FUJI SUKIYAKI BUSINESS IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper documents the research and procedures that went into the creation of a business identity that includes a logotype, menu, business card, letterhead, envelope, monthly sales report sheet, gift certificate, drinks list and posters for Fuji Sukiyaki. The paper describes the final outcome and general conclusions about the project, and concludes by offering recommendations for further study that could result from this project.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I—Introduction ................................................................................................................................. iii

Statement of the Problem

Purpose or Objective of the Study

Limitations of the Study

Glossary of Terms

CHAPTER II—Review of Research ....................................................................................................................... 8

CHAPTER III—Procedures and Results .................................................................................................................. 10

WEEK 1: Exploration and Concept Development

WEEK 2: Logotype and Color Development

WEEK 3: Basic Menu Design

WEEK 4: Icon Design

WEEK 5 and 6: Menu Design, revisited

WEEK 7: Pattern Design and Application

WEEK 8 and 9: Refining and Designing New Components

WEEK 10: Refining and Producing

The Results

CHAPTER IV—Summary and Recommendation .................................................................................................... 25

Bibliography .......................................................................................................................................................... 27
CHAPTER I—Introduction

Statement of the Problem

A business identity for a Japanese Restaurant (Fuji Sukiyaki) located in the Bay Area was be created. The established identity was carried throughout multiple pieces of material for the restaurant which included creating a logotype, menus, a business card, letterhead, envelope, monthly sales report sheet, gift certificate, a drinks list and posters. The identity could be expanded in the future to include chopstick wrappers, napkins, newspaper ads, t-shirts, and other items as needed.

Purpose or Objective of the Study

• To create a cohesive system of designed pieces that would work together and separately. The identity system’s main focus was to create legible and easy to read pieces without compromising interesting design in its process. Keeping pieces unique yet consistent was a part of this challenge. The identity should also reinforce the restaurant’s traditional ambiance and food.

• To incorporate everything I have learned in college thus far to effectively execute this project: layout and design, illustration, and typography.

• To create a logotype that will be simple and recognizable, and will incorporate color where necessary, while a black and white version will be used for applications such as fax and to-go menus. Logo should be able to be reproduced in various sizes.
Limitations of the Study

The main concern of this senior project has to deal with time. We are allotted 11 weeks to complete both the project and the research paper. With the first few weeks dealing with research, ideation, sketching, refining concepts, and creating comprehensives, there is only so much time left for actual production. The design process is expected to take the most time, since most of the thought process and justification of the design style takes place here. Once design elements are decided upon (such as color palette, typeface) and ideas are flushed out along with the “feel” of the identity system is created, the rest is easier to create. Adding additional pieces in the future (such as newspaper ads) should also be easier, once an overall design direction is selected.

The budget is another constraint when dealing with clients. Because my project dealt entirely with printed pieces, the majority of the cost for the project was the printing of the project—the paper, and ink. There is also the possibility of having to purchase extra displays (plastic) for mini drink menus, or new menu enclosures for the restaurant. If I choose to print this business identity using my own high-quality printer in the future, I can save on the printing costs of going to an actual printer. The costs then, would still be ink and paper. Printing it myself could save a bit of money and time, as I can have full control of how I want my pieces to come out.

Another issue I had to consider were cultural constraints. Because my project dealt specifically with the Japanese culture, I had to keep in mind the style and design aesthetics of the Japanese culture.
Glossary of Terms

**Bleed:** The edges of images, color, text or other content that extends beyond the edge of a printed sheet prior to trimming or other media boundaries. Bleeds ensure that elements extend all the way to the edge of a trim line or visibility boundaries of other media.

**Body:** The main text of work not including the headlines.

**Border:** The decorative design or rule surrounding matter on a page.

**CMYK:** Abbreviation for cyan, magenta, yellow and key (black), the four process colors.

**Color Palette:** A selection of specific colors that are chosen to coordinate, contrast or harmonize as an aid to maintaining a desired degree of consistency within a visual identity system.

**Composition:** (1) In typography, the assembly of typographic elements, such as words and paragraphs, into pages ready for printing. (2) In graphic design, the arrangement of type, graphics and other elements on the page.

**Comprehensive:** Simulation of a printed piece complete with type, graphics and colors. Also called “comprehensive” and “comp.”

**Crop Marks:** Lines near the edges of an image indicating portions to be reproduced. Also called cut marks and tic marks.

**Flush Left:** A term used by typesetters and designers to refer to text that is arranged line for line exactly against the left margin with unequal line lengths on the right column margin.

**Font:** A complete assortment of letters, numbers and symbols of a specific size and design.
Font Family: All the combined varieties of a single typeface design. This would include the bolds, italics, condensed, extended fonts and so on.

Format: Size, style, shape, layout or organization of a layout or printed product.

Graphics: Visual elements that supplement type to make printed messages more clear or interesting.

Grid: The name for the underlying system of spatial units defined by vertical and horizontal lines that help designers organize imagery and content on the page. This hidden architecture helps to visually link even the most divergent content and design solutions into an integrated body of work.

Gutter: In the book arena, the inside margins toward the back or the binding edges.

Identity System: Includes all of the components of the brand that work together to create the visual signature, look and feel of an organization, including the logo, icon, name, tagline, and color palette, etc.

Inkjet Printing: Method of printing by spraying droplets of ink through computer-controlled nozzles.

Layout: a sample of the original providing (showing) position of printed work (direction, instructions) needed and desired.

Leading: Amount of space between lines of type.

Legibility: Term used to describe how legible or clear a particular font or typeface is at different sizes and for different purposes.

Logotype: A graphic element of a trademark or brand, which is set in a special typeface/
font or arranged in a particular, but legible, way. A company, partnership or corporate creation (design) that denotes a unique entity. A possible combination of letters and art work to create a “sole” entity symbol of that specific unit.

Margins: The blank area of the page, outside the type area.

Moodboard: A type of design that may consist of images, text, and samples of objects in a composition of the choice of the creator. Designers and others use mood boards to develop their design concepts and to communicate to other members of the design team. The mood board may be used as a frame of reference during the design process.

Sans Serif: The term used to describe a typeface without serifs. Sans serif typefaces, or fonts, do not have the characteristic small horizontal lines at the tops and bases of characters as serif fonts.

Sketch: a preliminary drawing for later elaboration.

Typography: Refers to the art and technique of designing letterforms. It also refers broadly to the practice of graphic design where a variety of typefaces are employed to enhance communication.

 Thumbnails: Initial ideas jotted on virtually anything in regard to initial concept of a future project.

Tint: Screening or adding white to a solid color for results of lightening that specific color.
CHAPTER II—Review of Research

My main source of research was to gather information about the restaurants around San Mateo and to look for inspiration. Before starting any design research, I had to consider the demographic and other vital information about the restaurant to come up with a solution that would best be communicated throughout this project. The Design Brief that was due at the beginning of the Senior Project class had already led me to think about the primary audience and demographic that I was dealing with, along with the message I was trying to send. The main demographic of this restaurant consists mainly of non-Japanese, college-educated men and women between the ages of 30-60 with an annual income of $50,000+, who live in suburban and urban areas.

Creating a successful identity system would not only allow for a successful senior project, but it could also mean making this restaurant stand out from the other Japanese restaurants in San Mateo and possibly the Bay Area. Established approximately 60 years ago, Fuji Sukiyaki was the first Japanese restaurant in San Mateo, and owners have changed hands several times. Just downtown San Mateo itself has over 15 Japanese restaurants, but none have a distinct identity system. Based off of the competition’s menus and what customers have spoken of, Fuji Sukiyaki offers a wider selection in food variety and options, lower prices, and high quality fish that exceeds a lot of other restaurants. However, due to its location on the outskirts of downtown San Mateo, it is not one of the first Japanese restaurants people would see when they first visit San Mateo and its downtown area. A lot of the business comes from repeat customers, or through word-of-mouth.
A well-designed identity system may give this restaurant a competitive edge by becoming more memorable in new and repeat customers’ minds and reinforce the idea that it is one of the first Japanese restaurants in the area and it thrives on its established reputation for authentic, traditional Japanese fare that does not compensate in its quality and pricing.

Japan is known for a lot of things, and having been able to establish itself as a country that prides itself on tradition, the country is also known for its ability to have transitioned into the modern world so well. The Japanese have a wide range of visual history ranging from woodblock prints of its natural landscapes to family crests, to patterns symbolized both in their fabrics and various symbols. For my beginning of the research phase, I started out with a list of words and images associated with Japan, which was later formed into a moodboard. The moodboard contains examples of inspiration such as Japanese lettering, iconography, color palettes, and various design trends. More technical research involved looking up standard sizes for printed materials, such as gift certificates, or sizes of the plastic placards placed on table tops in restaurants.
CHAPTER III—Procedures and Results

As part of my Senior Project class, we were supposed to keep a record of the progress we made on a weekly basis by keeping a 3-ring binder that would include a progress report along with relevant materials garnered in the process. The following is a breakdown of the weekly reports:

WEEK 1: Exploration and Concept Development

Starting a new project always begins the same way—by generating sketches for a project through brainstorming. My brainstorming session involved thinking of words and images that would pertain to developing this identity system. I tried thinking of images that would work for a Japanese identity first, and not necessarily exclusively for a Japanese restaurant. I threw out words that came to mind, in hopes of generating related images or
ideas associated with Japan.

**Nouns:**

- crane, paper cranes, origami, lucky cat, fish, mountain, Sakura cherry blossom, plum flower, lotus, bamboo
- chopsticks, sushi, sake, rice, rice bowls, noodles, boats, swords, pagoda
- kimono, geisha, samurai, master, Buddhism, Shintoism

**Adjectives:**

- Peaceful, serene, artful, harmonious
- traditional, modern, Zen, ritualistic
- cute, modern, technological

**Miscellaneous:**

- Food ingredients in Japanese dishes, sukiyaki pot, brush strokes, calligraphy, cut up fish, plates of sushi, kamon (family symbols), harajuku.
- The tortoise signifies longevity; the peony, prosperity and good fortune; the bamboo plant, fidelity.
- “Land of the Rising Sun”

After coming up with a decent list of words, I began sketching whatever came to mind to get the ideas down. This included Japanese-like patterns and design elements in thumbnail form. I also drew images that I found on the internet that I liked and I felt
could contribute to the creation of the logo. Another technique I used as part of the idea generation was to create images that I thought I could use later on whether in the logo, or as an element somewhere else. Creating bits and pieces helped me generate bigger ideas for later on. Like word generation, images create associations as well.

**WEEK 2: Logotype and Color Development**

Based on the feedback I received on my folder, I needed to focus on what I wanted to communicate with my logo. Despite the various drawings and ideas I had for the logo, they did not communicate the message of it being for a restaurant yet. I needed to find out what would work best for the logo first, such as figuring out what I wanted the logo to do. Only then could I take all the images I had and start modifying them to fit the profile, and develop it. Various comments I received on my sketches helped me eliminate what I should or should not consider using in a logo. Ultimately, I did not create a logo, but a logotype instead, and decided to deal with imagery in the creation of icons.
In experimenting with type, I started out with a regular brush and ink to write out “Fuji’s.” I tried to mimic the look of Japanese calligraphy and wrote out Fuji’s in as many different ways as I could to give it a traditional look. Because the type of utensil used for lettering greatly influenced how I rendered the letters, I moved to using a bamboo brush and calligraphic pen ink nibs to see what other effects could be achieved. I was later satisfied with the outcome of the bamboo brush exercises so I decided to transfer the brushwork into the logotype. I looked through every letter with a discerning eye to see which ones I thought looked “authentic”: ones with the right proportions, or ones that looked natural and unforced that gave off the sense of a brushing movement. I scanned in individual letters and turned them into vectors to form the word “Fuji” for the logotype.

Because the “Fuji” was done in a more traditional look, I thought it would be a good idea to let the word “Sukiyaki” have a more modern look which would reflect the restaurant’s balance in both traditional and modern practices. The next step was choosing a typeface. I chose to work with sans-serifs because I found that serif fonts became too busy looking and competed with the calligraphy in “Fuji,” but also gave my logotype the more
modern look that it needed. Since Japanese design is generally simple, a sans serif would provide simplicity and cleanliness in this logotype. Of all the fonts available, Din was chosen as my sans-serif as it looked good when matched with the calligraphy and offers a large font family. Din also seems to offer a bit of that humanist feel in its strokes which in this case is a good match to the calligraphy. Now with a font chosen, it was time to apply color. The word “Fuji” was left black, as traditional inks are also black, and as the name “Sukiyaki” implies a (hot) soup, choosing a red-orange would invoke imagery of warmth.

With black and red-orange selected, I continued to develop a color palette that would work with those colors. Blue-grey, an off black, and a couple of tans were selected. This color palette works well for a Japanese restaurant, as the red and tans not only imply warmth, but are also reminiscent of the fish found in Japanese cuisine. The blue-grey and off-black colors are harmonious with the warmer colors, and also invoke colors of the ocean and what is found in the sea—seaweed, or the nori used in sushi.

WEEK 3: Basic Menu Design

With a logotype developed, it was time to move on to the bulk of the work: the menus. The main issue in designing for this restaurant was to keep in mind the predominantly American customer base while still staying true to the business by keeping the tradition of Japan. With the demographic information in mind, I considered a more modern approach in my design, such as not having to include Japanese characters in the menus as
a second language, or being very traditional in the overall design. This would have been very different if I were designing for a restaurant that catered to traditional Japanese or older folk who only read Japanese. If that were the case, using a modern sans-serif might not have been the way to go.

After sketching various menus designs, I came up with the solution to use icons to distinguish the different food sections. The result was a 2 column grid; one column for the icons and another for text. Since Din was chosen for my logotype, I used only Din for all of my printed materials. However, due to its large font family, I was able to create enough variation in the text to keep the menus and the various printed pieces such as the “Fuji House Rolls” and Lunch/Dinner Specials interesting to look at. I tried various heading styles for food categories and different ways of playing with the body type that would make it easy to read the different sections of food, while still maintaining proper structure and balance of the food sections.

WEEK 4: Icon Design

In keeping with a clean and simple design, the symbols had to be relatively simple, yet have enough detail in them to inform the customer of what section they were looking at. I decided on a square shape with rounded corners to make them seem friendlier and softer. The final icons are rendered in a way so that you can see both the top and sides of the objects, and are outlined with a stroke. Because the icons were to be used not just in the menus but other printed pieces as well, I had to keep in mind that the smaller the
icons got, the more difficult it was to see the stroke and the areas in which they outlined or created and had to adjust the strokes accordingly.

WEEK 5 and 6: Menu Design, revisited

I had created sample layouts for the menus by exploring type, and different styles for the headings that would separate the different types of foods available at the restaurant. Based on my printouts, most of the type was all too large, some were too small, and the leading was too tight. Creating the menu was harder than I thought, even with the simple layout that I had, because I had to figure out a way to lay out all the food items and still make it feel balanced. To do this, I tried to use space more efficiently by combining some food groups and moving categories around, while still keeping the menu in a way that made sense.

I continued to work on the icons by refining the ones I already had and worked on new ones. Of course, choices had to be made as to which ones I thought would work best as a system, and which ones I thought would make the most sense for each category. I
had to shift certain food groups around so that the icons could serve their function; what resulted from this was a clearer menu than what the owner previously had. Aside from the main sections of the menu, layouts for the lunch and dinner specials and special rolls were created as they are each on their own pages.

**WEEK 7: Pattern Design and Application**

As part of this class, we were to develop a pattern that was either for experimental purposes or to be used in the actual senior project. Developing a pattern worked in my favor in that it added visual interest to my identity system. Drawing inspiration from traditional Japanese patterns as seen in my mood board, the pattern I created utilizes simple shapes and line. What makes my pattern interesting is that it can be interpreted in a few ways: the shapes look like fish scales, the beautiful landscape of Japan, or even water waves. Whatever your interpretation, the simple yet elegant pattern is distinctly Japanese and is appropriate to the idea of simplicity in Japanese design. To make good use of the pattern, I applied it to the business card, letterhead, envelope, gift certificate, menu covers, and drinks list.

In creating the business card, I tried a variety of typographic treatments, such as where the address and phone numbers went, and what elements needed to be emphasized. Aside from the main elements such as the logotype and address, helpful information such as the lunch and dinner hours and what days the restaurant is closed were included. The phone number is in bold, as it is most likely the first thing one would look at on a busi-
ness card, since chances are, the patron already knows where the restaurant is located if they have a business card. An important step in creating this business card was that once the type treatment was settled, it set how the information would be displayed on the rest of the printed pieces, such as the letterhead, gift certificate and take-out menu.

I then used a chosen set of four icons and played with the positioning of where I wanted them to go. After several attempts of putting the icons on the front of the card, the best looking solution was to put them on the back, since I did not want the back of the business card to be blank anyway. Having moved the icons to the back kept the front of the business card easy to read but also served a greater purpose: it would remind the customer who happens to see the back of the card first that this is a restaurant offering a variety of food from sushi, noodles, and a variety of kitchen food.

For the gift certificate, I came up with several ideas that differed both in size and shape. One of my ideas was to have a more slender looking certificate that would be have 3 panels folded—two long, and one short that would overlap like a flap to keep itself closed. The flap would either tuck into a slit cut into the certificate itself, or be kept shut with a simple sticker. However, I ultimately decided to stick with a standard 4.25” x 5.5” sized card as it would be most cost affective, and would also resolve the issue of the kind of envelope that would need to be purchased.

One of the designs I had for the gift certificate was purely typographic on one side and was bold looking as it used large type and a contrasting white on the red-orange color, but it did not feel to be a part of the identity. Because of this, I created a more tra-
ditional gift certificate, and used the style of typography developed for the business card on here.

A letterhead and Monthly Sales Report sheet were also created. Both the letterhead and sales report sheet use the same point size as found on the business card, but the letterhead has a half inch strip at the bottom that uses the pattern. Instead of using the icons, the pattern found on the letterhead can also make a statement that this is “distinctly Fuji Sukiyaki.”

WEEK 8 and 9: Refining and Designing New Components

Having met with my advisor to go over the comments I received on my work that was turned in from the binder, I changed the type on both the “Dinner Specials” and “Fuji House Rolls” page, since it was described as looking a bit “clunky” and thick. Comparing the old and new versions, the revised version seems to be a lot easier on the eyes and even friendlier. I also had to resolve the awkward type treatment on the prices on the “Fuji House Rolls” page.

One of the more challenging pieces to create was the take-out menu. It was a lot harder than I had expected; the text required reformatting to fit the format of the page, and I had to spend some time figuring out the measurements to properly give the 3 columns the right amount of space within the grids. What threw the take-out menu off was the added vertical bar used to distinguish between lunch and dinner. Because of this one element, a lot of text and design elements had to shift around. I did not put the icons in
the take-out menu, as space was limited and having the icons in it made the menu seem too crowded.

Finally, I decided to create two posters in addition to the business identity as a fun element. Whether or not these posters will be turned into ads or displayed in the restaurant, they add a bit of humor to the strict and professional looking system. Both the phrases “Roll with it” and “Ichi. Ni. Sake!” are a play on words; both use elements associated with a Japanese restaurant yet still appeal to the main American audience.

WEEK 10: Refining and Producing

One of the last designed pieces was the cover for the lunch and dinner menus. The cover uses the pattern in the blue-grey or red-orange, depending on lunch or dinner, respectively. Changing the color of the lunch and dinner menus not only serve as a design element, but also provide the employees at the restaurant an easier time in distinguishing which menus are which when it comes time to switching out the menus from lunch and dinner and vice versa.

The last week of senior project was devoted to refining every piece in this identity system. Hours were spent printing and putting together comprehensives, and making sure all the pieces felt like they belonged together. There were some complications in printing double sided prints, such as making sure the images aligned or that enough of a bleed was left so that when it came time to trim the edges off of a piece, no white (or paper) would show.
The Results

I am pretty happy with the outcome with this project. This project was intense in that there was a lot of detail oriented work involved, and it required me to look at everything with a careful eye. The overall result of the business identity system is fairly conservative, yet it is refined and holds your attention. I think that this was a successful project in that I was able to fulfill the goals and objectives that I set out for myself by creating pieces that are aesthetically pleasing both as individual pieces and as a whole.

The “clients” were actually my parents. As a child of two hard working parents, I grew up at the restaurant and spent a lot of my youth there. Fuji Sukiyaki was built through ingenuity and the desire to produce high-quality food at an affordable price. Needless to say, the family business means a lot to me. Taking on this project was my way of giving back to the business that has supported me throughout all these years of childhood, and now college.
CHAPTER IV—Summary and Recommendation

Because I printed and cut everything myself, I did not have to deal with professional printers. The upside to this was that I could control everything myself, but the downside was that there was a limit to what I could do, such as printing on various types of papers or exploring the different types of finishing techniques such as embossing or die-cutting, for example. Dealing with a printer may have been more trouble than producing everything myself, but having the experience of having to deal with a printer may come in handy one day.

I believe that because I followed the various steps of the design process such as ideation and implementation thoroughly, I was able to effectively problem solve, and therefore produce a successful outcome. As a whole, I think the design conveys the sophistication, the energy, and the style of the dining experience at Fuji Sukiyaki. What guided me through this project was creative energy—staying inspired, working through design frustrations, and finally pushing through.

My advice to future students working on senior project is that there will be times when one can feel stuck; this may be the time to take a break, browse through other designs, or quite possibly generate a whole new idea and forget about the one you are stuck on. However, one must not forget about the time it takes to actually get everything designed and produced. Ideation and designing is a big part of the process, but there comes a point in time where you must move on and start implementing your pieces—you can generate ideas forever. Getting stuck on one element of the design will cause delay in
the creation of other work and before you know it, you may fall behind. Decide on one idea and go with it. Pump out those designs and keep moving along! Do not underestimate the time it takes to complete a project.

Senior project is supposed to wrap up your college career by showcasing what you've learned in all the years you have been in college, but it can easily turn into a painful experience if you wait until the last minute to do something. I have had my fair share of late nights (and early mornings!) because of procrastination. Senior project can also be a very enjoyable experience however, if you start early, follow suggested deadlines and keep making progress. What you will end up with may be a project that is portfolio ready and something you are truly proud of.
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