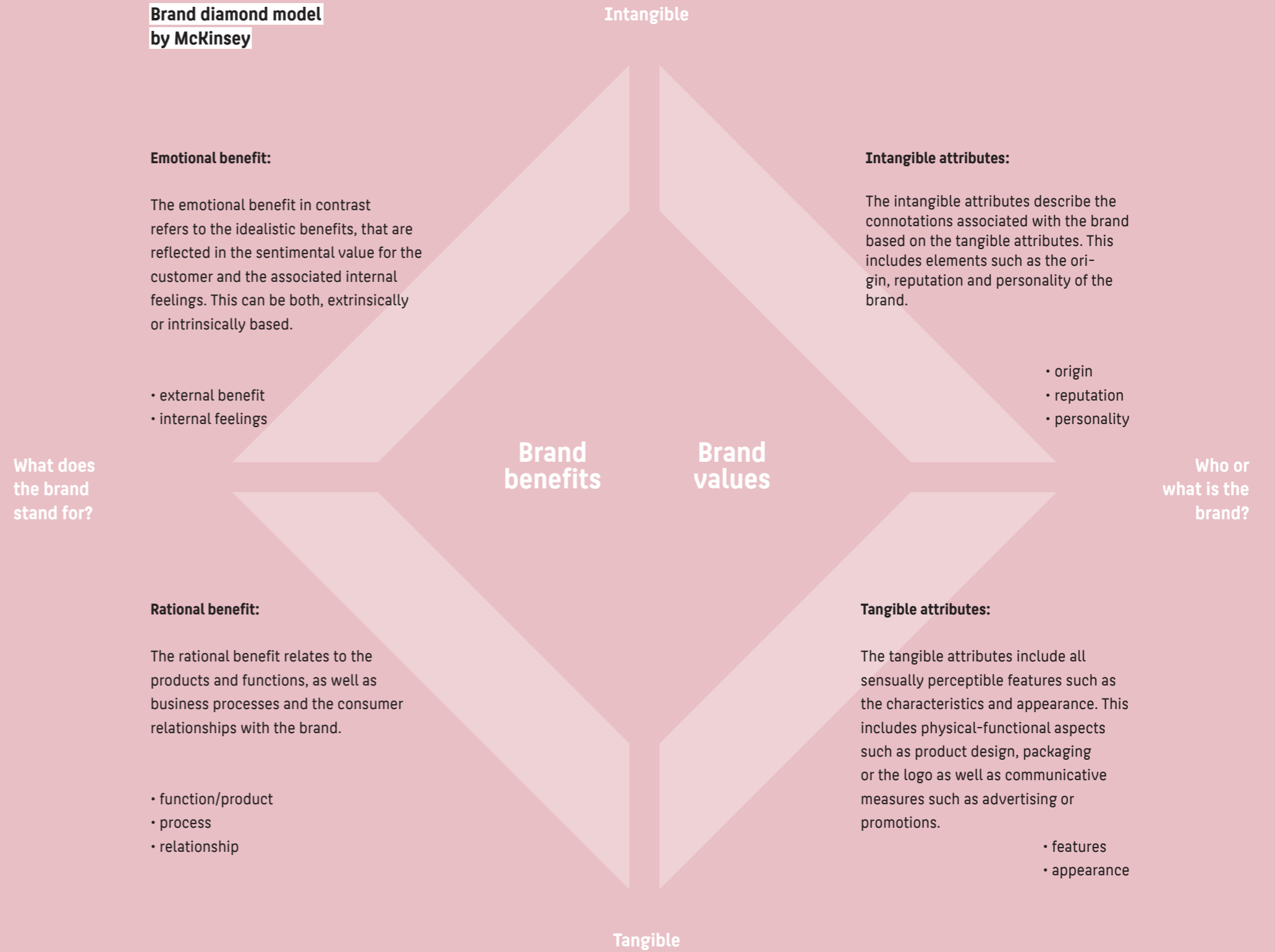
How do I appear as a brand? Investigate how you are perceived by others on certain levels through various touchpoints.

Horizontal lines for writing

Who am I as a brand?

Horizontal lines for writing

A similar approach to capture the brand identity is the so-called brand diamond by McKinsey. This model distinguishes between brand attributes and brand benefits, as well as a tangible and an intangible dimension, all of which together represent what the brand stands for. The division into overlapping dimensions helps to clearly structure and grasp the central aspects of brand identity.



Own illustration based on Esch²

²Riesenbeck & Perrey, 2004. Mega-Macht Marke. As cited in Esch & Langner, 2019. Ansätze zur Erfassung und Entwicklung der Markenidentität. In Esch (Ed.), 2019. Handbuch Markenführung. Springer Gabler Wiesbaden.



What are the rational benefits I offer as a brand?
Describe how your business and products create value for your customers on a functional level.

What are the emotional benefits I offer as a brand?
Reflect how you create value for your customers on a psychosocial level.

What are my tangible attributes as a brand?
Summarise all your features, that are perceptible and concrete.

What are my intangible attributes as a brand? Think of the characteristics that are associated with you based on your tangible perception.



Example brand identity: Fictional brand Ajala Threads

Ajala Threads is a female-led, fair and sustainable fashion manufacturing business, rooted in cultural heritage and craftsmanship. It builds on principles of women's empowerment, environmental consciousness, and transparency. It offers a wide range of artisanal high-quality clothing and accessories for every day, made from organic and durable materials in eco-fair production. The company and its products stand out through balancing ethics and aesthetics and connecting traditional crafting techniques with contemporary design and timeless aesthetics. Through constant change and innovation, the company always offers new inspiration for sustainable lifestyle products.

The brand fulfils the demands and needs of the target group on a functional and psychosocial level. Ajala Threads serves customers with long-lasting clothing with an excellent finish made from comfortable and natural premium materials. The customers get unique handcrafted products in a modern and contemporary aesthetic. The high-quality manufacturing and timeless aesthetic reduce the need for the constant purchase of new clothing and allow the customers to consume consciously. This way, the customers profit from a good conscience and a harmonious self-image strengthened by leading a value-led lifestyle. They also feel a personal connection to their clothes through the stories behind the product

about the artisans. Moreover, the handcrafted production contributes to a feeling of uniqueness and individuality. The target group's need for a sustainable yet enjoyable lifestyle is fully satisfied by the products. By purchasing the brand's socially and environmentally responsible products, conscious consumers not only feel that they are making a positive contribution and live a value-led lifestyle, but above all can show their individual style and express their unique character, all while having a good conscience.

This is achieved by the brand's perception as authentic, genuine and its sophisticated and contemporary appearance. Yet it is also perceived as natural, friendly, and approachable. This in turn roots in its respectful, appreciative, and social character. Ajala Threads can be characterised as value-driven, human-centred, and empowering. It is also defined by a creative and relaxed nature. The brand's outer appearance underlines these characteristics as well as their cultural roots and contemporary aesthetic. The brand lives up to its own standards in all their actions and strengthens consumer trust through transparent behaviour and relevant knowledge on Fair Trade and sustainability.

1.3 Key Values

In line with the brand identity, identify the underlying key values your business is based on. This will help you to maintain your brand identity consistently and consequently.



Key values represent the core of your brand identity and correspond to fundamental principles that serve as a central guideline for all your actions and decisions.

Clear and expressive key values serve as orientation both internally and externally. First of all, with regard to employees, they offer a universal and overarching guideline, both on a strategic and an operative level. This ensures that everyone works in accordance with the same principles and that your business remains true to itself in all activities, including those visible to the outside world. From an external perspective, consistently communicated and – more importantly – practised key values offer a competitive advantage through creating trust and identification with

the business or brand. The congruence of principles with their own can create a sense of connection and promote engagement and loyalty, both internally among employees and externally with customers. The latter is especially relevant in competitive markets, as many consumers base their purchasing decision on their conviction of the corporate values.

How to determine key values

To achieve these benefits, it is important to determine key values and actively share them with your stakeholders – above all your employees and customers. For the development of effective values follow these steps:

1 Integrate your team

In the process of determining key values, it is essential to involve all employees, as their diverse perspectives and input can lead to a more comprehensive and representative value system that resonates with the whole team. This way they will be more likely to identify with the values and commit to them.

2 Brainstorm collaboratively

Instead of imposing values from the top down, initiate creative ideation sessions with all employees. Encourage them to contribute their ideas and opinions. Discuss and evaluate the results of the brainstorming session openly within the team and repeat the process if necessary.



Brainstorming methods

For the successful implementation of brainstorming, the stimulation of creativity and lively participation, as well as the promotion of qualitative results, we recommend using established methods for co-creative ideation processes in groups, including so-called Design Thinking in particular. There are many free resources online that explain various easy-to-implement methods in an accessible way.

3 Extract the essence

Take a look at all the ideas that have been collected and your evaluation of them. Identify the key aspects with the greatest agreement within the team to find your common ground. Your key values are the core aspects that most succinctly express what your business and your brand stand for. Now determine some key terms and accompanying statements, describing what this means to you. With regard to the concrete formulation of the key values, it is important that they are expressive and distinctive.



Effective key values are...

- **concise**

Concentrate on a few, but clear values in simple terms. They should be easy to understand and memorise. Make sure they are comprehensible and straightforward. To avoid room for interpretation, complement them with a few sentences, specifying what this means in practice.

- **unique**

Your key values should be as individual as your business itself. They should reflect what is special or different about you. Avoid generic or interchangeable terms. Instead focus on what makes your company truly extraordinary in order to stand out from other brands and companies.

- **positive**

Use positively associated terms to describe what your company is striving for, as this strengthens a sense of identification. Connectedness is created through similarities, not through demarcation. Your values should inspire and motivate action.

4 Implement internally

Once your key values have been determined, it is important to communicate them internally. Point out why these key values are important for you as a business and ensure that the meaning and purpose is understood. This will encourage employees to align their actions accordingly. Don't forget: It's not enough to talk about it, you also have to live your values. Managers and leaders should set an example by actively practising and integrating them into all processes in order to motivate the employees to do the same. In dialogue with your team, continuously address the values, check whether they are being implemented consistently and provide training if necessary.

harmonious alignment of all actions with the values is essential for a strong and authentic brand.

As already described, the full process of determining key values is very extensive and should be done in collaboration with the entire team. However, here is a short exercise to help you get a sense of how to determine your key values.

5 Communicate externally and practise consistently

To strengthen an authentic, credible and coherent brand perception, all your activities and touchpoints with the customer must be aligned with your key values. They must be transported continuously and consistently. All external communication, whether visual or written, whether in direct customer contact or as part of a big campaign, should be checked for consistency with the values. Your offers and products or services must also correspond to your values and deliver what you promise, so that they fulfil expectations. A consistent and



Gather the aspects from your brand identity that are most relevant from your perspective.

Now elaborate what they comprise and summarise these core elements in a few terms.

Complement these terms with illustrative yet clear statements.

**Example key values: Fictional brand Ajala Threads****Value Orientation**

Our business is based on a bigger mission. We stand for sustainability, fairness and empowerment. We are driven by a strong feeling of responsibility and live up to our own standards.

Authenticity

We build upon cultural heritage. We are transparent and credible in our business. We create individual fashion for genuine personalities and stay true to ourselves.

Connection

We connect ethics with aesthetics. We connect traditional crafting techniques with contemporary design and timeless aesthetics. We connect humans and nature and see ourselves as part of something bigger.

Appreciation

We cherish and preserve traditional craftsmanship. We work in harmony with our precious nature. We create durable, timeless clothing that will be loved for a long time. We show appreciation for ourselves and beyond.

Quality

We manufacture products in outstanding quality. We work with extraordinary women and talented artisans. We use selected premium materials and established techniques. We know our worth.

**Real-life example**

Another great example of a real-life business that clearly and consistently formulates, communicates and implements their values is Patagonia, a long-established supplier of outdoor clothing and equipment. Patagonia has a strong market presence beyond its niche and often serves as an example not only of a strong brand, but also of a (largely) sustainable company. Patagonia lives up to its values, determined as follows:

“Quality

Build the best product, provide the best service and constantly improve everything we do. The best product is useful, versatile, long-lasting, repairable and recyclable. Our ideal is to make products that give back to the Earth as much as they take.

Integrity

Examine our practices openly and honestly, learn from our mistakes and meet our commitments. We value integrity in both senses: that our actions match our words (we walk the talk), and that all of our work contributes to a functional whole (our sum is greater than our parts).

Environmentalism

Protect our home planet. We’re all part of nature, and every decision we make is in the context of the environmental crisis challenging humanity. We work

to reduce our impact, share solutions and embrace regenerative practices. We partner with grassroots organizations and frontline communities to restore lands, air and waters to a state of health; to arrest our addiction to fossil fuels; and to address the deep connections between environmental destruction and social justice.

Justice

Be just, equitable and antiracist as a company and in our community. We embrace the work necessary to create equity for historically marginalized people and reorder the priorities of an economic system that values short-term expansion over human well-being and thriving communities. We acknowledge painful histories, confront biases, change our policies and hold each other accountable. We aspire to be a company where people from all backgrounds, identities and experiences have the power to contribute and lead.

Not bound by convention

Do it our way. Our success – and much of the fun – lies in developing new ways to do things.”³

³Patagonia Inc. 2024

1.4 Unique Value Proposition (UVP)



The unique value proposition (UVP) describes the distinctive value that a company or product creates for a customer, setting it apart from the competition. As it contributes to differentiation in the market, it represents a key purchasing decision factor and therefore a crucial element in brand building.

The unique value proposition

- points out the characteristic benefits for customers, both on a rational (functional) but more importantly also on an emotional (psychosocial) level.
- does not focus on particular features of an offer but rather emphasises the overall value created through it.
- positions the product or service as the best solution for the needs of the target group in the market.
- gives customers a reason to buy the product and convinces them to choose this company over others.

- enables a strong differentiation from the competition in the market and strengthens customer loyalty.

How to define the UVP

The definition of your unique value proposition is based on your brand identity and the comparison with competitors in order to elaborate the differentiating aspects. Based on this, think about what is the unique value you are creating for your target group. To phrase your UVP statement, carry out the following steps.



1 Analyse your competitors

To identify the most unique aspects about the value or benefits you are creating for the customers, you need to know your competition. It is essential to do your research and carry out a competitive analysis. Research the following aspects.



What other businesses in the market are addressing the same needs?

How do they position themselves?

What are they offering to the customers?

What is the benefit they are creating for the customers?

How are they satisfying the customers' needs?

What wishes or problems remain unmet?

2 Elaborate your uniqueness

Compare the results of your competitive analysis with the value you are creating for the customers to identify the differentiating aspects. Sort out the benefits your competitors are performing well at, as these don't work as a distinctive feature for your business. Instead, think about aspects in your business and offers that you are doing differently, as these are likely to represent your uniqueness. Ask yourself the following questions.



What is special about your business and the benefits you are offering?

What are you doing better than your competitors?

What are issues with competitive offers that you can provide a solution for?

What unmet problems or wishes are you addressing?

What gaps in customers' needs can you fill in the market?

How can your positioning on the market differentiate from your competitors?

When defining a unique value proposition, common mistakes are that it is either too generic and could apply to any business in the sector – or instead is too complicated and unclear to understand. Another typical problem is also that it does not reflect the actual needs of the target group. To avoid these mistakes, and formulate an effective UVP statement, remember the following requirements.



An effective UVP is...

- **distinctive**

The UVP should be specific and convey the individuality behind your business. It is supposed to highlight what makes you stand out from the competitors.

- **simple**

The UVP should be straightforward and comprehensible. Focus on the most important aspects and formulate a statement that clearly conveys the essential message.

- **relevant**

The UVP should describe the special benefit your customers get only from your offer. To engage your target group, point out what is actually of relevance for them.



Example UVP: Fictional brand Ajala Threads

We make more than clothing - we create human connection. Stay true to yourself, live up to your values in style, and be part of something bigger by wearing Ajala Threads!

Buying our unique, handcrafted clothing with a personal story behind it, you can shop with a good conscience and make a positive contribution without compromising on the authentic expression of your individual personality.



Unique Value Proposition in B2B

As a producer working mainly in the B2B-business, you might think this step is not relevant for you, but it is indeed: It is also important to stand out from the competition in the B2B sector. Your (potential) clients want to find the best business partner so that all processes run as smoothly as possible and they can achieve the best possible performance. They are therefore interested in how you can contribute to this and why they should choose you as a producer. Put simply, they are also interested in the value you can deliver to their company.

The process for defining the UVP is pretty much the same, but in the

individual steps you must always refer to the B2B market. Who are your competitors when it comes to potential clients, what do they do better than your business and what gaps can you fill? Does the added value you offer lie, for example, in more favourable prices, higher quality or more flexible processes? Once again, don't forget how important it is to be as specific as possible!

For more information on B2B Communications, also check out the Market Access Toolkit. If you do both B2B and B2C, it is recommended to develop specific communications including a customised UVP. Even if a strong UVP for B2C also proves to your business customers that you are good at understanding your target group and taking them into account in product development and marketing, business customers are looking out for other benefits than end customers. So we recommend tailoring your offer and communications to the particular business channel and the corresponding target group for the biggest success.

1.5 Visual Identity

The external appearance is also an important part of brand building as it represents the internal dimensions of the brand identity such as characteristics, benefits and immaterial attributes to the outside. All tangible and sensually perceptible impressions influence the brand image perceived by consumers and thus are relevant elements to be curated and controlled carefully. The basis for this lies in the development of a visual identity.



The visual identity (VI) describes all visual elements and the interplay of these in a logo and a general aesthetic applied along all visible touchpoints for the purpose of representing, differentiating and identifying a brand.

In short, brand identity is a holistic description of who a brand is on the inside and everything that makes up the brand, whereas the visual identity as part of it consistently expresses this on the outside. Visual images are a powerful communication tool, since they speak on

a subconscious, emotional level. Thus, creating a visual identity is about using the visible elements of your brand in the right way to shape its perception and leave an emotional impression.

A coherent visual identity

- ensures that the brand is perceived as authentic and true to its values
- makes a brand easily recognisable
- helps to build trust and loyalty among customers
- increases the impact of marketing measures
- and contributes to long-term success.

This is why it is also recommended for long-standing companies to regularly review the visual identity and revise the alignment with the brand identity and the target group.

1

Find inspiration

Before you start with the actual design of your visual identity, we recommend finding out what appeals to you and in which direction you want to go in the first step. For this process, to gather inspiration, it makes sense to start directly with yourself and your brand: What are the elements influencing your business? What inspires you in your product development? What are special characteristics of your brand identity and your products? Then think about how these aspects can be abstracted and translated into visual elements.

To get started, it can be helpful to create a mood board as a kind of collection of visual references to gather ideas and stay focused. You can either take inspiration from other brands' visual identities and logos, or from any other source that stimulates you creatively. You can collect specific elements such as colours, fonts or symbols or gather more abstract inspirational material such as images or photos. Anything that inspires you and represents elements of your brand identity in your eyes can be included in the collection of ideas. Of course, keep in mind that this should only inspire your creative work and not replace it: Never copy any images or graphics one-to-one. Respect the work and intellectual property of other creatives.

How to create a visual identity

The visual identity consists of several elements that together form a harmonious appearance. It is important to note that the visual identity is not just about the design of the logo, but generally about defining a consistent look applicable to the various media and communication touchpoints.

In the following, we take a practical approach and provide suggestions, examples and tasks to help you develop your own visual identity step by step. The first steps have already been taken. We have conducted research on our target market and established our brand identity and positioning. We have bought all the ingredients for the cake, so to speak. Now it's a matter of conveying this to the outside world by taking the results from our brand identity development and translating it into the visual identity – we will finish baking the cake. The key elements of the visual identity are colours, typeface and shapes, the latter being particularly relevant for the development of a logo.

Of course, the following chapter is no substitute for professional visual brand development, but it does provide a helpful guide to getting things started as a small business.

To boost creativity and gather more ideas, you can also work with a team of people including staff in the creative roles (such as design and marketing) throughout the whole process.

2 Define the colours

When designing a visual identity, colours represent an important element. Colour is used to identify a brand based on very specific shades and evoke emotional reactions from the viewer. This is due to the fact that people have psychological associations with colours, which are also culturally determined. Thus the strategic use of colour can influence the perception of your brand.

To define a colour palette, start with choosing three colours: One main colour, which is perceived as a colour accent and as a personality feature of the brand, and two secondary colours as a background and for contrast. These can come in all different shades. While black and white are technically the absence of colour, in this context, we consider them as colours, too. We recommend experimenting and playing around with different colour combinations to see what works best for your identity. It is important that the colour combination looks harmonious and has a good contrast, but also that the brand is well represented and stands out from the competition.

As mentioned before, the perception of colour and the psychological reactions and emotions tied to it, are also dependent on cultural conditions. The following image provides an overview of the various colour meanings in different cultures.

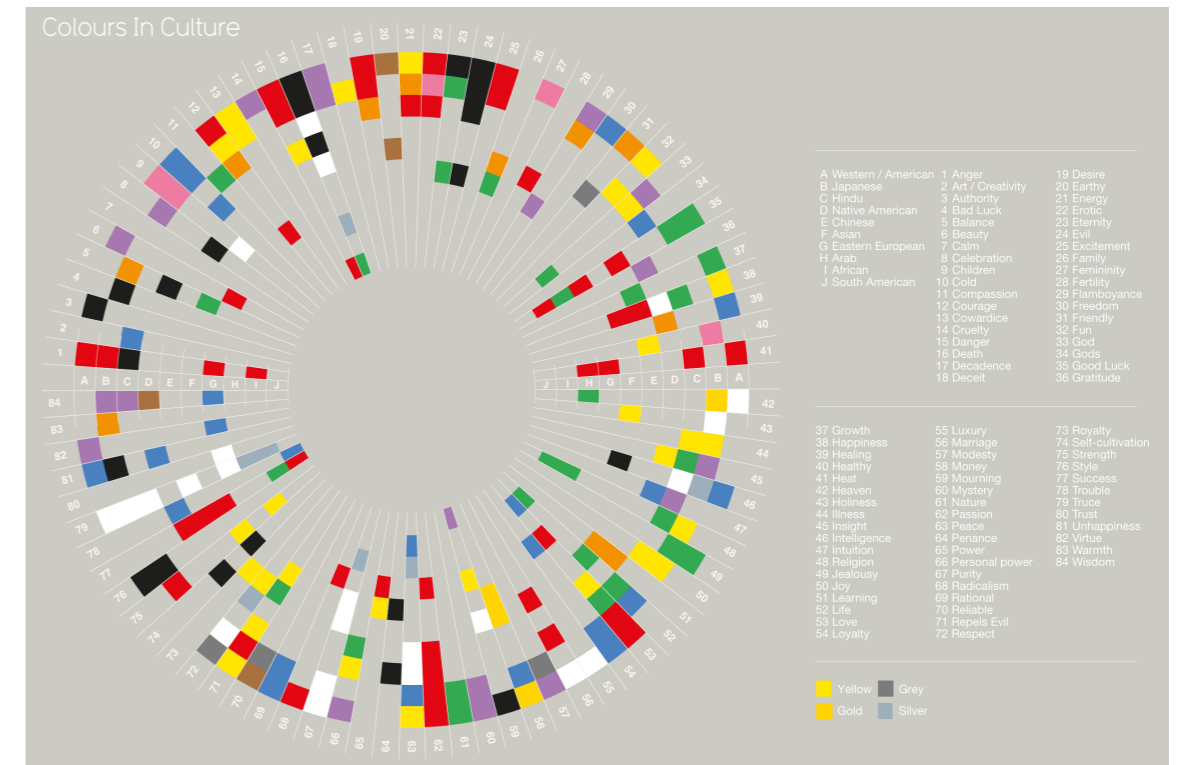
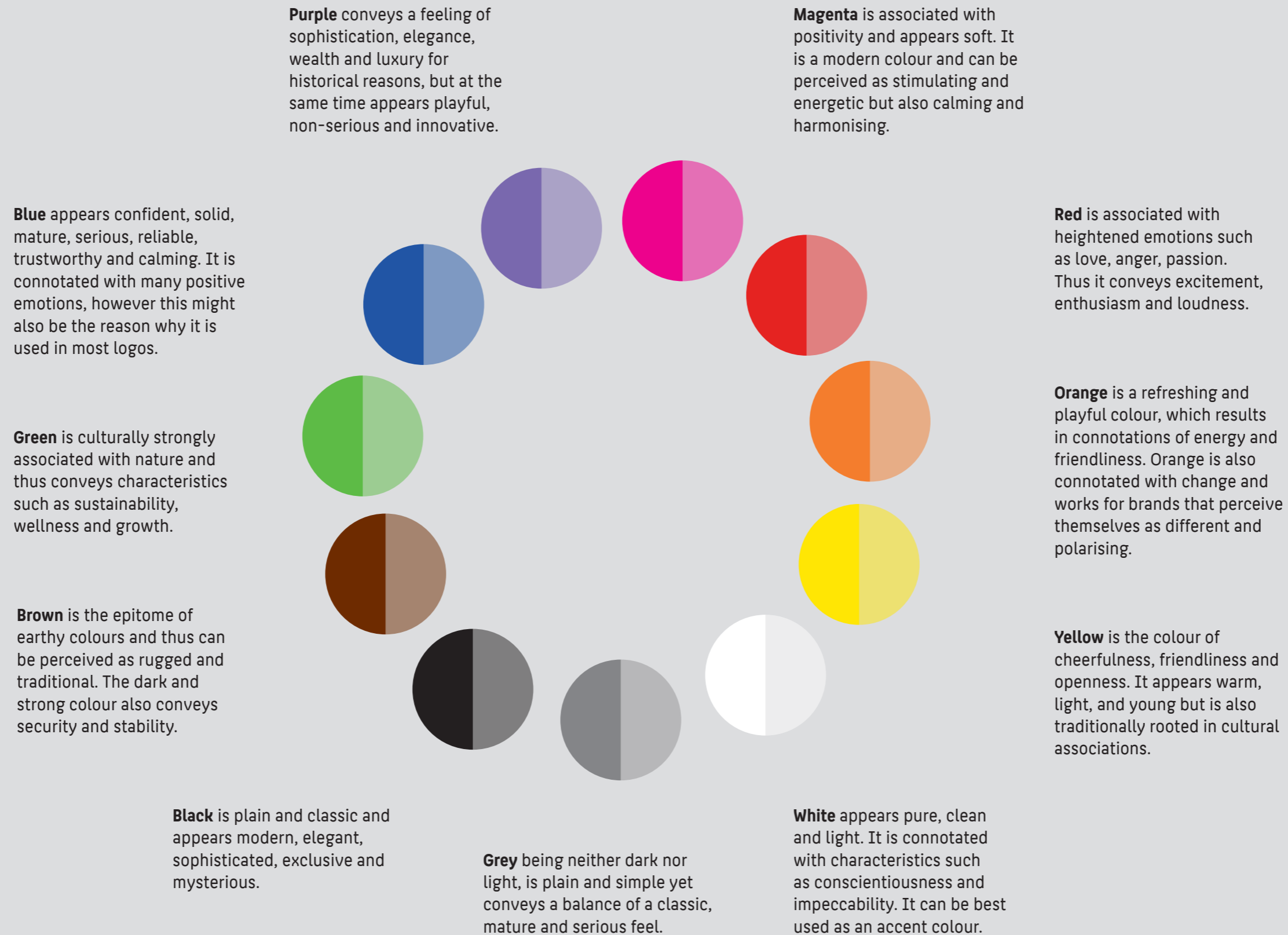


Illustration: "Colours in Cultures"⁴

In the following find more detailed information on which feelings and characteristics might commonly be associated with colours in Northern-American and Western-European cultures. However, please note that this interpretation is not factually and universally established, but instead subject to individual perception, interpretation and feelings, which in turn depend on cultural and personal influences.

⁴Information is Beautiful 2024



3

Define the typeface

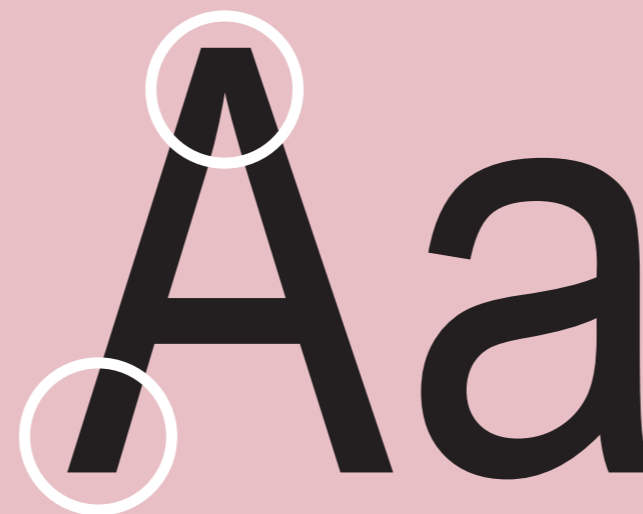
Typeface refers to the font you use in your visual identity and branding materials. It is an important part of a brand identity and can strongly influence the impact of the brand, even acting completely as a unique selling point. Keep in mind to not mix more than two typefaces at the same time and pay attention to a good contrast. There are many different kinds and each style can have a different effect on the viewer, however there are four major types:

**Serif typefaces**

Serif typefaces are characterised by little anchors or feet at the end of each line. This classic type is a good fit if you want to create a trustworthy or traditional appearance, but can also have a conservative effect in your logo design. They are intended to give the eye more support and thus improve legibility, they are mainly used for body text in printed graphics.

Sansserif typefaces

Sansserif typefaces thus describe letters with straight edges and clear lines. They are a suitable choice if you want your brand to appear modern, strong and stable. They are mainly used for body text in web design, but are as well the ideal choice for headlines and large texts on posters.

**Cursive typefaces**

Cursive typefaces imitate handwriting and thus can convey a luxurious, individual and feminine character. They make the design appear dynamic and are mainly used as headlines.

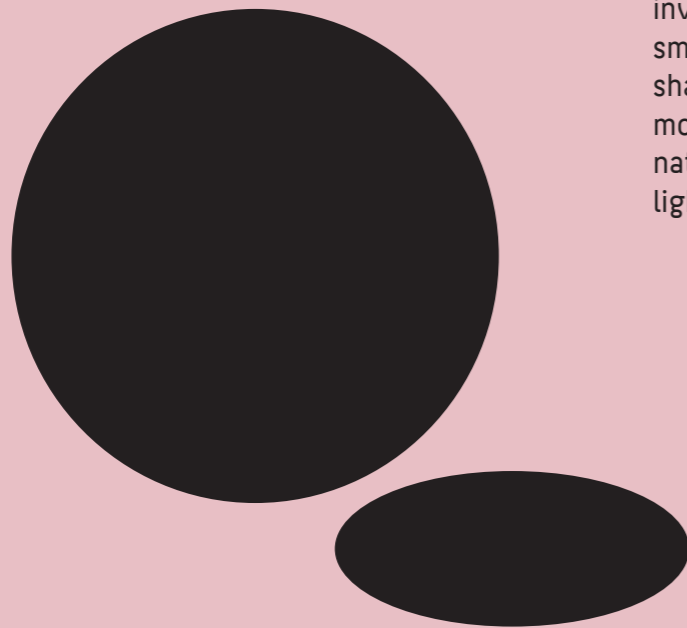
**Display typefaces**

Display typefaces come with special artistic elements such as unusual letter shapes, outlines or shadows and due to this create a unique and remarkable impression. It is recommended to give them enough space and let them stand on their own in a large font size.

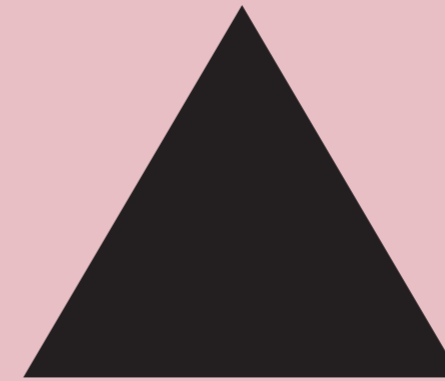
4

Define the shape

When it comes to shapes, you should consider that they are perceived differently and evoke different emotions in people. This subtle element can create various effects and thus influence the customer's impression. Knowing this, be mindful of how you use them for the creation of your visual identity such as your logo. Based on the personality traits of your brand, you can define your shapes and create a first important basis for your logo, shape and image style or even the development of icons.

**Round shapes**

Round shapes like circles, ovals and ellipses can create a feeling of unity, community and love, as well as connotations of femininity and comfort. In general, they appear soft, friendly and inviting. Shapes, which are rounded and smooth but not quite a closed circular shape convey the same feelings but seem more organic, as they can be found in nature. They appear more flowing, free light and delicate.

**Angular and pointed shapes**

Angular and pointed shapes like squares, rectangles and triangles on the other hand are logically more abrupt and linear, this can create connotations of precision, reliability and power or coolness. They often represent technology or elegance. Shapes with sharp and straight edges are associated with strength, stability and trustworthiness, but can also evoke a rather impersonal feeling.

Composite lines

Composite lines can also form shapes. The effect depends on the direction: Vertical lines create a feeling of establishment, superiority, and advancement. Horizontal lines in contrast represent speed and movement but also calmness since they appear grounding.





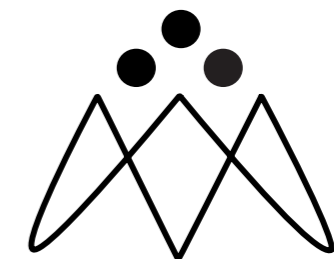
Which shapes could represent your brand?
Think about your brand identity and the values you defined before. Note down the most unique points about your brand and your offer and use it as inspiration.

Lined writing area for notes.



Example VI shape: Fictional brand Ajala Threads

Ajala Threads is a female-led artisan business that has positioned itself on the market primarily with its values of responsibility, empowerment, appreciation and connection. The latter in particular is at the centre of its actions and is even reflected in the name of the brand under the term 'threads', which can also be associated with connection. Ajala Threads also uses this characteristic in its logo and in its choice of shapes. In this context, round and organic shapes are the most suitable for the label in terms of its brand identity, as they convey a sense of close unity and community and appear soft and friendly, which emphasises the brand's characteristics.



5 Implement the visual identity

We have now defined the basic elements for our visual identity in line with our brand identity and developed some sort of construction kit for the implementation along all visual communication measures and brand touch points.

Logo

The most important step now is the creation of a striking brand logo through a harmonious combination of the various visual elements (colours, fonts, shapes). It is also very common to add certain symbols or illustrations to the logo. Think about what you want to express and get creative. How can the most important aspects about your business be represented visually in a unique but clear way? Start experimenting and find a way that helps you to be inspired and creative. Have a look at your mood board, play around with your visual elements and work practically, e.g. by drawing, sketching, crafting - whatever works for you. Just try out a few versions and repeat to find your perfect result.

However, when it comes to the final logo design, also keep in mind that its most important features are simplicity, scalability and memorability. The simpler and the more abstract a logo is, the better it can be applied to various sizes and

formats and thus be implemented along the various communication measures and brand touchpoints.

Visual library

As part of your visual identity, you should also create other visual elements for all these touchpoints such as packaging and labels, the website or social media content. So, the next step is to create a visual library of supporting graphics, design assets, icons and images. All the visual elements can now be combined and applied as desired. This is because the development of central visual elements that can be found repetitively and are used consistently, ensures a strong brand presence.

Example VI Logo: Fictional brand Ajala Threads

Ajala Threads has its roots in the Indian region of Bastar in Chhattisgarh, which is known for its traditional Indian wall paintings. As the brand often incorporates these artworks into the style of its collections, it has also taken inspiration from the traditional craft for its logo design, adopting the simple geometric representation of the elements to create a regional reference to its cultural heritage. With regard to the brand's name and focus on fashion products, it plays with the visual representation of a thread, which can be found as an abstract form in the logo. The depicted thread is intended as a metaphor for the connection between ethics and aesthetics, between traditional craft techniques and contemporary design, between people and nature and between craftswomen and consumers. The logo shows three people who are connected by their values. Moreover the logo can also be interpreted

as a stylisation of a sunrise above the mountains, symbolising landscapes, natural cycles and environmental sustainability.

Overall, the visual identity of Ajala Threads represents the key values of the brand, which include connection and their orientation towards a bigger mission based on sustainability and empowerment. It also stands for the value of authenticity by picking up on the brand's cultural background through the choice of colours and shapes and creating a unique and individual logo design. The detail-loving and professional logo design underlines Ajala Threads' values of appreciation for crafts, humans and nature and a high standard of quality in everything they do.





When creating a visual identity, remember these important aspects:

Unleash your creativity

The visual identity significantly influences the perception of your brand and, if done right, expresses your individual brand identity on an external level. It bears the potential to enhance the recognisability, uniqueness and authenticity of your brand. Make sure to utilise this potential and develop a creative and distinctive visual identity that truly conveys what you are all about. Try to find expressive ways to reflect your characteristics to effectively strengthen your brand.

Stay consistent

While creativity is desirable, make sure you don't get lost on the way. Remember that the visual representation should be consistent with the brand identity. Your appearance should match who you are as a brand on the inside, and represent your character in an authentic and coherent way. It is equally important to implement your visual identity consistently among all touchpoints with your customers, be it digital or physical, be it on a small or a large scale. Wherever customers come into contact with your brand, their perception and image should reinforce your brand identity.

Be aware of cultural sensitivity

As already outlined in a few paragraphs, cultural sensitivity plays an important role in the design of a visual identity. This means dealing carefully and respectfully with visual, symbolic and linguistic elements that can be perceived and interpreted differently in different cultures. An example would be colours as described before, but also symbols. Depending on your target markets, you should therefore research different meanings and potential significance in advance to ensure that your brand is perceived as respectful and appealing. Avoid stereotypes and appropriating elements with a strong cultural, spiritual or religious significance.

We know that time and money are often tight in small businesses. To help you put things into practice even with fewer resources available, we've put together some useful tools and free resources that can help you develop your visual identity – none of them requiring a big budget or a communications design expert on your team.



Practical tools

To gather **inspiration**, you can use visual search engines for the collection of images such as [Pinterest](#) and social media, too. You can also ask [ChatGPT](#) to gather ideas, for example on how to represent certain aspects of your brand identity visually. However, keep in mind not to put the result into practice one-to-one as the suggestions are often not particularly original. The tool can stimulate your creativity, not replace it.

To create a **colour** scheme, check the online tools [Coolors](#) and [Mycolor.space](#) for creating and collecting matching colour palettes. [Khroma](#) is a similar tool that generates colour palettes based on personalised algorithms and allows you to structure them.

You can find a huge selection of **typefaces**, partly available for (free) download via [Google Fonts](#), [Fontspace](#) or [Dafont](#).

To create a **logo and other visuals** you can use [Vista Create](#), a free graphic design tool with thousands of free templates to choose from and customise or [Canva](#), another free online graphic design tool for creating visual content (find more information on this in chapter 3).

You can get access to **photos and images** for communication purposes (for free or at a small price) via [getty images](#), [Unsplash](#) or [Pixabay](#).

And if you decide to hire an **expert** anyway, you can request offers from freelancers via networks such as [Upwork](#), [Fiverr](#) or [Behance](#).

1.6 Rebranding

So, this is how brand building works in theory as an initial step in the strategic process of founding a business. In reality, many of you are probably part of an established business that may or may not have gone through this process before. Putting things into practice, some follow the ideal step-by-step guide for business foundation, while others don't stick to a strict plan and concentrate on what the everyday business requires. The brand building in particular might have also been carried out in a strategic process or just happened on-the-job instead. Either way, it is essential to review, reevaluate and revise your brand identity regularly.



Rebranding is the process by which a company or organisation changes or adapts its brand identity and visual identity (in part or in full) in order to create a new perception among target groups.

Rebranding plays a crucial role, given today's dynamic markets, competitive environment and changing consumer preferences, especially with regard to sustainability and fashion.

Rebranding helps to

- reflect on your own business
- align with current market trends
- drive further development
- recognise discrepancies between self-image and external perception
- and make the necessary adjustments to ensure an effective approach to the target group and a strong brand presence on the market.

On the other hand, rebranding can also be a costly and time-consuming process that carries risks such as dilution of brand identity and recognition value which might result in the loss of customers in the worst case, if not well thought through. Keep in mind that rebranding does not always mean you have to make substantial changes, however it means you should take time to review and reflect in the first place.

How to carry out rebranding

The rebranding process works pretty much the same way as the branding process described before, but in this case you are not only looking at *what you strive for*, but also focus on *what actually is*.



1 Reflect your self-image

First, you have to do an internal analysis to critically examine if what your brand identity is based on is actually what you put into practice too. Evaluate whether your business profile is still the same as when you set up or last updated your brand identity.



Are you still focusing on the same aspects of your business activities?

Are you still offering the same products and services?

Have your key characteristics or key values changed?

Are what you do and how you see yourself as a brand actually aligned?

2 Review the target group

Check whether your target group is actually who you think they are, or if you need to adapt your assumptions and adjust your brand presence accordingly.



How do you think your target group is characterised?

Who are your actual customers and what characterises them?

Do your customers align with the image you had of them?

Are your activities targeted to the right group?

3 Examine the competitive environment

Understand whether the competitive environment has changed. As we already know, brand building always happens in the context of the market and the competition has to be considered in the process.



How has the market situation evolved since your market entry or last review?

Have your competitors changed?

Who has entered the market and who has left?

What do these developments mean for your company?

4 Compare your assumptions with reality

Now compare your assumptions with the actual reality. You should take into consideration all relevant stakeholders involved with the brand, mainly your customers. To put this into practice, you can conduct surveys to capture their perspectives. Gather and structure all insights and understand where your assumptions, objectives and actual appearance of your brand differ.



How is your actual appearance and position in the market?

How does your self-image (identity) differ from the perception of consumers (image)?

What are the main differences between your assumptions and the actual reality?

How can these gaps potentially be filled?

5 Implement the rebranding process

Depending on the extent of the discrepancies between assumptions and reality, you can either slightly adapt parts of your communication or visual representation – or you go into a full rebranding process, completely revising your brand identity including the key values, the UVP, visual identity, and communication strategy.

Rebranding is always a critical process that requires sensitivity, as a balance must be struck between market adaptation and recognisability and the closest possible match between self-image and external perception must be achieved.

There are numerous analyses of positive and negative examples for rebranding processes from other brands. While we do not wish to present or promote any of them here, we encourage you to research them for your reference. In this brochure, we decided to summarise the quintessence of these analyses in 10 important rules for rebranding – for you to take concrete guidelines away from it.



The Ten Dos and Don'ts of Rebranding

Dos

Do it for a reason:

Rebranding is not something you do just because you fancy a change, but because you are pursuing the goal of improving brand performance by filling gaps between the internal and external brand perception.

Build on facts, not feelings:

In line with the above aspect, a strategy-driven rebranding process should always be based on extensive research, data analysis and a concrete plan. You need to know clearly where you are starting from and where you want to go.

Stay true to yourself:

While you should reflect on your business, your identity and your performance, remember to stay true to what is at your core and maintain an authentic basis, so that your customers will recognise your brand.

Get a fresh perspective:

During the process, make sure you don't get lost. It is always helpful to get a fresh perspective every now and then, by gaining distance, getting other opinions and iterating the process.

Implement it completely:

We've mentioned it a few times before, but we never tire of reminding you that a consistent brand presence is key. This means that also the rebranding should be implemented consequently and simultaneously along all touchpoints.

Don'ts

Try to be something you're not:

Even if you intend to achieve further development and to address your target group as well as possible, don't forget that you should only promise what you can deliver and focus on what you're good at.

Focus too much on short-term trends:

Regular evaluation of the brand is essential in dynamic markets, but this does not mean rebranding should happen all the time. A strong brand is solid, authentic and appealing in the long term.

Overdo it with the changes:

A rebranding should bring transformation and a fresh perspective. But even if there is a need for a better fit between internal and external image, your loyal customers should be able to recognise your brand.

Forget to communicate your rebranding:

You are trying to better address your target group. To fulfil this goal, announce your rebranding and the changes made with corresponding communication measures to get your customers on board.

Skip measuring the impact:

If you are aiming for a specific goal, you should always (be able to) check whether you have achieved it. Measure and analyse the results of the rebranding in order to react if necessary and to learn for the future.

2. Brand communication

2.1 Communication strategy



A communication strategy is a plan for how you will communicate with your target audience and deliver your messages through external measures.

The communication strategy is a concept for well thought-out, targeted and holistic corporate communication to convey the brand identity and achieve specific goals. It serves as a basic orientation for all communication measures. An effective communication strategy intends to convey your messages in a clear and targeted manner and to use the communication channels and means appropriately.

How to develop a communication strategy



Essential steps for developing a communication strategy


There are eight essential steps for you to follow, when developing and applying a communication strategy.

1. Set communication goals
2. Analyse target group
3. Determine communication style
4. Develop key messages
5. Create targeted content
6. Choose communication channels
7. Implement communication measures
8. Monitor and evaluate performance

Along all steps and decisions, the communication elements should be aligned with the brand identity, the core values and the unique value proposition. They should also be coordinated with each other in order to achieve the greatest possible success.

1 Set communication goals

The first thing you need to do is define your communication goals. What do you want to achieve by developing and implementing a targeted communication strategy? Think about your overarching objectives as a business. But then, think further: Consider which concrete objectives an effective strategy would achieve. When defining your goals, you should use the SMART method as a guide. The goals should be formulated specific (S), measurable (M), achievable (A), relevant (R) and time-bound (T). Clear objectives are the key to an effective communication strategy.

 **Example: Fictional brand Ajala Threads**

It is the overarching objective for the business to promote sales and establish customer loyalty in the German market. Communication measures can help achieve this objective by increasing brand awareness and attracting interest. So let's look at how to transfer this into concrete goals.

*“Through our communication we want to attract and retain new customers” is not a SMART goal, which makes it very difficult to work towards this in a targeted manner.
A SMART goal would be: “In the next 6 months, we want to acquire 10% new customers and thus achieve an increase in sales of at least 2%. At least 50% of these new customers will become regular customers within the next year. We will achieve this goal through a targeted communication strategy and appealing marketing of our products: We will increase the reach of our online marketing measures by 100% and increase the number of visitors to our site by 50%. Suitable communication measures will lead to new customers making at least a second purchase within 6 months.”*



What is the overarching objective you want to achieve as a business?

How can your communication measures contribute to this objective?

Formulate this as a specific and measurable goal with a concrete timeframe.

Check if this goal is relevant for your overarching objective and actually achievable, rephrase if necessary.

2 Analyse target group

Knowing which goals you want to achieve, you can also derive the target group you are aiming for. To address and reach them effectively, you need to understand them. Above all, you need to empathise with their problems, wishes and needs. If you know what they are looking for, you can pick them up right there. For the actual implementation, you should also know which communication channels, measures and content you can use to address them. To learn how to identify and analyse relevant target groups, head over to the Market Access toolkit.



When you focus your energy on targeting a narrower audience, your message can be more customised. Customised messages are the ones that get the real engagement, and when that happens, there is a higher chance they will trust you to understand their needs. They will know you are a good fit for them.⁵

Example: Fictional brand Ajala Threads

Ajala Thread knows its target group by now, as the clear analysis of this was already of central importance for the development of the brand identity. Considering the overarching objectives set in the first step however, the brand mainly focuses on a communication strategy and measures that effectively catch new customers. This is addressed in more detail in step 7 on the implementation.

⁵[Trish Saemann, Founder of True North \(Sustainable Outerwear\) as cited in Hubspot 2023](#)



Who is my communication strategy targeted at?

How is this target group characterised?

What is this target group looking for and which needs can be addressed?

How can I encourage interaction in order to achieve my communication goal?

Please note: For a comprehensive and relevant analysis, please head over to the Market Access Toolkit.

3 Determine communication style

Part of the strategic development of a communication concept is determining a communication style that is applied consistently and consequently. This includes the general tone of voice and linguistic style, as well as the visual aesthetics and imagery. It is important that the communication style is aligned with your (visual) brand identity in order to achieve a coherent perception. For a successful brand presence, it is essential that the brand image among customers matches your positioning and your self-image.

Of course, as already explained, the communication strategy should also be tailored to the target group, but ideally this is already achieved by aligning it with the brand identity. Small adjustments are possible, but you should ensure that your communication does not contradict or dilute your brand identity and values, which instead should be reflected in your communication style.

Example: Fictional brand Ajala Threads

Ajala Threads builds its business on authenticity, connection and appreciation. Accordingly, the communication style is approachable and personal. This is achieved by using easily accessible, everyday language and a positive, engaging tone. To create a sense of community, we-phrases are used intentionally and consistently in the communication. Ajala Threads also

emphasises transparency in business, so in communication the focus lies on clear messages and claims.

In terms of content, this is also reflected in background information on the brand’s general approach, the design and production processes and stories about the people behind the products, including special behind-the-scenes insights from everyday business.

This is complemented by the imagery used, which includes unposed pictures of the artisans and the people behind the business to underline the authentic and genuine brand identity. For displaying products and the manufacturing process however, Ajala Threads uses professional photographs to convey its skilled expertise and high-quality orientation.

Generally, as the brand pursues a creative and individual design approach, the selection of imagery is equally versatile and unconventional. Next to product images and detail shots from materials and crafting processes, the range includes motifs from landscape and local life underlining the brands’ appreciation of nature and cultural heritage. Nevertheless, the colour tones of the imagery stay in line with the colour palette established in the visual identity, focusing on warm and earthy shades that strengthen a harmonious perception and the brand identity.



What are the key aspects of the brand identity and the key values?

How can this be expressed in communications through language?

How can this be expressed in communications on a visual level?

How can this be expressed in communications in terms of general content style?

4 Develop key messages

Think about the key elements of your brand identity and your key values. All these aspects should continuously and consistently be reflected in your key messages. Consider the unique value proposition (UVP) you determined before and continue from there. Think about how you can transport this through your content. Also consider what is relevant for your target group. Highlight the aspects that make your brand and products special and convince customers to make a purchase. Always highlight the distinctive value you are creating for your target group. Communicate these key messages consistently along all communication channels and measures such as your website, social media profiles, (online) shops, product tags and packaging and other information and advertising material.

Example: Fictional brand Ajala Threads

As sustainability and empowerment are the core of Ajala Threads, the brand highlights these values and how they are embedded in their business regularly as part of their key messages. In addition to their consideration of environmental protection and fairness, Ajala Threads prioritises excellent manufacturing quality, outstanding craftsmanship and the longevity of products, knowing that these are the most important buying factors for their target group. Considering that the customers focus on premium products and cherish a high quality regarding the finish, fit and cut, and materials of garments,

these features are emphasised as key messages in the communication of Ajala Threads.

When selling products in the sustainability niche market, ecological and social standards do not represent a unique value but rather a minimum requirement of the niche target group, so these aspects are not the decisive reasons for buying a product. This is considered in the brand’s communication. The key messages underline the comfortable fit and premium materials, the high quality and the longevity of the products instead, as these represent the most important buying factors and bear the potential to differentiate Ajala Threads from competitors in the sustainable fashion market. One of the main distinctive features of the brand is also its cultural heritage and the integration of traditional artisanal techniques with a contemporary design approach.

Accordingly, instead of only promoting “sustainable and fair fashion made by women”, considering the aspects mentioned before, Ajala Threads highlights in their claims that they offer long-lasting clothing with sophisticated, unique designs based on a modern interpretation of cultural heritage, made of premium materials in outstanding quality and handcrafted in fair production by skilled female artisans.



What is at the core of your brand?

What is your Unique Value Proposition?

What are the main purchasing decision factors for your target group?

What is convincing them to choose your brand and products rather than the competition?

5 Create targeted content

When creating content, start with your key messages determined before and continue from there. How can you transfer them into written and visual content? To gather ideas, you can get inspired by other companies, content creators or magazines. Try to find out which type of content is trending on social media (such as Instagram or Pinterest) at the moment. Also pick up general trends in society, and try to integrate general trends in society. Think of specific events or dates that could be picked up and incorporated in your content. Consider what other topics your target group is interested in and try to integrate them in line with your brand content. All this can help you get inspiration for both written and visual content. But don't forget to stay true to yourself and only create content that is aligned with your brand identity and your key values.

“At the moment we are making new videos about the fibre and how it works, something that I think will help a lot to have our clients be more conscious of having products recycled. We also give our clients some videos of how the product was made, so that they could share with their final clients in their stores. They will be able to see who made the product.”⁶

“We have a really unique opportunity, because of how we're set up: To be able to tell our story and share behind the scenes information, that a lot of brands can't. So we can connect you directly to the women, who are making your products through pictures and stories and videos.”⁷

^{6,7}Own research:
Interview with
Fair Trade artisan
producer

Example: Fictional brand Ajala Threads

Considering their focus on handcrafted premium products, Ajala Threads creates content that shows detailed steps of the manufacturing process, the crafting techniques and the materials. As the target group is very quality-orientated, photos include close-ups from the fabrics with additional information on the particular features that make them special. In line with its approach of appreciation and connection the brand creates content on the humans behind the business, such as the artisans or designers and the farmers supplying the materials, as well as the customers cherishing their products.

Ajala Threads picks up on general societal trends such as the increased interest in sustainability and feminism and shares information on these topics with regard to the fashion industry centering around their fairness and empowerment approach. Considering the target group's interest in nature, culture, outdoors and travelling, they share imagery and content on Indian landscape and local traditions, which also strengthens their brand identity based on making business in harmony with the environment and cultural heritage.

Recently, Ajala Threads implemented posting more video material in addition to photos, as short clips are trending on Social Media and gaining more awareness. The brand shares interviews with the makers and recordings of the manufacturing process, as well as styling videos of their garments. Nevertheless, the communication rarely and selectively picks up on trends, only if they are really relevant to the target group and also fit in with the business positioning, self-image and communication style of Ajala Threads to maintain its authenticity as a central feature of their brand identity.



What are particular features of your brand or your products?

What information are your customers usually asking for?

What topics is your target group generally interested in?

What are current trends or relevant topics in society, fashion or communication?

Gather creative ideas how all of this can be transferred into communication content.



Choose communication channels

To ensure that you reach the desired target group, it is of course important that you spread your messages at all touchpoints they come into contact with. Research the communication channels and (social) media they are using. Understand where they find information and inspiration for buying decisions. This could be both online (e.g. social media, blogs) or offline (e.g. magazines, TV). Specify as precisely as possible down to particular channels or resources. Then focus on these communication channels and make sure to align your messages appropriately.



Example: Fictional brand Ajala Threads

Ajala Threads' target group is using a lot of online communication channels. They are active on social media and using Instagram in particular. They also get information on sustainability topics, conscious consumption and fair fashion online via dedicated sustainability shops or blogs, online news channels and magazines, as well as related social media channels with similar topics. They don't look for shopping inspiration on social media though, but rather get inspiration when already browsing particular stores or online shops. Ajala therefore focuses on online marketing but positions its messages clearly and coherently along all these touchpoints and all their channels (website, Instagram account, in-store) to steer consumers to their shop.



Which (social) media does the target group consume?

Which channels or resources in particular are they using?

Where are they gathering information and inspiration?

7

Implement communication measures

Now that you've taken all strategic decisions and set a clear plan, of course it is time to put this into practice and implement the communication measures developed. This can include advertisements, social media marketing, newsletters and many more. As long as you narrow this down to your target group and align with your brand identity, you can get creative.



Example: Fictional brand Ajala Threads

Ajala Threads mainly focuses on online communication: Among other measures, the brand runs an Instagram account and a newsletter to generate awareness, encourage interaction, create a community, and promote customer loyalty.

Ajala Threads places social media advertisements to reach new consumers who don't follow their channels yet. These ads are a useful tool as they can be targeted specifically to a particular group defined by demographic and psychographic characteristics based on data about their social media usage behaviour. In line with what the target group values, the images and claims used in the ads highlight the quality orientation, sustainability approach as well the story behind the products. The ads also highlight affordable entry-level products and include an initial discount to steer new customers to their online shop and incentivise purchases.

In addition Ajala Threads introduced a newsletter to engage with existing customers and build long-term customer relationships in line with the goal to raise the share of regular buyers. Through targeted newsletters, special offers and discounts for the customers, they are encouraged to purchase repeatedly.



Now develop concrete measures to be implemented and describe them in detail.

Handwriting practice area with horizontal lines.

8 Monitor and evaluate performance

Finally, the regular review of the communication strategy is the last but equally important step in the process to see if the approach established actually helps you achieve your overall goals. Based on the specific and measurable objectives set in the first step, analyse your performance to see if adaptations of the communication strategy are needed. Have the communication measures implemented contributed to the achievement of these objectives? It is important to continuously monitor the results of your communication activities and adapt the community strategy, if necessary.

Example: Fictional brand Ajala Threads

Based on the objective set in the first step, the company checks their performance weekly and makes necessary adjustments after a full analysis on a monthly basis.

As part of this, first the number of people who see the advertisement and click it are compared to understand if the ad is appealing and interesting to the recipients. In the next step the number of visitors on the social media accounts and the website are analysed to see how many people actually take the step to check the brand’s website after initial interest was aroused on social media. Then, the number of orders from new customers and the sales value will be tracked consistently to see whether the brand is on the right track.

If the performance is not in line with the target, new ads will be developed. After six months, the total results will be analysed and discussed in order to draw conclusions for the development of the next campaign. After a year, it will be evaluated how many of the new customers have bought from Ajala Threads again to learn lessons for the long term.



Are you reaching your SMART objectives set in the beginning?

How are the various measures performing?

Which channels and content is performing best?

What can be learned from this?

2.2

Marketing keywords

To help promote your products online, both on the website and on social media, it is relevant to use the right marketing keywords. Keywords are an essential part of online communication and marketing, as they help to increase the visibility and target the right audience.



A keyword is a term that is typically used in search engines (such as Google, Bing or Yahoo) in order to search for specific information, content or products on the internet and find relevant results.

Suitable product names and descriptions making use of these keywords help your target group to find the desired products more easily when specifically searching for it. Thus, the more relevant keywords you are using, the higher the chances are for your website or profile to come up. This helps with raising brand awareness and traffic on your communication and sales channels.

Optimising the use of keywords is part of so called Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), which describes the practice of improving a website to increase its ranking and improve its visibility on search engines.



1 Define product and keywords

First, choose one of your products to focus on. To get a good overview of your current use of keywords, take a closer look at the product name and product description. Then create a table with the columns keyword, search volume and cluster to collect and sort the keywords. Now write down all the terms currently used to describe the product. As cluster put the product you are currently referring to, as this helps with overview and structure when several items and keywords are analysed.



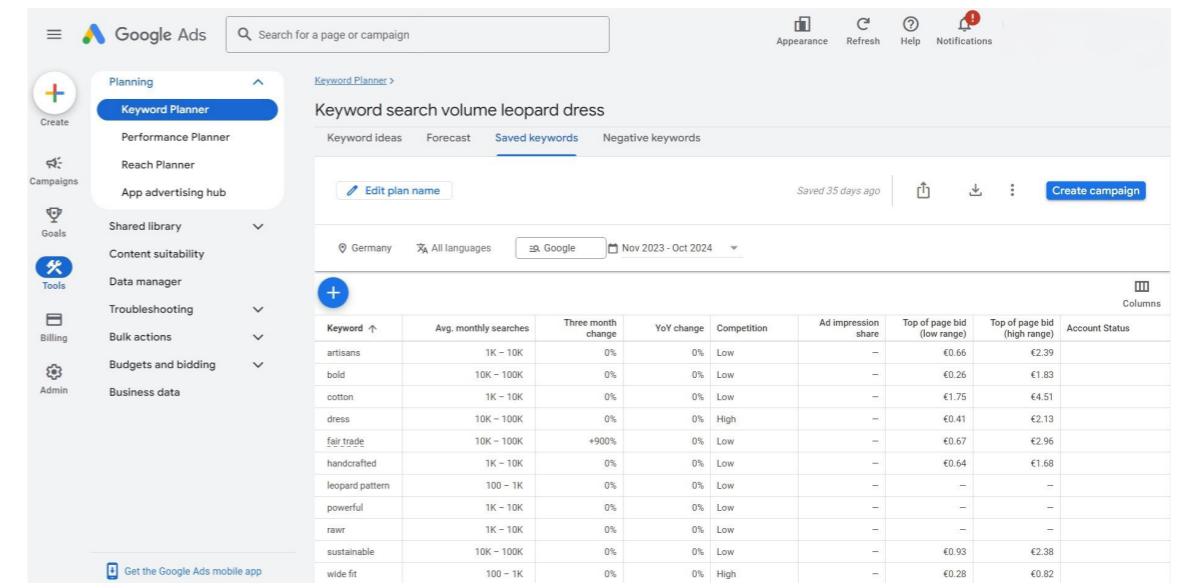
As an example, we are looking at a women's dress with a leopard print made from organic cotton with the following product description:

“Rawr - embrace your powerful side in this bold dress with a leopard pattern! This buttoned dress with a wide fit comes with a matching fabric belt. Made from 100% sustainable cotton it feels soft on your skin, but makes you feel strong. Handcrafted by Fair Trade artisans.”

Keyword	Search volume	Cluster
rawr		leopard dress
powerful		leopard dress
dress		leopard dress
bold		leopard dress
leopard pattern		leopard dress
wide fit		leopard dress
sustainable		leopard dress
cotton		leopard dress
handcrafted		leopard dress
Fair Trade		leopard dress
artisans		leopard dress
...		

2 Find out search volume

With the help of Google Ads, you can find out the search volume of specific keywords. Using a function, which allows you to break down search queries, you can find out how often potential customers search for the keywords you are using to describe your product. With that information you can complete your table.



3 Collect ideas for new keywords

Looking at the terms with a small search volume, in the next step, you should find more relevant keywords to use instead. First, think of more terms that could possibly be used to describe your product and synonyms to your keywords. You can do so with the help of specific useful tools.

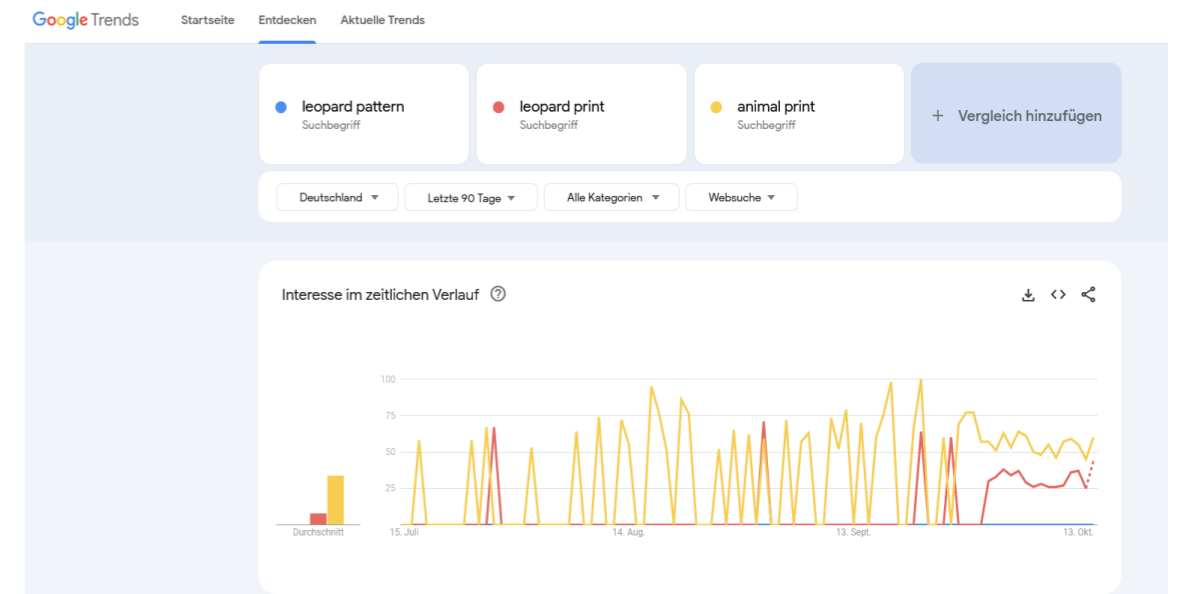
Now, compare similar terms to figure out which ones are used more often for online searches with the help of Google Trends. This is a free tool that allows you to explore the relative popularity of search terms and topics and to analyse trends in user search behaviour.

Start by entering the terms that you're already using to advertise your product and compare with the synonyms that try to describe the same aspect of your product.



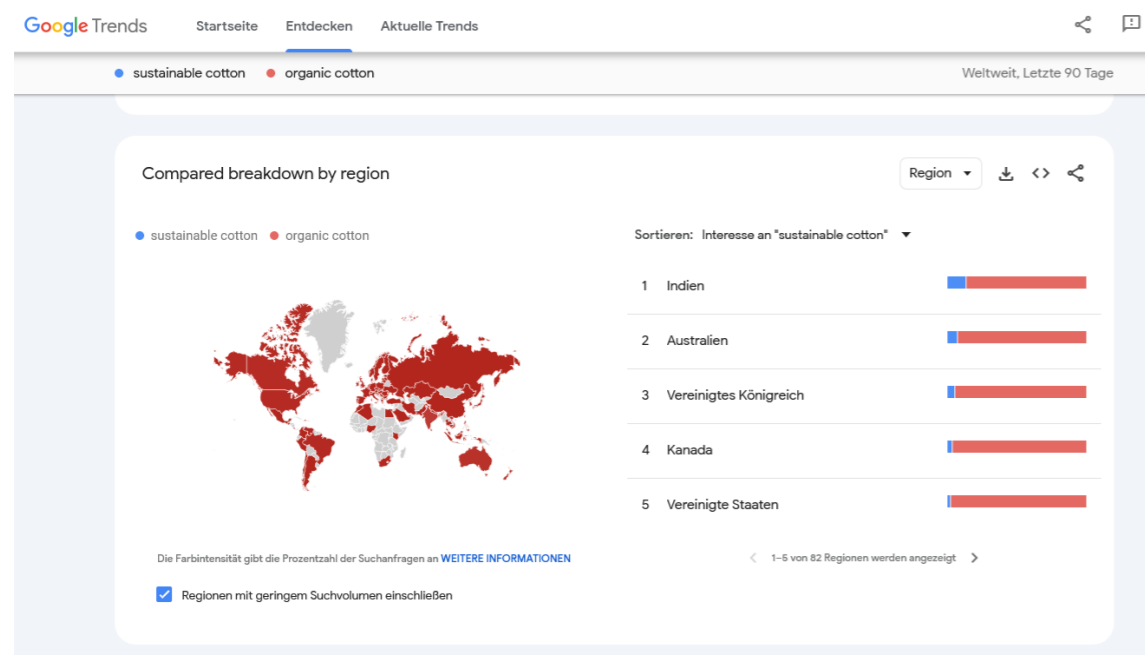
Google Ads Keyword Planner is a powerful tool for keyword research and planning. It helps you to find relevant keywords and understand their relevance. It provides insights into exact search volume and competition levels which are important for SEO. This helps you to choose the right keywords and estimate traffic potential.

Google Trends is a tool for the analysis of search engine trends. It shows the relative popularity of search terms over time and across various regions. This tool helps you to understand user interests, discover emerging topics, and compare the popularity of search terms. It offers insights into changes in search behaviour and can help identify trending topics and monitor real-time interest.



In this case the keywords *organic cotton* and *leopard print* would be the best option to promote your product, compared to the other options.

Considering your target markets, also compare the popularity of keywords in different countries and you might find out that certain terms work better in some regions than in others.



You can narrow your search down further by particular aspects like season, product, cuts, materials, colours, and more. In this step, try to find as many suitable and popular keywords as possible to be used on your website and in product descriptions for higher visibility. Always remember to consider the relevant region of your target markets.

4 Sort out ideas and choose keywords

Figure out the keywords that represent your products in the best way possible. Take a close look at the keywords with the highest search volume and consider whether they could be a good fit for your product. Do a counter-test and search Google for the keywords and see if you can find products similar to yours. If so, replace your current keywords with the new ones. Reduce the keyword list sensibly and appropriately for the product. As a result, through this kind of research you will have figured out the best keywords to use to describe your products and meet the preferences of your target group.

How to continue from this

The description in this chapter only represents a brief example. Of course, for an effective implementation of keywords, you should research for way more terms. For successful marketing, it is helpful to understand which keywords are performing well and which aren't. Try to consider as many alternative words as possible to find out how they are used, also depending on various regions. Be creative with your product descriptions and marketing copies and use as many relevant terms as possible. Play around with the mentioned tools to get a better sense for relevant keywords. You can try this out for many different aspects of your marketing and communications, including your website and social media, brand and product description.

As this toolkit only offers a short introduction into the topic of keywords, we recommend to learn more about this, if you want to enhance your online marketing activities. There are several free useful guides and courses for the effective implementation of keywords to be found online.

3. Useful resources

3.1 Overview

Running a small business entails numerous, different and constantly changing tasks. Who knows that better than you? Since we can't cover all of these tasks and business areas in this toolkit, we've put together some great resources that provide you with further helpful information on various topics around running a business in the field of sustainable and handcrafted products.

There are several online platforms focusing on online business and marketing, providing **guides** on these topics. Here we present a few of the most popular ones.



Shopify is the all-in-one commerce platform to start, run, and grow a business, both offline and online. Here, you can find practical insights on all topics relevant such as ecommerce business and marketing both on their [blog](#) and in [in-depth guides](#).

HubSpot is a platform that provides software and resources for all topics centering around running an (online) business. This includes but is not limited to marketing, sales, ecommerce and content creation. You can find helpful articles on their [blog](#) and free kits in their [resource](#) area, such as a [brand building guide](#).

99 designs is a global creative platform connecting designers and clients for collaboration. On their [blog](#) and social media channels, they share useful, detailed yet easy to understand introductions into visual design. We recommend these video tutorials on the [anatomy](#), [colour selection](#) and [typography](#) of a brand logo.

A great way to dive deeper into these topics and become an expert in certain tasks is to take part in online **courses** that teach you in-depth skills in a practical way.



HubSpot is also a great place to go for courses on various online marketing topics. With their [HubSpot Academy](#), the aim is to educate professionals in sales and marketing with free online courses.

Google also offers various [courses](#), also with a focus on digital marketing. You can find a selection from a more general introductory level to specific topics.

While it is useful to acquire new knowledge, to educate yourself and to build up skills, the most important step is ultimately to put it all into practice. That's why we present you **tools** to help you do exactly that. For marketing and communications, copywriting and graphic design tools are especially relevant.

[ChatGPT](#) an AI programme communicating with people and answering questions or prompts. Based on technology that is able to understand and process data, it can generate text in natural language. For your business, you can use it for copywriting for website content, product description and social media.

[Canva](#) is a free online graphic design tool for creating visual content. It can be used to design images, fonts and graphic elements for social media posts, presentations, posters or logos and more. There are various ways of use for you to explore.

Disclaimer

In the following, we are introducing and explaining two open access tools for text creation (ChatGPT) and graphic design (Canva). As a disclaimer, we would like to emphasise that as free versions, both of these applications collect your data. There are also alternatives that take more care in protecting personal information. These, however, come with a fee. In this toolkit we want to present low-threshold solutions and tools. However, if you use these applications, make sure you know what information about your business you are willing to disclose. Never share sensitive data.

3.2 ChatGPT

Especially in the marketing sector, it's becoming a new standard to use ChatGPT to write compelling promotional content and product descriptions. But what exactly is this, how does it work and how do you avoid common mistakes?

ChatGPT is designed to process and analyse massive amounts of text data and generate human-like text responses. It can be a helpful resource for generating ideas and streamlining the writing process. Nevertheless, it's not a substitute for human creativity and expertise.

Please note that the content generated by ChatGPT may not always be completely accurate. Its knowledge is limited to what has been published on the Internet up to a certain date. ChatGPT does not really know anything nor does it understand your questions. It can analyse and generate texts, but it has no human understanding or consciousness. So there are tasks it is particularly good at and tasks it is not equipped for.



Things ChatGPT can do

- Drafting and optimising texts
- Assisting with creative tasks
- Explaining knowledge on various topics

Things ChatGPT can't do

- Thinking logically on its own
- Creating original ideas
- Making ethical judgements

How to use ChatGPT

Considering the capabilities and limitations of ChatGPT, please make sure to follow a few general rules, when using it.

- Consider ChatGPT as a supporting tool, not as a replacement for your work.
- Do not copy content one-to-one, but rather use ChatGPT as a source of inspiration.
- Do not blindly trust the information from ChatGPT and always verify it.

The short commands or questions that are sent to the ChatGPT system to generate a response are called prompts. The quality of the prompt is crucial for the quality of the response. A well-formulated prompt ensures that the system has enough input to provide precise and useful information. Here are a few guidelines to follow when using Chat GPT to get the best possible results.



Use clear and precise language

Make sure that you formulate your questions and requirements clear and simple in order to get the best possible answer. Avoid overly complex sentences and do not use technical terms if you are unsure whether the system knows them.

Give specific instructions

Make sure to give ChatGPT as much information as possible. Inaccurate answers are usually due to ambiguous or overly general prompts.

Ask open questions

Open questions encourage ChatGPT to explain information in more detail and deepen discussions. It also allows you to discover new perspectives on a particular topic. Avoid yes-no questions, as these do not allow for in-depth answers.

Consider the target group


Make sure that your ChatGPT prompts are tailored to the needs and interests of your target group. For example, if you are writing for an audience that is interested in fashion, this should be included as an instruction in the prompt.

As mentioned before, ChatGPT works as a great tool to find inspiration for text creation. For example, you can use it to write texts for online marketing purposes.

This is an example on how to use ChatGPT to create a copy for an Instagram post to promote a product.



Please write a copy for an Instagram post that promotes our newest handmade product: a women's dress with a leopard print made from 100% organic cotton and crafted by female artisans from India.

 🌱 ✨ **New Arrival Alert!** ✨ 🌱

Introducing our stunning **Leopard Print Dress**, made from 100% organic cotton and ethically handcrafted by talented female artisans from India. 🇮🇳 🌿

This dress isn't just a fashion statement—it's a celebration of bold, empowered women and sustainable style. The breathable organic cotton keeps you comfy while the fierce leopard print makes you stand out in any crowd. 🦁 🌿

♥️ Why you'll love it: ✓ 100% Organic Cotton ✓ Handcrafted with love & care ✓ Ethically sourced and fair trade ✓ Empowering artisan women

Add some wild beauty to your wardrobe while supporting slow fashion and female artisans. 🌿 🦁

#SustainableFashion #HandmadeWithLove #EthicalFashion #LeopardPrintDress #OrganicCotton #WomenEmpoweringWomen #ConsciousStyle #FairTradeFashion

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You can also use it to create SEO descriptions for your website, meaning that the text is making use of relevant keywords that strengthen your visibility in search engines (Search Engine Optimisation).

In general, please remember: We recommend that you use ChatGPT for inspiration only, and always customise the text suggestions to match your brand identity, tone and offer.



Please write a SEO optimised website description for our female led artisan business in India. We make handcrafted, fair trade and sustainable fashion products and empower women. Please structure the text in "About us" and "Why choose us?".

 **About Us**

We are a women-led artisan business based in India, dedicated to creating handcrafted, fair trade, and sustainable fashion. Our collection is made with love and care by talented female artisans using eco-friendly materials such as organic cotton. Each piece reflects a blend of traditional craftsmanship and modern design, resulting in unique, high-quality fashion. More than just a brand, we are a movement that empowers women by providing fair wages, safe working conditions, and opportunities for financial independence. By supporting us, you are investing in ethical fashion that uplifts communities and protects the environment.

Why Choose Us?

- Sustainable & Eco-Friendly:** We are committed to sustainability at every step. Our products are made from organic, natural materials, and we use environmentally friendly dyes and production methods, ensuring a minimal ecological footprint.
- Women Empowerment:** Our brand is driven by a mission to empower women in rural India. We provide female artisans with fair wages, dignified work, and the tools they need to become economically independent, directly contributing to their personal and community growth.
- Handcrafted Quality:** Every product is handmade with meticulous attention to detail, ensuring that each piece is unique and high in quality. Our artisans bring generations of craftsmanship and skill to each item, making it more than just fashion—it's wearable art.
- Fair Trade & Ethical Practices:** We proudly follow fair trade principles, ensuring ethical treatment and fair compensation for all artisans involved in our production. By choosing us, you support a business model that prioritizes people and the planet over profit.
- Conscious Fashion:** We cater to consumers who value sustainability, ethical production, and handcrafted quality. Our fashion is not just about style; it's about making a conscious choice to support a brand that aligns with your values.

By choosing our brand, you're embracing sustainable fashion that empowers women and supports ethical craftsmanship. Join us in making a positive impact—one handcrafted piece at a time.

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3.3

Canva

Canva is a simple and practical application for graphic design tasks. If you need such a tool for your communication purposes, you will learn how to use it in this chapter.

Offering a user-friendly platform, Canva empowers businesses to create professional and engaging visuals. With its extensive library of templates and design elements, you can craft marketing materials, social media graphics, and product labels that highlight your unique brand identity. Canva helps you present your brand beautifully and attract more customers – all without needing advanced design skills.

How to use Canva

Firstly, you need to be aware of what kind of content you want to create. In this example, we are developing an image for an Instagram post to promote this toolkit. So the first step is to decide which format suits your idea best. Click on “Create a design” then choose the one that fits your idea. After choosing the correct format, upload all materials that inspire your design. In this example we chose a picture of a poster we designed earlier, the toolkit’s contents, our logo and the slogan created by ChatGPT.

Once you chose everything you want to integrate in your design, add a second page. Now it makes sense to set the background first. You will find many templates and ideas for this. However, you can also upload your own image as a background. Another possibility is to pick a colour that is used within the pictures you want to incorporate in your design anyway. Now you can play around with the different pictures and colours you want to incorporate. Copy and paste the pictures onto your new page for this. If you want to insert a shape in a specific colour, click on “Elements” and choose a shape. Click on the new shape and choose its colour. You can again pick a colour from your Inspiration images. To perfectly centre your images you can click on “Position” and then adjust the picture. Once you have integrated all the images into your design, you can insert the text or lettering at last.

To add a text, click left on “text” then on “Add a text box”. Type your text into the textbox. If you are already using a certain font, it makes sense to use it every time. You can change the text type in many different ways: The size, positioning, bold and cursive print.



Canva offers you the opportunity to get creative. So feel free to try out different designs. In the end, you will be able to decide which design suits you and your company best. Have fun!



**Image composition**

In terms of image composition and design, here are some basic guidelines on how to create visually appealing designs.

Rule of thirds

The rule of thirds is a fundamental principle in visual arts and photography that helps create well-balanced and interesting compositions.

Here's a step-by-step explanation:

1. **Divide the Frame:** Imagine your image is divided into nine equal parts by two horizontal lines and two vertical lines. This creates a grid with four intersection points.
2. **Position Key Elements:** Place the most important elements of your composition along these lines or at their intersections. This approach generally leads to more dynamic and engaging images.
3. **Balance and Interest:** By avoiding placing the subject in the centre, the rule of thirds helps create a sense of balance and movement in the composition. This makes the image more pleasing to the eye.
4. **Natural Viewing:** Viewers' eyes naturally gravitate towards the intersection points of this grid. By positioning key elements there, you make it easier for viewers to engage with the image.

**Whitespace**

Whitespace, also known as negative space, refers to the empty areas in a design that are left unmarked. But it is not just empty space; it's a powerful design element that can enhance comprehension, engagement, and create a more aesthetically pleasing and user-friendly experience.

Whitespace creates:

- **Clarity**

It helps to separate different sections of content, making it easier for viewers to read and understand.

- **Focus**

It directs attention to the important elements, reducing clutter and making the design look organised.

- **Balance**

It creates a balanced and harmonious look, which is pleasing to the eye.

Fairfaktor

ifaf Institut für angewandte
Forschung Berlin

ASH
Berlin **Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin**
University of Applied Sciences

htw. Hochschule für Technik
und Wirtschaft Berlin
University of Applied Sciences

 **Home of Fair Trade
Enterprises**

ff **FORUM
FAIRER
HANDEL**

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