

CREATING BRAND IDENTITY FOR THE HUMANITARIAN ENGINEERING RESEARCH GROUP

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This bachelor's thesis aims to develop a brand identity for the Humanitarian Engineering research group at the University of Twente to increase the group's impact from an academic perspective, with a specific target audience of students. By establishing a strong brand identity, the research group seeks to enhance student awareness, recognition, and engagement. This research involves an analysis that includes a literature review, interviews with research group members, market research, and an online survey to gain insights into the target audience's perceptions of humanitarian engineering.

Brand identity covers a brand's desired image and aspirations, including core values, beliefs, and unique brand associations. It can be divided into core identity, representing the brand's essence and values, and extended identity, which includes visual representations and marketing information (Aaker, 1995). Brand philosophy, consisting of values, ethics, principles, and beliefs, plays a vital role in shaping brand identity. Visual brand identity focuses on perception through logos and product design (Mogaji, 2021). Developing a brand identity involves analysing the current situation, the brand's position and goals, the target audience, and the market (Aaker, 1995).

Humanitarian engineering combines humanitarian principles and engineering to improve human lives and reduce suffering (University of Warwick, 2023). It involves using science and engineering to address challenges faced by underserved communities. Humanitarian engineering is not a separate discipline but a philosophy that can be integrated into all engineering fields. It promotes a broader understanding of the impact of engineering projects in challenging contexts, emphasizing professional and ethical responsibility.

The Humanitarian Engineering research group at the University of Twente focuses on research and education to address challenges in underserved communities. The group's research spans humanitarian aid engineering, resilience engineering, and responsible and sustainable entrepreneurship. They offer a master's course in humanitarian engineering and aim to establish a master's programme in humanitarian engineering. The research group communicates information about humanitarian engineering, its mission, and ongoing projects through their website and podcast.

Market research evaluates various (humanitarian engineering) research groups and educational programs. Some of these groups utilize their respective university's branding and incorporate visual media to support their themes. Some lack a clear logo or mission statement on their web pages, while others effectively use social media platforms to showcase their projects. Educational programs employ communication tactics such as introductory videos, visual symbols, slogans, and a strong social media presence.

The survey conducted among the target audience revealed a lack of familiarity with the term "humanitarian engineering." However, most respondents expressed interest in learning more about humanitarian engineering and showed motivation to contribute to society through their engineering projects.

The analysis leads to the development of the brand identity for the Humanitarian Engineering research group. For the textual brand identity, a vision, mission, unique values and beliefs, and a set of keywords are created. Dissatisfaction with the current logo prompts the need for a new design. The visual brand

identity includes the development of a logo, three symbols representing different domains, and an explanatory video.

The vision focuses on becoming a centre of excellence in humanitarian engineering research and education, while the mission revolves around conducting research and education to create engineering solutions for underserved communities. The values and beliefs emphasize universalism, interdisciplinary approaches, equity thinking, sustainability thinking, and the recognition that humanitarian engineering is a scientific task rather than charity work. The list of keywords includes terms related to impact, inequality reduction, human involvement, development, and sustainability.

The visual brand identity requirements emphasize alignment with the core identity and resonance with the target audience. Three logo concepts are developed, and the target group survey helped determine the preferred design, with a logo featuring a world, gear, and hands being the favourite among respondents. Symbols are designed to represent the research group's domains, and a promotional video is created to showcase the research group's topic, domains, and mission and vision statement.

The visual brand identity is tested through an online survey, which provides insights into the target audience's perception of the visual elements. The survey results guide the selection of the final logo design, colours, and symbols. In the final design phase, the chosen logo design, domain symbols, and video are refined and created in various versions to ensure adaptability to different mediums and sizes.

The implementation and communication plan focused on integrating the brand identity into the research group's webpage and utilizing non-visual aspects to guide behaviour and decision-making. The visual elements are incorporated on the webpage to establish a recognizable brand image. Suggestions for future steps include leveraging social media platforms, particularly Instagram, and participating in relevant events to enhance brand awareness and engagement.

It is worth noting that this thesis primarily focused on one specific target audience. Further research is recommended to explore the brand identity's resonance with other potential target audiences and stakeholders. Additionally, testing and monitoring of social media efforts can provide insights into the success of posts and the if the content resonates with the target audience, further refining the brand communication strategy.

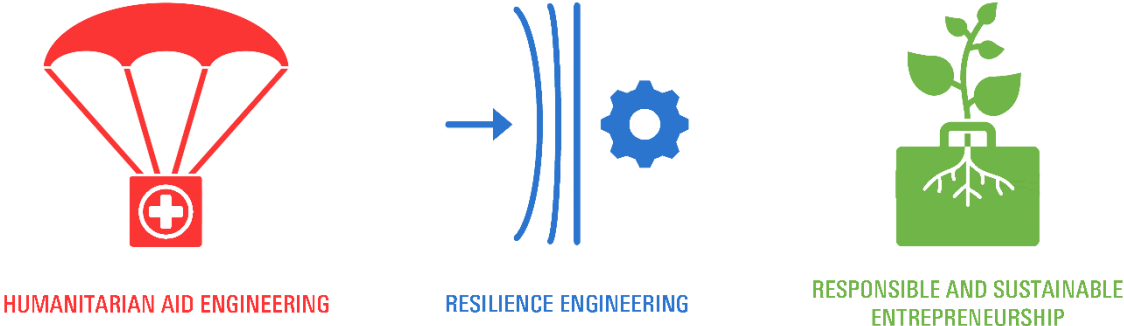
Figure 1

The logo designed for the Humanitarian Engineering research group



Figure 2

The 3 domain symbols designed for the Humanitarian Engineering research group



References

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