

2021 - The most important year to develop your brand's visual identity

Issued by [Jacaranda FM](#)

17 Feb 2021

Five lessons from Jacaranda FM's Marketing Manager - Leith Smith

Visual identity drives not only resonance but engagement with a brand, it also drives our purchasing behavior. Have you ever scrolled through Instagram and instantly recognised the brand without a logo reference?

Well, that's your reaction to a visual identity.

Some brands like [Coca-Cola](#) or [Nando's](#) use a unique font, other brands like [Headspace](#) use illustrations and colour palettes, whilst a local fashion brand like [Chusuwannapha](#) enforce their visual identity through pattern and design. The mix of elements doesn't matter, what matters is that your brand has a style that can be distinguished.

A strong visual identity allows you to cultivate an impression through the visible elements of your brand. Visual cues are a powerful form of communication because they don't rely on words for communication, but rather speak to consumers on a primal, emotional level – giving your brand a layer of persuasion and differentiation that you can't achieve without it. Along with persuasion and differentiation, visual cues also make your brand more memorable.

Covid-19 has undoubtedly changed the way brands reach and communicate with consumers. With fewer cars on the road, less eyes on advertising, and the ban on mass participant events; there has been a massive need for brands to relook at how they are connecting with consumers online.

Having just undergone the exciting journey of developing a visual identity for the Jacaranda FM brand, I've shared some learnings:

1. EVALUATE

Jacaranda FM rebranded in 2012 with minor changes made over the years, and the purple plectrum has remained core to the brand. We used the well-established brand to create a visual identity, but sometimes you may need to rebrand depending on the shape of the brand.

- Do you need to differentiate your brand from competitors?
- Is your branding outdated and reflective of a different societal culture?
- Have we outgrown our original mission?
- Do we have a poor reputation that needs an overhaul?

Ask yourself these questions and if you answer "yes" to any of them, then you will start with a rebrand and build your visual identity on those foundations.



Jacaranda FM logo incorporating plectrum icon and colour palette

2. BUILD A BRAND PERSONA

Your brand can either tiptoe down the street in a nondescript tracksuit, or strut about town with a top hat, shiny shoes, and loud feather boa. Your visual identity will be led by the persona your brand takes on. Whether your brand is high-energy and dynamic, or serious and respected, your visual language needs to convey that persona. That persona is what consumers will resonate with.

Invest the time. Jacaranda FM's visual identity was created over several months, with numerous meetings to understand our target audience and employees. Make sure you sift through the data and research to create a compelling framework of how consumers and employees interact with the brand on all its platforms. This will inform how you develop your visual identity and adapt it for application.



Jacaranda FM design, imagery, and colour application to their new Visual Identity

3. COLLABORATE

Once we knew the persona of our brand, we enlisted creative input for the design and application of the visual identity. It's a nuanced skillset, and a lot more psychology goes into building brand visuals than I realised, so it made sense that we returned to the agency who helped Jacaranda FM rebrand in 2012.

Brands that are developed or refined in collaboration, are more democratic and resonate with a wider base of consumers than isolated ideas, and this was crucial for us to get right. Make sure you collaborate with partners who understand your brand as well as you do.

Here's a helpful list of visual identity elements to consider:

- Logo elements like an icon
- Mnemonics that drive brand association through shapes or colours
- Special typography and secondary fonts
- A definitive colour palette with rules and secondary options
- Imagery
- Photography, photo style guides, and styles props to ensure repetitive cohesion
- Patterns and graphics that highlight an element of the brand persona
- Proprietary collateral assets like Hippo's [Hippo](#) puppet
- Application diversification (I'll get to that in a minute)

Any of these served repeatedly will start to build a visual identity



Various spectrum shapes and colour combinations applied to different shows in the same style

4. DIFFERENTIATE

Jacaranda FM is one of the most exciting businesses to market right now. It's an iconic brand in the South African landscape, it's almost 35 years old, surrounded by powerhouse talent and well-known personalities, and it has a super loyal and diverse base of engaged listeners on multiple platforms.

We know the brand deserved a beautiful visual language, but we want to add a layer of personalisation to differentiate it, we therefore focused on two groups, our listeners, and our employees.

For listeners we applied our new visual language to each show to demonstrate brand cohesion. Radio transition from on-air to digital has seen a massive integration so we also applied our visual language to all online platforms where many of our listeners experience the brand visually. For employees we created an online interface where they can select various elements of the Jacaranda FM visual identity to personalise their stationary, digital assets, and other merchandise.

It was important that the people behind the brand know that Jacaranda FM value their unique attributes and diversity. Even if no one outside the organisation ever sees this, it has meaning for the people who make the brand a success.



Jacaranda FM's spectrum icon, design, and colour palette applied to various brand properties and shows

5. TAKE IT TO THE STREETS

Don't assume that once you have this wonderful new visual language, that everyone will just automatically speak it. Have a roll-out plan for how you will apply the new visual identity.

A good point to start is to roll-out the new visual identity internally. It's important to take all employees on the journey the marketing team took to create the visual language, and to package the creatives and story in a way that excites and elicits buy-in. We set-up a digital presentation room and took the Jacaranda FM family through our brand history, why we created a visual identity, the importance to the business, and how it will be rolled-out and personalised for them.

Once your employees are on board, roll-out to owned channels and digital assets, and then finally onto physical assets which often require much larger budgets.



Leith Smith, Marketing Manager Jacaranda FM remotely presenting the new Visual Identity and it's application to the entire Jacaranda FM family.

- " **Jacaranda FM remains one of Mzansi's favourite radio stations with 3 SA Radio Awards** 5 Dec 2023
- " **South Africa's award-winning podcast 'Don't Hold back: say it loud' is back for a second season** 21 Nov 2023
- " **Spar Carols by Candlelight celebrates the theme 'Home for Christmas' as the event turns 21!** 10 Nov 2023
- " **Jacaranda FM wins the hearts and ears of Pretoria for a decade** 26 Oct 2023
- " **Jacaranda FM community tee up over R4.2m at Golf Day** 11 Sep 2023

Jacaranda FM



Jacaranda FM broadcasts at 94.2FM from Midrand, Gauteng and is one of the most popular radio stations with a substantial footprint across Mzansi. The station has the only bilingual commercial license in the country; broadcasting regionally in English and Afrikaans across Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and the North West Province.

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