Identifying digital technologies for designing a mobile portal – odgovoren.si

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Abstract

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As part of the research project Odgovoren.si, we explored the potential development of a digital platform designed to support sustainability-oriented practices and enable effective communication among non-governmental organizations, social enterprises, and other socially responsible actors. We identified a gap in the market, noting the absence of comprehensive web-based solutions that integrate a flexible and modern user experience, a sustainability-driven visual identity, and intuitive content management within a single platform.

The objective of the research was to develop a digital solution that is sustainable, accessible, and visually coherent, while fostering collaboration among various stakeholders. We applied the design thinking methodology, conducted an analysis of existing CMS tools and prototyping software, and performed a comparative technical review of platforms such as WordPress, Wix, Odoo, and Figma. Figma emerged as the most suitable CMS due to its open nature, widespread adoption, and potential for integration with environmentally friendly practices (e.g., green hosting services).

Within the scope of the project, we developed a comprehensive visual identity, designed communication templates, and defined both visual and technological requirements.

The outcome of the project is a functional prototype of a digital platform that promotes inclusivity, transparency, and sustainable operation. Its social impact lies in the digital empowerment of the non-governmental sector, the promotion of responsible practices, and improved access to information for all. The project demonstrates the importance of aligning technology with the values of social responsibility.

1 Introduction

In an era marked by growing environmental and social consciousness, digital technologies have become critical enablers for promoting sustainable development and collaborative practices. As part of the Odgovoren.si project, this report investigates how a mobile-friendly digital platform can be developed to support sustainability-oriented communication and collaboration among non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social enterprises, and other socially responsible stakeholders. The goal is to create an accessible, visually coherent, and technically sustainable portal that empowers civil society actors through inclusive and innovative digital infrastructure.

The core research problem addressed in this paper lies in the absence of an integrated, sustainability-oriented digital platform that simultaneously incorporates user-cantered design, a coherent visual identity, and technical adaptability. Existing solutions available to NGOs and social enterprises are often fragmented, lack a sustainability-driven orientation, or do not ensure an intuitive and inclusive user experience. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to identify suitable digital technologies and design principles that can enable the creation of a mobile portal Odgovoren.si, designed to empower socially responsible stakeholders through accessibility, transparency, and ecological alignment.

To establish a strong foundation for designing such a platform, we began by reviewing key literature on mobile portal development. The field of mobile usability emphasizes user-centered design, adaptability, and seamless navigation as critical pillars for successful implementation. Lewis and Sauro (2021) argue that mobile usability requires simplified, intuitive interactions that reflect user behaviour patterns. Okonkwo (2024) further reinforces the “mobile-first” approach, highlighting the need to prioritize the mobile experience in both design and content delivery.

In parallel with the literature review, a targeted market analysis was conducted to examine digital platforms that reflect a similar mission. These include the American Sustainable Business Network (ASBN), Practice Greenhealth, Sustainable Brands, Ecowatch, Trellis, Ceres, and Sustainable Career Pathways. These platforms offer valuable insights into content management approaches, visual identity strategies, and user interaction models that center on sustainability, advocacy, and engagement.

Building on this research, we identified key criteria for designing an effective mobile portal: adaptability across devices, ease of content creation and management, visual alignment with sustainability values, and long-term technical scalability. At the same time, building on the research we conducted, we worked on developing a consistent brand image which included colour, typography and logotype creation.

To meet our needs for the portal creation, we evaluated four popular prototyping and content management tools—Figma, Wix, Odoo, and WordPress. These were assessed through a design thinking lens, allowing for iterative feedback, user testing potential, and alignment with environmental considerations such as green hosting compatibility.

Figma emerged as the most suitable tool for early-stage design and development due to its collaborative features, open structure, and integration flexibility. The findings, technological decisions and final designs throughout this process reflect our broader goal: to build a socially responsible platform that not only functions efficiently but also embodies the values of inclusivity, transparency, and ecological mindfulness.

2 Methodology

This research was conducted between January and May 2025, during the development phase of the Odgovoren.si project. It employed a qualitative, design-based methodology grounded in the principles

of design thinking. The purpose was to identify and evaluate digital technologies appropriate for developing Odgovoren.si platform. The process was structured around five iterative phases: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test.

To begin, we conducted a literature review to understand established principles in mobile portal design and user-cantered development. In parallel, we conducted a comparative market analysis of seven web-based platforms: American Sustainable Business Network (ASBN), Practice Greenhealth, Sustainable Brands, Ecowatch, Trellis, Ceres, and Sustainable Career Pathways, chosen for their alignment with socially responsible missions. These platforms were analysed through heuristic evaluation, focusing on functionality, content organization, visual coherence, and user interface design.

We then identified technical requirements and critical design features necessary for the target user base: non-governmental organizations, social enterprises, and environmentally conscious institutions. Key evaluation criteria included mobile responsiveness, ease of content management, customization flexibility, potential for integration with green hosting, and adherence to sustainable visual design standards.

Four digital tools—Figma, WordPress, Wix, and Odoo—were selected for comparative analysis based on their popularity, availability, and support for collaborative prototyping. Each tool was assessed using a scoring matrix across predefined dimensions (usability, scalability, sustainability alignment, and open access). Prototypes were developed in Figma to visualize the platform's structure and interface, allowing for iterative adjustments based on internal team feedback and alignment with sustainability goals.

The development of the visual identity (Corporate Identity – CI) for the Odgovoren.si project began without any pre-existing visual framework, which allowed for complete creative freedom in shaping the brand. The process was based on a qualitative and collaborative approach, incorporating research, conceptual development, internal evaluation and validation.

In the initial phase, we conducted a contextual analysis of both domestic and international platforms focused on social responsibility, sustainability, and ethical communication (e.g., Sustainable Brands, B Lab, Practice Greenhealth). The analysis examined visual elements (logo, colour palette, typography), tone of communication, and adaptability to digital environments. In parallel, we consulted relevant literature in the fields of sustainable design and colour psychology.

Based on these insights, we defined the platform's core values—reliability, transparency, sustainability, and openness—and translated them into specific visual guidelines. We developed several conceptual solutions, including various logo proposals, colour systems, and typographic structures. The design process took place in Adobe Illustrator and InDesign, where we created the primary logo, a vertical version, and a standalone symbol without typography. Positive and negative versions were also prepared to ensure flexibility across different backgrounds and contexts as you can see in the pictures below.

The entire process was collaborative. Through regular team meetings, we collectively developed, evaluated, and refined proposals—placing emphasis on alignment with the platform's values, contemporary visual aesthetics, and functionality in both digital and print environments.

Figure 1 - colour palette

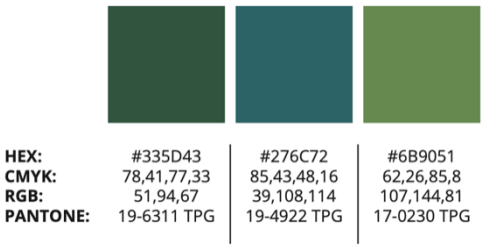


Figure 2 - primary logo

Figure 3 - Title typography

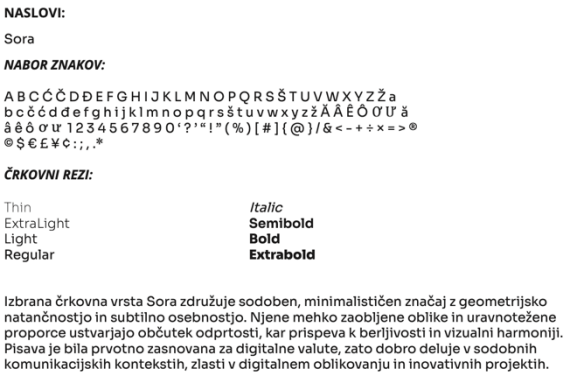


Figure 4 - Positive and negative versions of the logo

Figure 5 - Vertical version and a standalone symbol

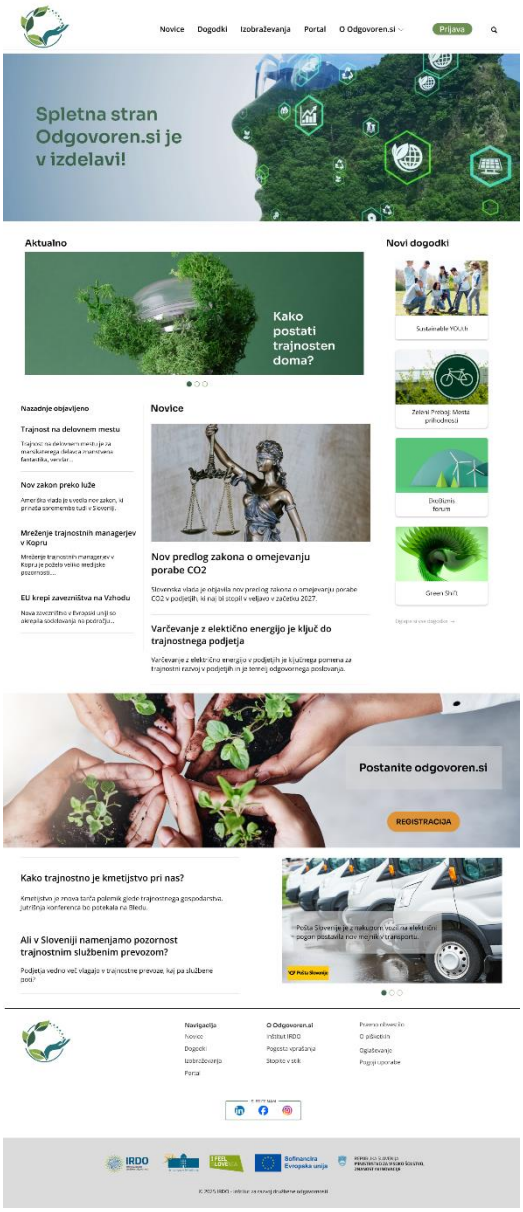
3 Results

A prototype of the platform was developed and finalized in Figma, incorporating the full visual identity system created specifically for the Odgovoren.si project. The design process was driven by the project's core values of accessibility, visual coherence, and user-centered interaction, resulting in a clear, intuitive, and consistent interface that reflects both the platform's functionality and its broader social mission.

Prototypes were developed separately for mobile and desktop users to ensure a responsive, device-specific user experience. The mobile version was prioritized due to the high rate of mobile device usage among the target groups, and it was completed and validated internally. The desktop version, while functionally aligned with the mobile interface, remains in the testing phase, pending further revisions and layout optimization based on feedback. Difference in the mobile and desktop version can be seen below.

Figure 6: Mobile design for homepage

Figure 7: Desktop design for homepage



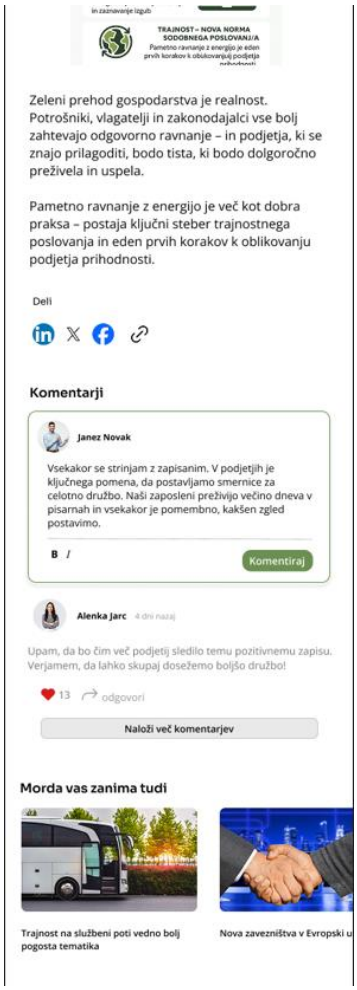
Within the mobile prototype, two distinct user flows were implemented—one for registered users and another for unregistered visitors. This division was established as a strategic engagement mechanism.

1. *Registered users* have access to the full range of platform functionalities. This includes dynamic content feeds, personalized updates and tools for interaction and collaboration, such as event registration forms and community network.
2. *Unregistered users*, in contrast, can navigate general information pages, learn about the platform's mission, and view limited news content. Clear calls to action and visual prompts are strategically placed to encourage registration, allowing unregistered users to recognize the benefits of becoming active participants.

On the picture of news section bellow, we can clearly see the difference between registered and unregistered user interface. Registered users can see and browse full versions of the news articles and interact with other users through comments, whereas unregistered users can only see a small part of the news article and are encouraged to register on the platform to unlock all features.

Figure 8: News section for unregistered users

Figure 9: News section for registered users



This layered access model was introduced to stimulate growth of the platform's user network while maintaining a low entry barrier for first-time visitors. By rewarding registration with increased utility

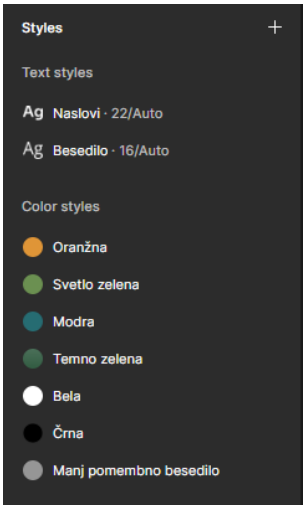
and personalized experiences, the platform fosters long-term engagement and strengthens the digital infrastructure for collaboration among socially responsible stakeholders.

Attention was given to layout consistency and visual hierarchy, ensuring that each screen guides the user logically through content without overwhelming them. The use of modular design components—such as cards, navigation tabs, and icons—ensures scalability and consistency across both user types and future content expansions.

Figure 10: Cards system for grouping potential learning courses

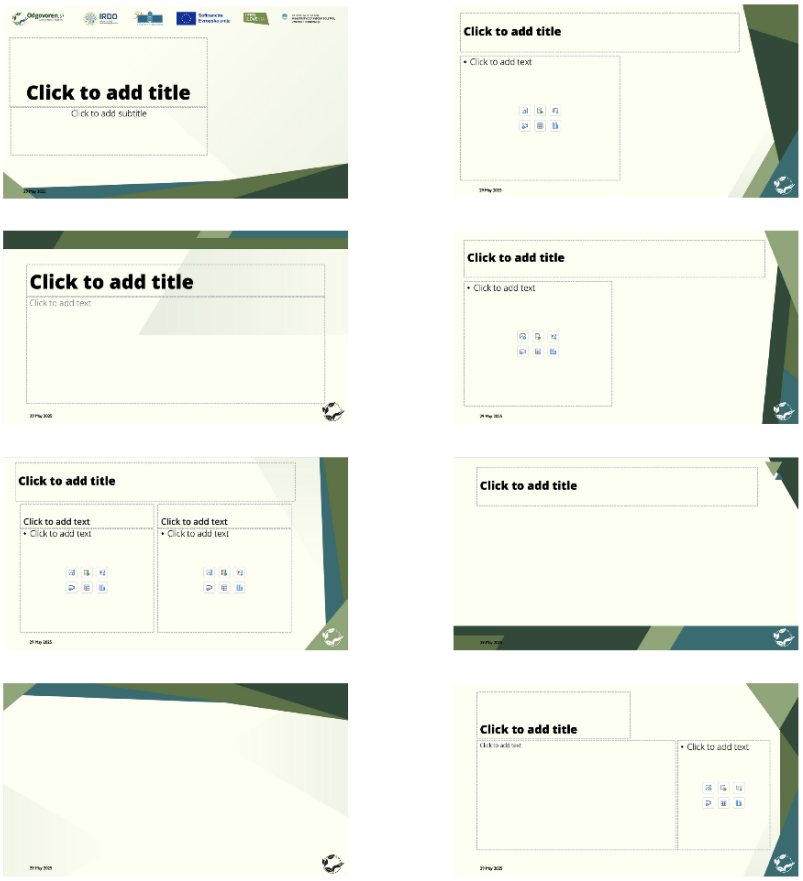
The prototype also incorporates the full visual branding system, including a sustainability-driven colour palette, icons, and typographic guidelines developed for Odgovoren.si. These elements were embedded into the Figma workspace as reusable components, reinforcing the brand's identity while streamlining future content updates or page development.

Figure 11: Branding system, incorporated into workspace



In parallel with the platform prototyping, the visual identity system was further refined and expanded. Building on the developed concepts, we created a comprehensive set of CI elements that, in addition to the core components, also includes applied materials such as promotional templates, Word documents, PowerPoint presentations, email signature graphics, and logo placement rules alongside other logos, respecting safe margins and visual hierarchy.

Figure 12 - Promotional templates – PowerPoint



Instead of formal user testing, we conducted a series of internal reviews and in-depth discussions within the project team. Evaluations were carried out both individually and collectively, focusing on criteria such as alignment with platform values, visual consistency, recognizability, usability across media, and sustainability considerations. Particular attention was given to the scalability of the CI system and its applicability across different formats and contexts—from print and presentations to co-branding scenarios.

Based on collective consensus, the most appropriate design solution was selected and formalized in the Odgovoren.si CI Manual. This document captures all key elements of the visual identity and provides clear usage guidelines for future communication materials. It establishes a strong visual foundation for the continued development of the platform and ensures long-term coherence and recognizability.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion the Odgovoren.si project illustrates how a collaborative, design-based approach can be used to develop a platform that is both functionally effective and aligned with sustainability values. Grounded in research and guided by design thinking, the process combined technical evaluation, user-cantered prototyping, and the creation of a coherent visual identity.

The resulting visual system reflects the platform's core values—reliability, transparency, sustainability, and openness—while the mobile prototype supports accessible and meaningful user engagement. By offering differentiated experiences for registered and unregistered users, the platform encourages deeper participation and community growth.

Overall, the project sets a foundation for future development and demonstrates the potential of ethically grounded digital design to support socially responsible initiatives

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