NOLABEL

How to create a sustainable customer growth strategy for a small brand?

To leverage branding and design for sustainable customer growth

Master Thesis by

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A brand is a story. A story connects me and others. Design is a novel way to depict the story. Good design helps to construct a fascinating story, which in turn, attracts people to use design.

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Executive Summary

About the Project:
Opportunities and challenges

In order to realize sustainable customer growth, a company could adopt different strategies: opening up a new market, developing new products, etc. Based on the SWOT analysis, No Label is small and lacking capital, while its main target group (middle-class men, aged 25-45) is growing rapidly. Thus, No Label's biggest opportunity lies in focusing on the current market and attract more potential customers within the market. After several interviews with its potential customers, the designer found the main challenge for **converting its potential customers to real customers** is that those people don't hold a strong belief that No Label is a "relevant brand" and "My kind of product".

Literature:
Right brand associations impact customers' purchase decisions and brand loyalty

According to customer-based brand equity(Keller, 1993), the long-term success of all future brand-related activities of an organization is greatly affected by the knowledge about the brand in memory of customers. The knowledge offers customers information to tell whether the brand is relevant and whether the brand sells the right products. **The belief that the brand is relevant could result in higher brand loyalty and positive responses to brand-driven activities such as their willingness to pay a premium price, keep purchasing the same brand, adopt new products and so on.**

Brand knowledge consists of brand awareness and brand associations. Once a customer is aware of the brand, the brand could enhance customers understanding of the brand by establishing related brand associations. **The right brand associations could directly result in customer's believing that the brand is relevant and "my kind of product".**

Literature:
Framework for forming right brand associations

The brand creates appropriate brand meaning in forms of product performance and brand imagery. The meaning of the brand is communicated by direct contact or experiences with the brands (products/services/experiences) or indirectly via the marketing-oriented activities. In response, customers start to form brand associations in terms of product attributes, benefits, or overall attitudes toward the brand.

Project Goal

No Label has established the right product category of "men's clothing." However, it's not doing well in creating the right brand meaning that could evoke corresponding brand associations. The current brand meaning is

mainly connected with functional features and benefits. In response, the brand associations in the minds of customers are also product-oriented. Those associations are easy to be replaced by competitors and fade away in the memories of customers. A strong brand should blend both product performance and imagery to create a rich, varied, but complementary set of brand associations(Keller, 2010). Besides, the current brand associations are not strong enough to convince potential customers to buy from No Label. Thus, the goals of this project are:

1. **Create appropriate brand meaning, including product performance and brand imagery, for No Label.**

2. **To establish strong, unique and favorable associations that could elicit the belief of "relevant brand" and "my kind of product" in the minds of potential customers. In this way, No Label could convert potential customers to real customers.**
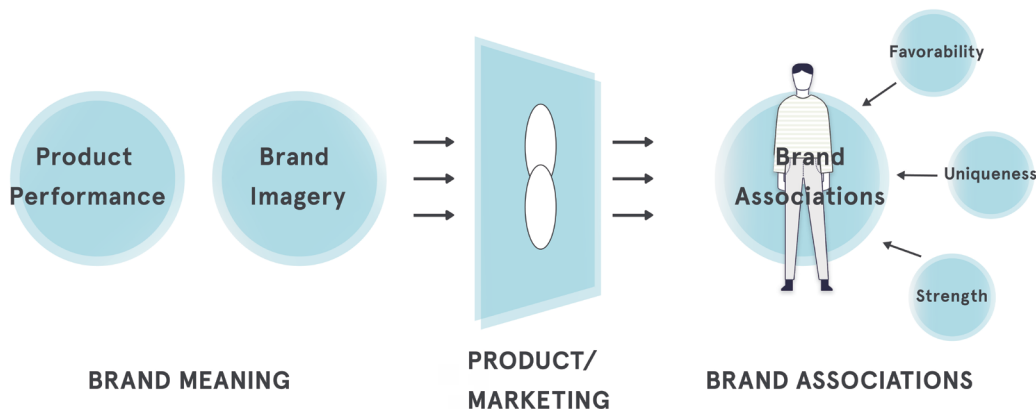

BRAND MEANING   **PRODUCT/ MARKETING**   **BRAND ASSOCIATIONS**

Figure 0.1: Process of forming brand associations

Research and Process

Extensive research of company, customer, competitor and Socio-Cultural context that customers live in was conducted in this project. The insights from this research were used throughout the whole project.

In the beginning, a SWOT analysis was conducted to look for opportunities and challenges for customer growth. A hypothesis of covering potential customers in the current market built after SWOT. The literature review was used to validate the hypothesis and explore possible approaches to covert potential customers. After that, the designer conducted several interviews with No Label's potential customers to define the problem. Two main problems were defined:

1. **Current brand meaning of No Label is too functional.**

2. **Potential customers are not forming strong brand associations when contact with No Label.**

The solution began with defining appropriate brand meaning, including product performance and brand imagery for No Label. For doing this, an online questionnaire with 19 loyal customers was conducted to find the uniqueness and favorable brand characteristics of No Label in the minds of customers. A DESTEP research and Search Areas were applied to explore the future

context of No Label's customer and the brand building directions for No Label. The "foresight" ensures that No Label keeps innovative and relevant in the long-term run. The competitor research was used to evaluate the uniqueness No Label.

After defining the brand meaning, several ideation sessions were conducted to come up with possible ideas for No Label to form corresponding brand associations. "Strong" comes from a combination of product/ service that aligns with what a brand promise and also right communication that convey the core meaning of No Label. In the end, an Innovation Roadmap showing "what No Label could do" to form right associations was formulated. The roadmap was evaluated and discussed by six No Label's internal people.

Results

1.   Brand Meaning Map

The map presents how No label create and integrate the right brand meaning, including product performance and brand imagery (usage imagery, brand value), step by step. It's a build-up process, in which the last Horizon is the foundation for next Horizon. Each Horizon has the main focus and the core meaning of No Label shifts. It shifts in light of the capability of No Label and the industry trend. The map helps to create a rich, varied, but complementary bran meaning for No Label. In the end, No Label is envisioned to be a socially-responsible brand that delivers the right products for people *(Figure 0.2)*.

2.   Brand Associations Roadmap

This is a process of superimposing functional performance, usage imagery, and Brand Value in the brand meaning of No Label. Through the implementation blueprint, the resulted brand associations and brand relationship were presented in the middle. It is expected the brand relationship will go from more functional to more emotional and in the end, value-driven *(Figure 0.3)*.

3.   Innovation Roadmap

A more detailed implementation roadmap showing related product/service that helps to fulfill the brand meaning and brand promise, and the communication approaches that could convey the message *(Figure 0.4)*.

4.   Concepts

In the end, two concepts were developed as a manifestation of showing how to build strong associations in the minds of customers: "The Journey of Clothes", "Shop for Good".

Validation

The final test of concept "The Journey of Clothes" showed the effectiveness of branding and design in increasing the purchase intention of customers.

Recommendation & Reflection

The designer reflected the whole process of the project. Based on all the researches and insights, several recommendations were written down for No Label.
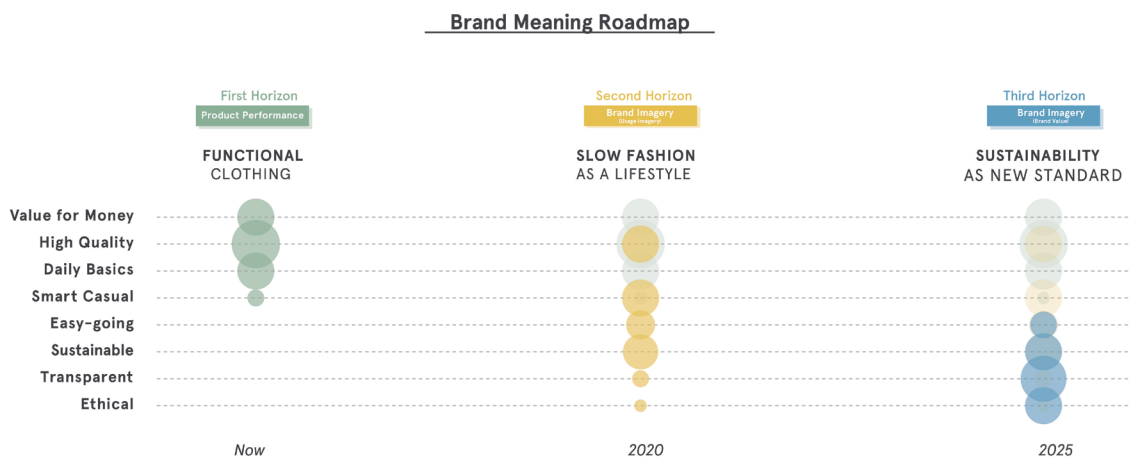
Brand Meaning Roadmap

First Horizon
Product Performance

FUNCTIONAL
CLOTHING

Second Horizon
Brand Imagery
(Usage Imagery)

SLOW FASHION
AS A LIFESTYLE

Third Horizon
Brand Imagery
(Brand Value)

SUSTAINABILITY
AS NEW STANDARD

Value for Money
High Quality
Daily Basics
Smart Casual
Easy-going
Sustainable
Transparent
Ethical

Now   *2020*   *2025*

Figure 0.2: Brand Meaning Roadmap

Innovation Roadmap

ACTIONABLE
Now

IMAGINABLE
2025

First Horizon

FUNCTIONAL CLOTHING

Offer high-quality basics
to fulfill the needs of customers.

BRAND PROMISE
HIGH QUALITY, FAIR PRICE.

PRODUCT

High-quality basics
Smart casual style

COMMUNICATION

1. Transparent in showing the material and
the production process to highlight the quality.

2. Break down cost structure to explain the
reasonable price comes from cutting
down the unnecessary cost.

3. Empathize that No Label focus on good
product, instead of label.

Second Horizon

SLOW FASHION

Deliver good enough products for customers
to make them buy less, use more.

BRAND PROMISE
SMART CASUAL, SLOW FASHION.

PRODUCT
Clothes with good design and good material
that could last longer.
1. Products/Services to encourage people
to wear their clothes more often.

2. Products/Services that help maintain the products,
and make products last longer.

COMMUNICATION

1. Highlight the material that used.

2. Offer returning services for customers if they are
not satisfied with the quality.

3. Give each garment a life expectancy.

Third Horizon

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Stimulate customers to think and reflect
before their purchase.

BRAND PROMISE
RADICAL TRANSPARENCY, MODERN LUXURY.

PRODUCT

1. Recycling programs.

2. Clothes using sustainable material.

COMMUNICATION

1. Associate products with people behind them.

2. Transparent in showing production and manufacturing
environment.

3. Translate products into resources, chemicals, pollutions

Figure 0.4: Innovation Roadmap

Brand Associations Roadmap

[BRAND MEANING]

	FUNCTIONAL CLOTHING	SLOW FASHION AS A LIFESTYLE	SUSTAINABILITY AS NEW STANDARD
	Product Performance	Brand Imagery (how visual)	Brand Imagery (how visual)
Value for Money			
High Quality			
Daily Basics			
Smart Casual			
Easy-going			
Sustainable			
Transparent			
Ethical			

[BRAND ASSOCIATION]

Comfortable · Reliable · Worthy · Good quality · Fair price · Basic collection

Customers tend to associate NO LABEL strongly with its high quality and fair price, thus wearing NO LABEL for a daily functional need.

Long lasting · Quality over quantity · Confidence of simplicity · Effort-less · Versatile casual

Customers will associate LABEL with quality, simplicity, thus purchasing it for both functional needs and emotional ease.

Self-identity · Right thing to do · Genuine · Eco-friendly · Socially responsible · Trustworthy

Customers will associate NO LABEL with social responsibility, a new standard for the industry, thus choosing NO LABEL for a personal belief.

[BRAND RELATIONSHIP]

NOLABEL — A reasonable choice for functional wearing of daily dress need

NOLABEL — An alternative way to pursue fashion and demonstrates lifestyle

NOLABEL — A new standard to challenge the status quo, the right choice to take action

[INNOVATION ROADMAP]

"Strong" brand association come from a combination of product/service that align with what a brand promise and also right communication that convey the core meaning of No Label.

	High quality, Fair Price.	**Smart casual, Slow fashion.**	**Radical transparency, Modern luxury.**
Brand promise	Offer high-quality basics to fulfill the needs of customers.	Deliver certain numbers of smart casual items each year. These items are sufficient and versatile on different occasions.	Deliver clothes what they should be: fit, good, sustainable
Product/service innovation		Offer matching guide/care guide to inspire customers buy less, use more.	
Communication	Transparent in showing product process and break down cost structure.	Highlight the quality of the product and the usage situations of the products.	Transparent in showing the resources used for producing clothes and people that made the clothes.

MY LABEL

Strategic roadmap to establish and enhance No Label's brand associations in the minds of customers

NOLABEL

– VISION –

To build strong, favorable and unique associations in the mind of customers that elicit a feeling of "my kind of product" and "relevant brand"

NOLABEL

Figure 0.3: Brand Associations Roadmap

Content

How to create a sustainable customer growth strategy for a small brand?

1

Project Introduction

This chapter addresses the background and aim of the project. It provides an overview of the project process and main research question.

1.1 Company Introduction

No Label is a small men's fashion brand, based in Amsterdam. Started in 2013, Michael van den Broek and Patrick van Riemsdijk (not in No Label any more), who had about 20-years experience in sourcing and manufacturing, founded No Label. Within six years, the brand has opened a second store in Rotterdam and grown into a total collection of shirts, jackets, chinos, knitwear, and sneakers.

Focusing on high-quality basics at a fair price, No Label has been successful among its early adopters. Now they have 300,000 visitors on the website per year, contributing to around 6000 online customers. They also have on average 90-100 (200 on the weekend) visits at Amsterdam shop. Except for that, No Label

has very high customer loyalty. 50% of their customers return to their online shop after purchase in the store.

No Label is continually growing. It aims at a global market and becoming the king of the Basics. Undoubtedly, attracting new customers constantly and retaining the current customers would be the major mission in the process of growing and extending. However, brand extension is a complex issue since it involves the changing of the social context, desires of the customers, company capabilities, and a variety of competitors in the market. A strategy is needed to help No Label to realize its customer growth.

Therefore, the main subject of this project is to **create a sustainable customer growth strategy for No Label.**

Figure 1.1: Image of No Label's store

1.2 Project Aim

This project focuses on the long-term and stable growth strategy for No Label. It aims to develop a strategy that helps No Label realize sustainable customer growth and design a product/service/experience as a tangible outcome for this strategy. The strategy should help No Label:

1. **Retain current customers and build deeper connections with current customers.**

2. **Attract new customers and convert potential customers to real customers.**

3. **Provide No Label a guide/framework for retaining current customers / converting potential customers**

The tangible deliverable in terms of product/service/experience should indicate how to implement the strategy in a tangible way.

1.3 Research Questions

Through discovering the differentiating values of No Label and its' potential customers in the market, a customer growth strategy of No Label will be created. Based on the strategy, some service/products would be designed as a showcase of manifestation of this strategy. The main research question is:

" How to create a sustainable customer growth strategy for a small brand? "

The following sub research questions might be answered:

*   **What are the main values that make No Label different from others?**

*   **Who are the current customers and potential customers?**

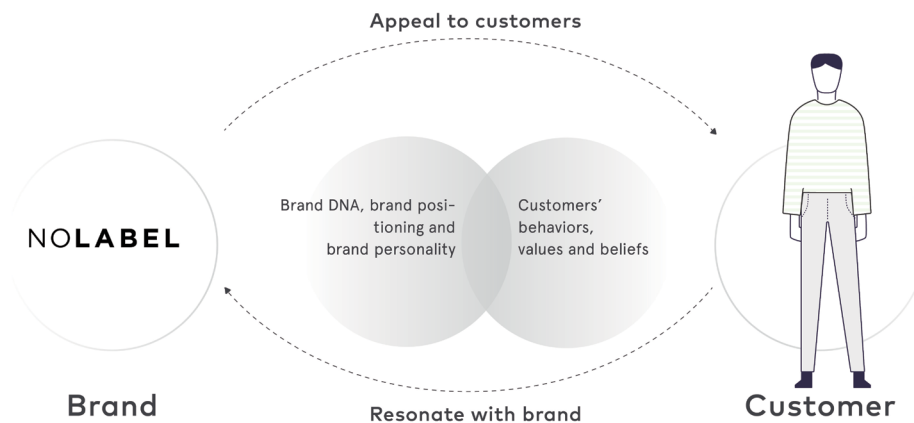*   **What are the behaviors, values of No Label's customers.**

Appeal to customers

NO**LABEL**

Brand DNA, brand posi-
tioning and
brand personality

Customers'
behaviors,
values and beliefs

Brand

Resonate with brand

Customer

Figure 1.2: Discover the uniqueness of No Label and the characteristics of its customer

1.4 Project Process

The project went iteratively. Extensive exploratory research regarding company, competitor, customer, trend, and literature was conducted to define the problem and discover possible directions for sustainable customer growth. The insights of the study were referred back to throughout the whole process. During the process, the problem and solution co-evolve (Maher, Poon & Boulanger, 1996; Dorst & Cross, 2001).
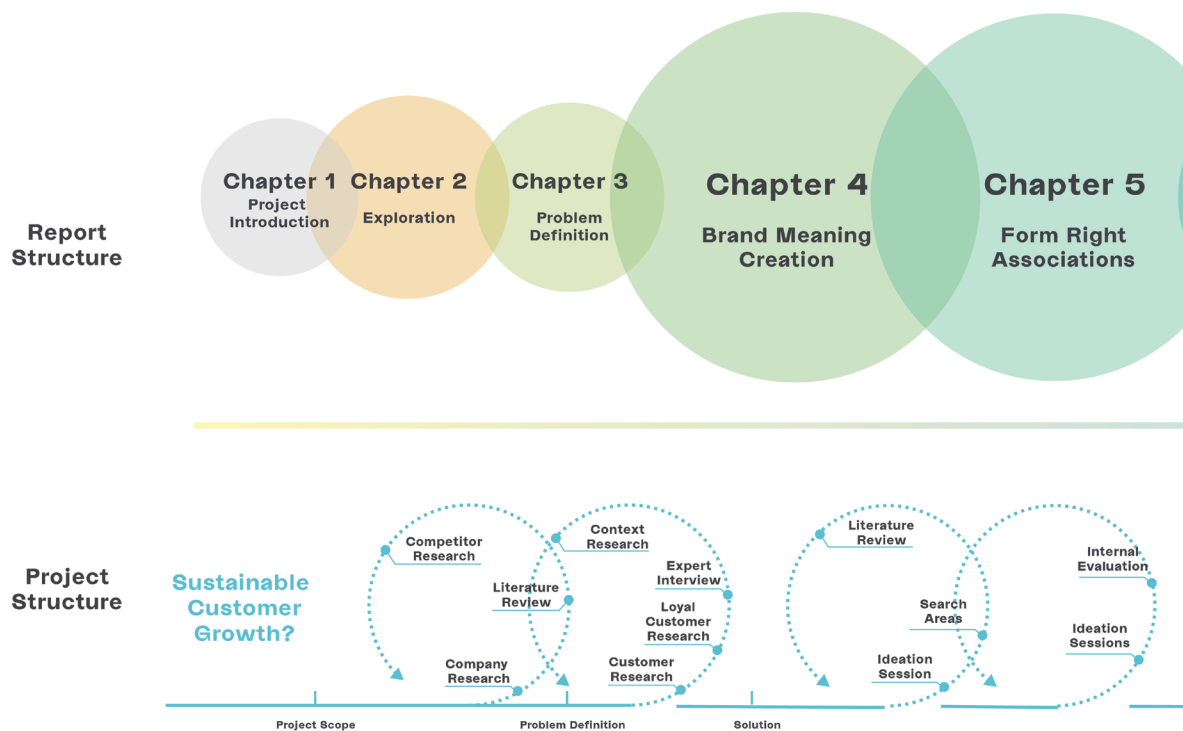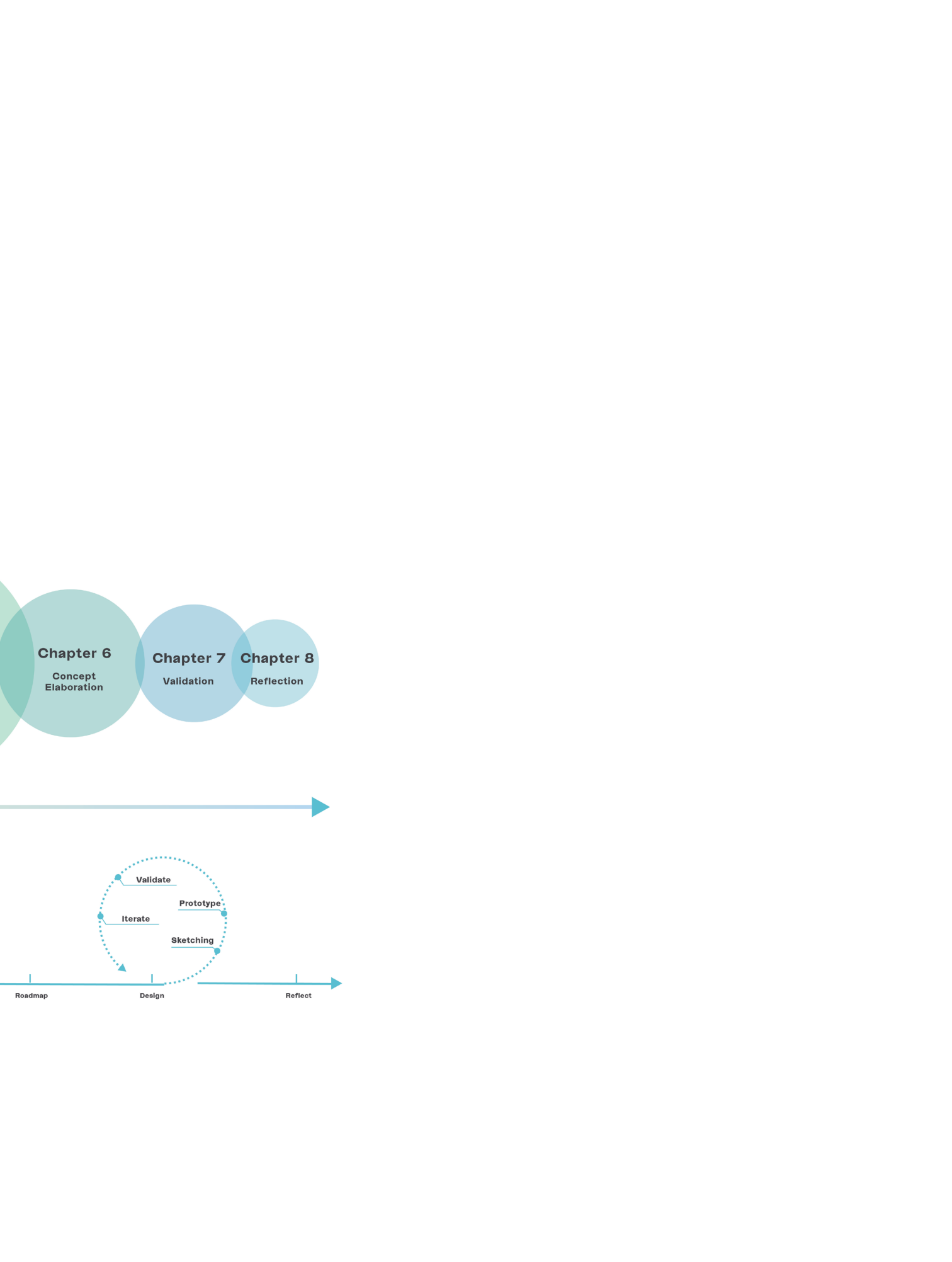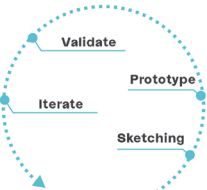

Figure 1.3: Process of the whole project

Chapter 6

Concept
Elaboration

Chapter 7

Validation

Chapter 8

Reflection

Validate

Prototype

Iterate

Sketching

Roadmap

Design

Reflect

2

Exploration

This chapter defines the scope of the project. With the SWOT analysis, the main challenges and opportunities in the way of achieving customer growth were mapped out. The literature review was conducted to explore the filed of brand and branding.

	Method	**Results**	**Conclusion**
Exploration	2.1 Company SWOT	① Strengths ② Weakness ③ Threats ④ Opportunities	No Label should keep focusing on the current market and dedicate to converting the potential customers to real customers.
	2.2 Literature Review	① Brand ② Customer-based Brand Equity ③ Brand knowledge affect buying behavior ④ Building customer-based brand equity ⑤ Creating right brand meaning and brand associations ⑦ Three criteria of brand associations	Right brand associations increase customers' purchase intention.

2.1 Company SWOT

The project started with an evaluation of the current situation of the company. The internal strength and weakness, external opportunities, and threats in the way of achieving customer growth were mapped out.

2.1.1 Process and Method

Aim

Find out what are the challenges and opportunities for No Label to achieve the sustainable customer growth.

Method

SWOT is a strategic planning technique for the company to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. In doing so, it helps the company figure out the barriers that will limit goals/objectives and explore possible directions for development(Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003).

Process

The designer took a 2-day training program of No Label to be at the shop and learn the basic culture and history of No Label. Besides, a formal interview with the managing director of No Label was conducted. The details of the interview could be found in Appendix A & B. The designer also had several informal conversations with people inside No Label in different positions.

The external factors, including customers, competitors, and business environment, were also involved in this phase. The customer research is mainly from the current selling data of No Label.
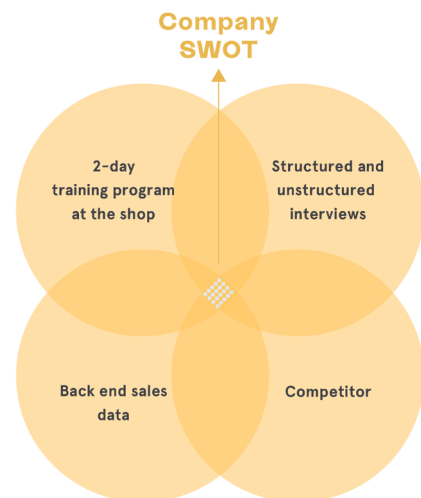

Figure 2.1: Process of SWOT analysis

2.1.2 Results

Strength

Quality and Price

The founders of No Label are experienced in sourcing and manufacturing. They know the right factories and good material. Thus, one of the main strength of No Label's product lies in product quality. Buying straight from the source and cutting down unnecessary cost in marketing and middle retailer, No label is able to deliver products at a fair price. Hence, the other strength of No Label lies in its price.

Quality and price are related, together they contribute to go good quality-price ratio, which is one of the main decisive factors when people make purchase decisions.

High Customer Loyalty

Currently, the customers of No Label are highly satisfied with the products. Those satisfactions bring high customer loyalty to No Label. The philosophy is simple: men will keep purchasing the same brand if they are satisfied with the overall buying, for convenience and efficiency. No Label has very high customer loyalty. 50% of their customers return to their online shop after purchase in the store.

"The dressing and shopping behavior of men cannot be compared with that of women and is characterized by a clear pattern. The one nice sweater that fits so well? Men prefer to order it immediately in multiple colors."

Managing director of No Label, Ruben Fust

Weakness

Capital

As a small company with only around 20 people, No label is still looking for investors. Short of capital prevent them from big innovations or changes at the moment. At the same time, they have to keep focused and innovative to appeal to investors and customers.

"Today's customers can go to 10 different shops but still buy from H&M. How can I compete as a small company with such a massive run? This is a huge challenge for us."

Managing director of No Label, Ruben Fust

Global Visibility

No Label is new and small, not so many people know them. The little investment in marketing and commercials also lower the brand awareness of No Label. And they now only have two physical stores in the Netherlands, which also decreases their visibility and accessibility in the global market.

Threats

Products are easy to be replaced by competitors

The competitors were divided into three categories: indirect competitors(Oger, The Society Shop), direct competitors(Van Gils, Only for Men, Suitsupply), and potentially strong competitors(Cos, Uniqlo, Everlane). Delivering fashion products for men aged 25-45, No Label

directly compete with Suitsupply, Van Gils, Only for men. All of these brands are Netherlands-based and initially target similar customer groups, middle-class men who want to dress well and look elegant. From a product level of competing, No Label differentiates itself with those competitors by focusing on basics. At the same time, for serving the needs of looking good, No Label also competes with many traditionally premium menswear brands in the Netherlands, such as Oger and The society shop. Those brands compete indirectly with No Label. They target a higher-end market and offer a delicate and complicated fashion. Compared with them, No Label has the advantage of delivering more modern and straightforward style fashion products at a lower price. In the native market, No Label does find a niche and delivers unique value for the customers. However, looking globally, No Label faces many other brands, including the biggest basics brands Uniqlo, very modern brand Cos, and rapid-growing American brand Everlane. Those brands are potentially robust competitors for No Label. The uniqueness of No Label's products fades when competing globally.
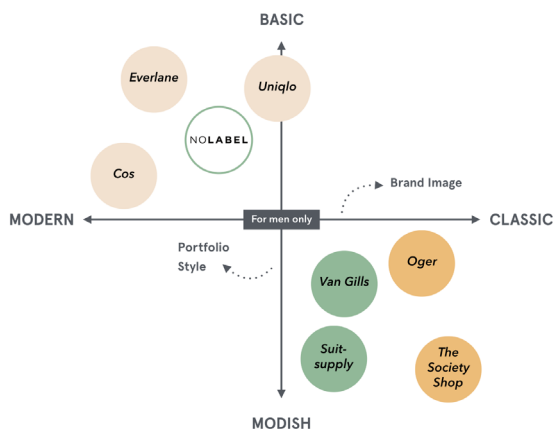

Figure 2.2: Competitors of No Label

Opportunities

Growing Target Group

We see the great potential in No Label's leading target group, middle-class men in age between 25-35. The world is seeing a rapid growth of the middle class, especially in developing countries (Mckinsey, 2019). Middle classes are swelling, resulting in a massive boost in more affordable fashion segments.

"Men are spending more money on clothes; I think they're spending more on more elegant things, too."

CEO of No Label, Fokke de Jong

Besides, No Label also has a large potential group: millennials, who showed a strong interest in the brand. "I really love the brand, and I was so surprised all my classmates and friends know the brand as well. But we are not ready yet, because it's still not for students." Said Peter, a 20-year-old student.

Transparency is the Key

With consumers' increasingly concerned about issues including fair labor, sustainable resourcing, and the environment, fashion companies are expected to be fully transparent across the value chain (The state of fahison, 2019). Transparency is also a key to gain trust with customers. However, considering the mark-up and competitor threats, not every company dares to be transparent. No Label already played a role associated with transparency.

Being ethical and sustainable, No Label only collaborates with factories that treat their employees well. They are transparent in showing the locations and pictures of the factories — they breakdown the price to empower customers to decide on what's fair and what's honest. Transparency will be a big competitive strength shortly, as 42 percent of millennials say they want to know what goes into products and how clothes were made before they buy (McKinsey, 2019).

"Our biggest opportunity lies in transparency. Not every company can do it."

Managing director of No Label, Ruben Fust

Strength	Weakness
Quality and Price	Capital
High Customer Loyalty	Global Visibility
Transparency	Products are easy to be replaced by competitors
Growing Target Group	
Opportunities	Threats

Figure 2.3: SWOT analysis of No Label

2.1.3 Conclusion

Three main conclusions can be drawn from the SWOT analysis:

1. **The current target market of No Label is growing, and there are many potential customers in the current market. The product features of quality, fair price, as well as a clean style help No Label win a group of loyal customers at the moment. In spite of that, No label is still very small and lack of capital. Therefore, it would be suggested that No Label keeps focusing on the current market and dedicate to converting the potential customers to real customers.**

2. **In the long run, the product advantages of No Label are easy to be replaced by competitors and fade away in the minds of customers. The perceptions that customers hold about No Label is also product-oriented and easy to be replaced. Hence, No Label is developing good products but ignoring building a strong brand.**

3. **Transparency could be one main differentiating competence of No Label in long-term competition.**

2.2 Literature Review

The previous stage indicates that the most significant opportunity for No Label lies in converting potential customers in the current market to real customers. And No Label is not building a strong brand, resulting in a threat of being replaced by competitors. The academic literature is used to explore the relationship between the brand and customers' purchase behaviors.

2.2.1 Process and Method

Aim

1. Explore the relationship between brand and sustainable customer growth.

2. Find out a way to convert potential customers to real customers.

Method

Literature Review

Main Literature:
Brand Management: Co-creating Meaningful Brands (Michael, 2018)
Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity (Keller, 1993)
Building customer-based brand equity: A blueprint for creating strong brands (Keller, 2001)
Innovation-driven Branding (Abbing, 2010)

2.2.2 Results

1. The relationship between brand and purchase decisions

Brand

The world we are living in today so much involves brands that we are immersed in a branded world from birth to death. Strong brands deliver many valuable outcomes for companies, including significant price premiums, loyal customers, sales, and ultimately, higher firm valuation (Fischer et al. 2010; Madden et al. 2006). According to Debbie Millman (2012), over the years, the values and functions of brands evolve. Today, the meaning of a brand includes functional performance, emotional resonance, identity reinforcement, and linking value. Michael Beveland (2018) defines a brand today:

"An intangible, symbolic marketplace resource, imbued with meaning by stakeholders and the broader context in which it is embedded that enables users to project their identity goal(s) to one or more audiences."
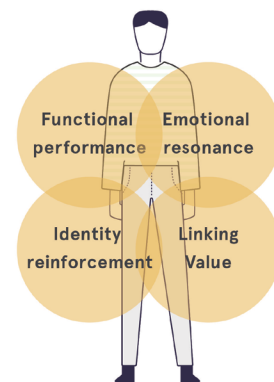

Figure 2.4: Brand value for individuals

Customer-Based Brand Equity

Full of meanings and values, brands are among the most important intangible assets for firms (Keller and Lehmann 2006) and brand-building activities are a top priority for many marketing managers (Keller, 1999). The value of the brand is believed to be very important for an organization's long-term success. The values of the intangible assets of a brand are related to brand equity. Generally, brand equity is defined as a set of assets linked to a brand's name and symbol that adds the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers" (Aaker, 1996).

"A product is something that is made in a factory; a brand is something that is bought by a customer. A product can be copied by a competitor; a brand is unique. A product can be quickly outdated; a successful brand is timeless."

Stephen King WPP Group, London

Brand Equity has been reviewed from a variety of perspectives (Asker 1991; Farquhar 1989; Srivastava and Shocker 1991). Among them, the customer-based brand equity (CBBE) of Keller (1993) is the most relevant for long-term strategic guidance for organizations' marketing programs and customer-centered innovation.

Defined as "The differential effect of brand knowledge on customer response to the marketing of that brand" (Keller, 1993), CBBE view brand equity from a customer perspective. It focuses on whether what customers know about the brand affect their attitude and responses to brand-driven activities such as their willingness to pay a premium price, choose one product over another, adopt new products or engage with brand-related activities and so on (Beverland, 2018). The belief that brand perceptions strongly influence buying behavior is widespread (Jenni Romaniuk, Byron Sharp, 2002). Based on Keller (1993), brand knowledge consists of brand awareness and brand associations (*Figure 2.5*). Brand awareness is reflected by the consumer's' ability to identify the brand under different conditions (Rossiter and Percy 1987). Brand associations is defined as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory. **Fundamentally, high levels of brand awareness and a positive brand image should increase the probability of brand choice, as well as produce greater consumer (and retailer) loyalty (Keller 1993, Beverland 2018).**

Figure 2.5: Brand knowledge affect buying behavior

2. How to build customer-based brand equity and convert potential customers to real customers?

Building Customer-Based Brand Equity

Built on the theory of customer-brand equity, Keller (2001) introduced a brand equity model (*Figure 2.6)* to build customer-based brand equity. Based on this model, building a strong brand can be thought of in terms of a sequence of four steps, in which each step is a strong foundation for the next step. As shown in *Figure 2.6,* the first step is to generate recognition of what needs a brand serves and what product category it belongs to. After building the basic recognition, the marketers can enhance the understanding of the brand through stressing the functional performance and emotional images of the brand. The 2nd stage is also called building brand associations. Typically, functional performance involves product features, style, design, etc. The emotional images relate to the personality, heritage, or culture of the brand. The customers take over in the third stage, where they will judge the product performance and elicit certain feeling toward a brand. In this stage, the perception of "relevant" brand and "my kind of product" will, to a large extent, increase the possibility of purchasing. The peak of the pyramid is defined by the strength of the customers' bond with the brand, which is also normally the end goal for a brand to build a strong relationship with customers. This bond could be manifested in brand loyalty, willing to pay premium prices for the brand (Starr and Rubinson 1978) adopt new products, and so on.

The goal of the project is to convert potential customers to real customers. It's resulted from the belief of "relevant brand" and "my kind of project." Based on the CBBE model, it occurs at the 3rd stage, where the customer holds a certain attitude toward the brand and will formulate judgment and feelings about wether the brand is relevant. A brand with right brand awareness and associations could result in customer's believing that the brand is relevant and "my kind of product" (Keller, 2012). No Label has defined a clear product category: men's basics. Based on the research in the last chapter, the main problem for converting customers is not that they are not able to recognize No Label's products, but they don't have strong associations with No Label that maintain in the memories and convince them to buy. **Therefore, the focus of this project is brand associations and corresponding brand response. Put more precisely, the response is the goal of the project, the belief of "relevant brand" and "my kind of products". Building the right associations is the approach to elicit this belief.**
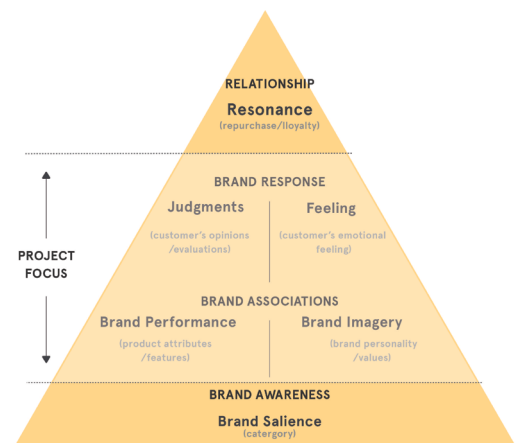

Figure 2.6: Customer-based Brand Equity model

Creating Right Brand Meaning and Brand Associations

Before we go deeper into this section, there are some terms that need to be clarified. In the CBBE model, the terms are used from a customer perspective. However, in the process of building CBBE, Keller (2012) also used many terms from the company's perspective. For example, the reciprocal word of brand association is brand meaning. A company builds on its brand meaning first and evoke corresponding brand associations in the minds of customers.

Creating brand meaning involves defining what the brand is characterized by and should stand for in the minds of customers (Keller, 2010). To some extent, Keller used brand meaning and brand associations to describe the same things. In this project, the designer used brand meaning from the perspective of company and brand associations from point view of customers to make it clear for the reader.
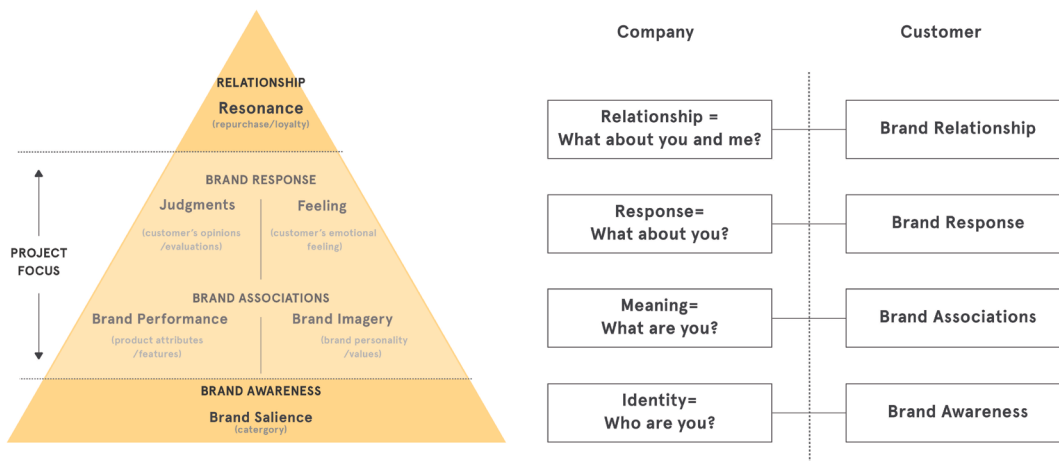

Figure 2.7: Terminology in building CBBE from different perspective

Thus, the process of building brand associations in the minds of customers is as shown in *Figure 2.8*. The brand creates appropriate brand meaning in forms of product performance and brand imagery. The meaning of the brand is communicated by direct contact or experiences with the brands (products/services/experiences) or indirectly via the marketing-oriented activities. In response, customers start to form brand corresponding associations in terms of product attributes, benefits, or overall attitudes toward the brand.

Three Criteria of Brand Associations

To be effective, brand associations need to resonate with customers, differentiate from competitors, and keep strong in the minds of customers over time (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000, Keller, 1993). Hence, there are three dimensions to evaluate brand associations:

- **FAVORABILITY**
- **UNIQUENESS**
- **STRENGTH**

FAVORABILITY refers to that customers believe the brand understand their values and the brand has attributes or benefits to satisfy their needs.

UNIQUENESS is the extent to which brand associations are shared with other brands. It represents that a brand is believed to have a "unique selling point" and the customers have a compelling reason for purchasing (Aaker1982; Ries and Trout1979;Wind 1982).

The **STRENGTH** of brand associations relates to how brand knowledge enter and maintain in the memory of customers. It could depends on the quantity and quality of brand knowledge processed in the minds of customers.
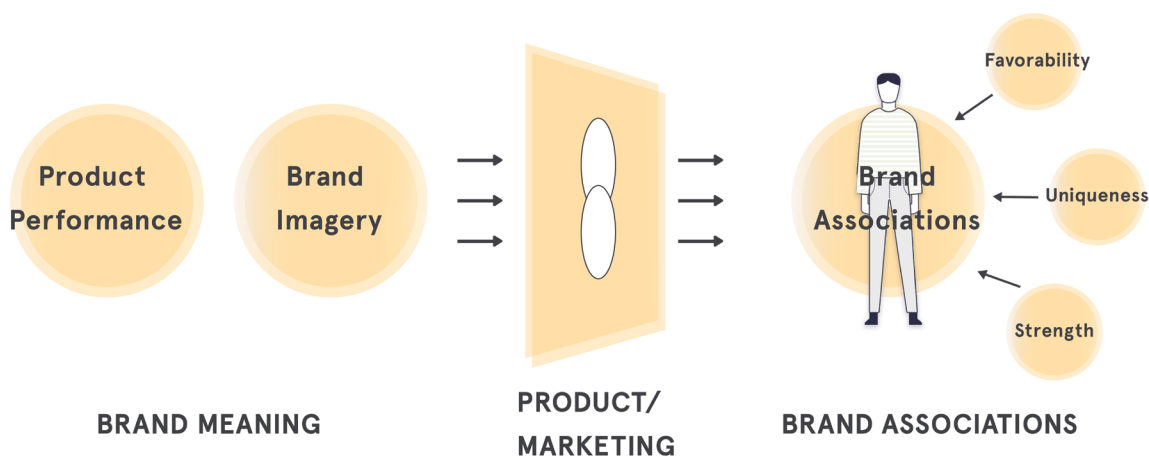

Product Performance — **Brand Imagery**

BRAND MEANING

PRODUCT/ MARKETING

Brand Associations — Favorability — Uniqueness — Strength

BRAND ASSOCIATIONS

Figure 2.8: Process of forming brand associations

2.2.3 Conclusion

1. Building a strong brand is valuable for the long-term relationship between a brand and its customers. In the view of customer-based brand equity, a brand is something exists in the minds of customers. What a customer know about a brand will affect their purchase decisions and loyalty. Therefore, the key step to convert potential customers and retain the old customers would be to establish the right brand knowledge in their minds.

2. The key step to impact the purchase decision of customers is that they hold a belief that brand is relevant and the products are appropriate. This belief is elicited by strong, unique and favorable brand associations.

3. A brand should define the right brand meaning in terms of product performance and brand imagery and form corresponding brand associations in the minds of customers.

3

Problem Definition

This chapter defines the relevant problems for the project. Customer research and expert interview were conducted to discover the problem.

Method	**Results**	**Conclusion**

Problem Definition

?

3.1 Customer Research

① An outline of customer
② The product-oriented relationship with customers
③ Plain products and brand identity
④ Not well-defined brand meaning

3.2 Expert Interview

① Irrational aspects of brand
② Functional benefits is not strong enough
③ Ethical parts of a brand are conditional

Design Goal

1. Create appropriate brand meaning, including product performance and brand imagery, for No Label.

2. To establish strong, unique, and favorable associations that could elicit the belief of "relevant brand" and "my kind of product" in the minds of potential customers. In this way, No Label could convert potential customers to real customers.

3.1 Customer Research

The literature pointed a direction to convert potential customers to real customers, which is by evoking the perception of "relevant brand" and "my kind of product." Customer research was conducted to understand the potential customers of No label better.

3.1.1 Process and Method

Aim

1. Find out the main characteristics of No Label's target customers.

2. Find out the main problem of converting potential customers to real customers.

Method

Quantitative questionnaire(Q1)
Qualitative research: interview/ observation
Back front data of No Label

Quantitative research and back front data that tracks the online shopping behavior of No Label were used to quantify attitudes, opinions, behaviors of customers. Quantitative research uses measurable data to formulate facts and uncover patterns in research(Mugenda, 1999).

Interviews with No Label's potential customers were conducted to explore design opportunities and understand their pain points and needs.

Process

The aim here was to find out the characteristics of No Label's customers and how potential customers think of No Label. The results of quantitative research (Q1) of 100 potential and current customers were analyzed. The Q1 was done by The Young, a Dutch brand agency, in August 2017. The designer analyzed the results to generate general images of customers. The back front data tracking the online shopping behavior of customers were also analyzed.

Six No Label's potential customers were recruited in qualitative research. Four of them were asked to look through the online website of No Label, while two of them were asked to walk into the store of No Label. During the process, the designer observed their behaviors. After that, interviews (Appendix C) were conducted to understand their thoughts and needs.


Figure 3.1: Process of conducting customer research

3.1.2 Results

An outline of customer

Based on the back front data and Q1, an outline of No Label's customer was drawn *(Figure 3.2)*. The main customers of No Label are men between age 25-35. 75% of these customers live in the Netherlands. These people are highly educated and work as a sales/marketing/IT manager, entrepreneur, accountant, broker, and layer. Those customers will describe themselves as a business type, smart, a perfectionist, loyal, curious, and honest.
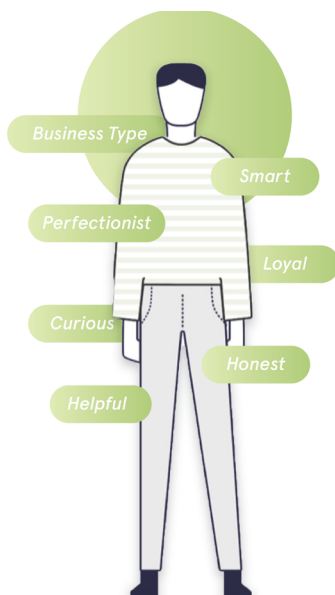
Plain products and brand identity

Based on the interviews with the potential customers of No Label *(Figure 3.3)*, people easily associate No Label with many other brands and styles. This, in no small extent, weakens the brand image of No Label. And the first impression of No Label is not unique and robust enough. This could result in that people will regard No Label as irrelevant, and they hold a belief that "not my kind of product." Many new customers like the style and feelings of No Label, but at the same time, they're wondering the brand story and seeking more information about the products. **So how can No Label leave an impression of "relevant" in the minds of its new customers and make it last longer in the minds of those customers? And how can No Label make it memorable for customers who don't have functional needs at the moment?**

Business Type
Smart
Perfectionist
Loyal
Curious
Honest
Helpful

Major Customer ◾

25-35, Male

Works as Sales/Marketing/IT Manager, Entrepreneur, Accountant, Broker, Layer...

75% live in the Netherlands

94% are highly educated
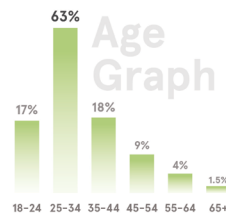
74% have a relationship or are married

Age Graph

63%

17%

18%

9%

4%

1.5%

18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+

Figure 3.2: An outline of No Label's customer

Jerry
38
Entrepreneur

"I think it's almost Scandinavian you know."

"And I think there's not so much engagement. No no joy no humor. No. It's it's so so plain. But it seems like that is an explicit choice. "

Roel
26
Designer

" It looks very clean...are they sustainable?"

" The shorts look expensive. Because you know, this is something you can also find in HM and Zara, with very low price. I don't know why they are so expensive."

Jim
25
Student

"They show these factories. I am not sure what does it mean, they are just the same factories as I can imagine."

" I don't feel this brand is something for me. I don't know the context of wearing those clothes and I don't see strong images to convince me where and how could wear those clothes."

Yee Khaw
28
Consultant

" I would love to go look at because It is a very neatly place and a nicely display and I really like that is really minimal. "

" Honestly, I did't even see the brand name. "

" I'm not really sure because I don't know whether it is really worth the price."

" I don't know the material of their products."

Housing
25
Student

" It's very clean and simple. And I also like the color, not very strong."

" I am considering buying a sneaker now. But the price is a bit high...Ehm, probably I will buy one for my graduation ceremony hahaa."

Tom
19
Student

" But it's still expensive for us. We are not ready to buy yet."

"Actually most of my friends like it as well. I was surprised that when I told them I work here, they all knew the brand already and they think it super cool."

Figure 3.3: The excerpt from the interviews with potential customers

Not well-defined brand meaning

No Label is transparent in showing factories and price. They do this because they hold a belief for ethical production. However, the responses from the customers are not as positive as expected. Some customers are confused by the messages of price and factories showed on the website. And they regard that information as irrelevant. It might result from that No Label does this intuitively and in one way. Besides, the brand has a purpose of bringing ethical and sustainable alternatives for the products. This purpose is not reflected in their current products, nor their brand promise.

"Our customers are wondering why we show the cost here and where is the profit going. Especially at the beginning."

Milo, employee of No Label

"I don't know why they show this factories. What does it mean to me?"

Jim, potential customers

The people in No Label have expertise in production and products but might not be specialized in defining their brand and brand image. In the end, it leads to that the brand meaning of No Lable is vague and not well-defined. As Abbing (2010) depicted in his book Brand-driven Innovation, small companies might always have the problem of not well defined the brand.

"There simply isn't a brand explicitly present in the organisation. This is often the case with smaller companies, or companies that have been founded by and are led by strong personalities with an intuitive way of doing business. They might posses a logo or brand identity, and maybe even a list of values or a mission statement, but there is not yet a well-de ned brand in existence – let alone one that is able to drive innovation."

Erik Roscam Abbing

3.2 Expert Interview

An interview with the expert in the field of branding and innovation was conducted to analyze the obstruction and possible solution directions for No Label.

Jeroen van Erp

Professor at TU Deflt & CCO (Chief Creative Officer) and partner at Fabrique

"If you create an experience for customers. It's always built up of what the product does. But there's also another input for the experience. And that is what we call the brand. Often, it overlaps, it resonates. "

I: Interviewer, Yujing Yang
E: Expert, Jeoren van Erp

E: And where do they stand for? What is their story?

I: So they sell the basics for men.

E: There's always...also within the range of basics, you can verify a lot. I mean you can make basics. And in practical very basic but colorful, or you

can make it very sustainable as these are basics but made from very sustainable fabrics. They are very very neutral and very plain. Which is okay if you sell the basics. **If you create an experience for customers. It's always built up of what the product does. But there's also another input for the experience. And that is what we call the brand. Often, it overlaps, it resonates.** What is the goal of your project?

I: For a sustainable customer growth.

E: Yes. OK then. I mean. ...**the sustainable customer growth. I truly believe, a strong brand with a strong articulated story helps. It makes the very plain products much more interesting. So there are a lot of irrational aspects that influence your experience and loyalty.** It all starts with the brand. And then you can think of how to articulate the brand in certain channels how to connect with people how to create loyalty whatever.

I: Yes. This brand, they do have their story. They are more or less transparent. They will show the markups, the cost of their products. And they also show the factories that they collaborate with.

E: Honestly, do you care? Is it that interesting? Is it relevant ? I think it's not interesting. It's not a story that touches the heart. So I think there should be elements in a brand .... being transparent show factories. It's very technocratic. And brands are not technocratic. Brand touches the human minds and emotions.

I: But isn't it the same? Toms give a pair of shoes to Africa and this brand, they select factories that treat their employees well?

E: Ah no no.. **That's also I mean I think to be ethical... it's becoming more and more a boundary condition instead of a differentiator.** So if a fashion company says yeah we're very ethical we produce our shoes to do it. And I will say go you better do. I think every company should do that.

I: Then isn't there a gap between the positioning and the story. Because like they position themselves as affordable basics, so super functional and product oriented. At the same time you could have a brand story of focusing transparency or ethical.... But I don't think it really connect to their functional positions or benefits. That's also the problem.

E: **A question is if these functional benefit is strong enough. So it's very difficult to build customer loyalty because it's very functional and you have many same choices.** So I think they should think of how to become more special. Ah. And I think it can be done by enriching the story. It's interesting to bridge the gap.

3.3 Conclusion

Three conclusion were drawn from customer research and expert interview:

1. **A strong brand with both the right product performance and brand imagery will help build a rational and emotional relationship with customers and make plain products more compelling.**

2. **The main problem to convert the potential customers is that the plain brand identity makes new or potential customers perceive No Label as "irrelevant" and not be convinced that No Label is "my kind of product." The perception of irrelevance will, in no small part, decreases their chance of purchasing and become real customers.**

3. **The current brand meaning of No Label is too functional that would not touch the heart of the customer. Besides, the only product-oriented benefits in the long-term run would result in a weak brand relationship with customers.**

3.4 Problem Definition

Combined with the literature review, we can conclude that the current No Label brand meaning is very performance-oriented and not well defined. And the brand associations are not strong enough to convince customers that No Label is the right brand and deliver the right products. Thus the two main goals in this project were formulated:

1. **Create appropriate brand meaning, including product performance and brand imagery, for No Label.**

2. **To establish strong, unique, and favorable associations that could elicit the belief of "relevant brand" and "my kind of product" in the minds of potential customers. In this way, No Label could convert potential customers to real customers.**
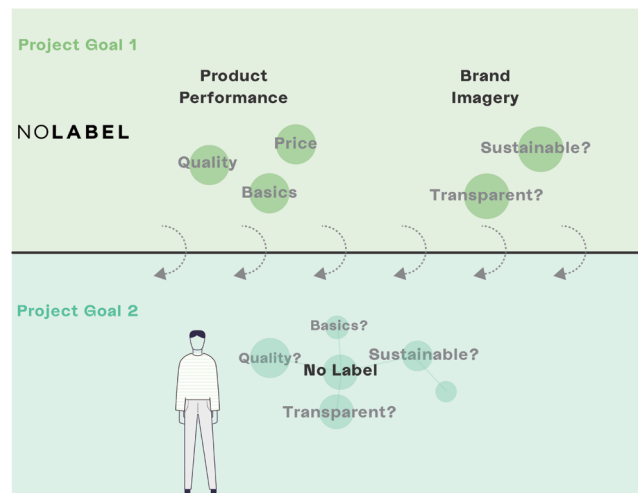
Figure 3.4: Project goal

4

Brand Meaning Creation

This chapter synthesizes the customer research, future context research, vision of the company CEO to forge appropriate brand meaning for No Label. The Brand Meaning Roadmap was created in the end.

	Method	Results	Conclusion
Brand Meaning Creation	**4.1 Loyal Customer Research**	① Performance related characteristics ② Imagery related brand characteristics	**Brand Meaning** Product performance: *Smart casual, High quality, value for money, Functional, Daily basics*
	4.2 Future Context Research	① DESTEP ② Search Areas ③ Synthesis	
	4.3 Vision of CEO	① Vision of CEO	Brand Imagery: *Transparent, Sustainable, Ethical, Slow fashion, Socially responsible, Easy-going*
	4.4 Create Brand Meaning	① Brand Meaning Roadmap	

4.1 Loyal Customer Research

The customers already formed certain brand associations through direct/indirect contact with No Label. From the high satisfaction and loyalty of current customers, it could be anticipated that certain characteristics of No Label are favorable. For creating brand meaning for No Label, the designer took an outside-in method, looking for the uniqueness of No Label by discovering the needs and value of customers.

4.1.1 Process and Method

Aim

1. Find out the favorable associations of customers.

2. Find out the needs and value of No Label's target group.

3. Define the right brand characteristics in No Label's brand meaning.

Method

Qualitative questionnaire(Q2)

Observation at shop

Interview with shop assistant

According to Beverland(2018), brands have been used as resources to achieve self-authentication and social expectations. Especially for clothes, which is always an essential product for showing personality and status.

So, an online questionnaire (Q2) was designed to find out how No Label help customers to construct their characters as well as fulfill their social expectations. In this way, the uniqueness of No Label can be made explicitly. Add to that, the designer also observes the shopping behavior of customers at the shop and constructed several informal talks with shop assistants, to explore the needs of customers.

Process

The Q2 was first designed as a booklet(Appendix D). The booklet was tested with two students and two internal employees of No Label. Besides, an expert evaluation was carried out with Marina Bos, an qualitative research expert at the Delft University of Technology. In the end, the real Q2 was carried out in forms of an online questionnaire(Appendix E). The questionnaire is not the best way of getting the depth of insights forms customers in qualitative research. However, in this project, it's more accessible to get in touch with the returning customers of No Label via email. The Q2 was sent out to 40 loyal customers of No Label to get 20 responses. Each of the customers who answered the questions will be rewarded with a chino. In the end, 19 customers replied. The questions and intention behind questions can be found in Appendix F. The designer also observed the customers in the shop and have several informal talks with shop assistants(Appendix G).

4.1.2 Results

Performance related characteristics

Overall, people love No Label mainly due to the product-oriented features. In Q2, when people asked about "what are the things that attract you most when choosing No Label?
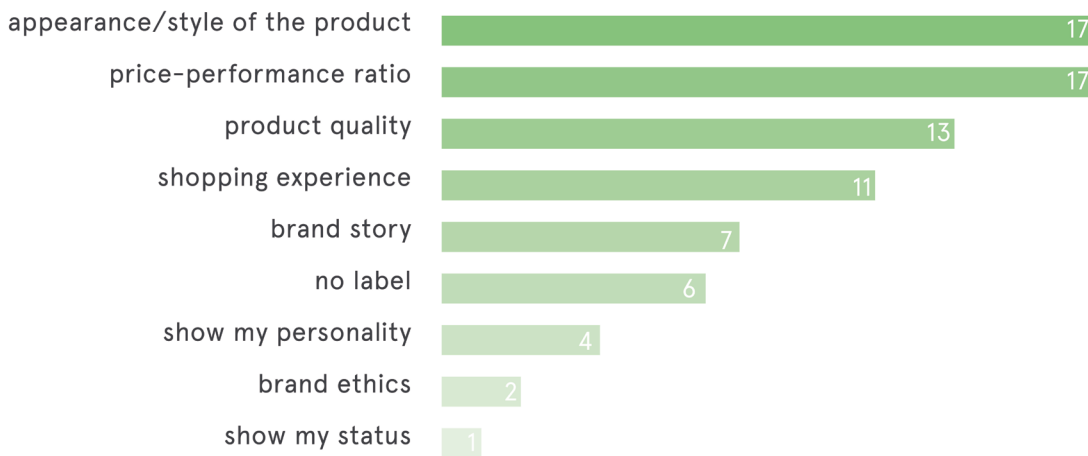

Figure 4.1: Average score of the question

Smart Casual & Functional (versatile, Simple)

One of the most important reasons that people love No Label is that they could wear it both casually and formally. This is because of the smart-casual style of No Label. Based on the questionnaire, smart casual is also the favorite style of No Label's customers. The benefits that associated with smart causal and basics are that it could be versatile on both professional and private occasions and bring simplicity for the customers.

It reflects that the customers of No Label are making a balance between professional and personal lives. For example, many customers

work as sales managers, and their jobs require them to look professional. At the same time, they also want to dress comfortably on personal occasions, such as hanging out, traveling, going to a party. So they love the products that can be versatile to different occasions.

Basic & No label (understated style, low-key)

Based on Q1 & Q2, the understated style and the fact it has no external label are also popular with No Label's customers. The customers of No Label would like to keep low-key. They care about whether they look elegant, instead of showing off status. In Q2, the customers were asked to

evaluate the extent that they want people to know they are wearing No Label. The answers to this question were extremely opposite. Half of the respondents grade it between 1-3 because they believe it's not about showing the brand, but about making people think they are dressing well. Half of them score it between 7-9, but the reason they score it high is that they want to recommend No Label to their friends instead of showing off.

"I want people to think I dress well, not to be impressed by a brand."

One answer from Q2

High Quality (elegant, comfortable, confident, reliable)

For No Label's customers, the quality of the products mainly means they could look good and feel confident. In Q2, customers were asked to answer the questions of when and why they wear certain No Label products. Based on the results, most of those customers will face multiple professional occasions, such as giving a presentation, meeting clients, going on a business trip, and attending the conference. During those occasions, they would like to dress elegantly and seen as reliable. So they would choose No Label's suits, knitwear, and sneakers. Those high-quality and stylish products make them feel confident and at the same time, feel comfortable.

However, quality is also a very subjective characteristic. Some people might think a garment is high-quality compared to its price; others might judge the quality based on if it's comfortable. In the question of "what do you think No Label should improve?",

many respondents suggested that No Label could improve the quality of certain products. Therefore, a single association of quality is meaningless. It should be related to other functional or emotional benefits.

Figure 4.2: The professional occasions when people wear No Label

Value for money

Value for money is a fundamental attractiveness for NO Label's primary target group, middle-class men. It's also an essential competence for No Label, especially when it's small. And it's an association related to the quality of the product firmly. Indeed, the value for money is also a partial association that shares with other brands. So how to make this association more meaningful and more unique will also be a challenge.

Figure 4.3: An image of main customer of No Label

Imagery related brand characteristics

Easygoing (friendly)

Among 19 customers, half of them would like to be described as confident, reliable, and easygoing. The customers would like to be seen as confident and reliable, especially in their professional life. At the same time, they want to be easy-going. That's why they love the clean and understated style. Besides, they like the fact that No Label's people are friendly and easy-going. And many of them desirable No Label as a dog, who gives a feeling of loyal and affectionate.

Transparent (honest, innovative)

Although this association has not been strong so far, it was mentioned by customers. In Q2, two of the nineteen answers said the uniqueness of No Label is that it's transparent in showing cost. And they think this will make NO label a brand of innovative and honest.

4.1.3 Conclusion

To sum up, there are many certain positive associations about No Label in the minds of customers *(Figure 4.5)*. And those associations reflect their favorable brand characteristics of No Label. **The salient brand characteristics were presented in green: Smart casual, Basics, High quality, easy-going, value for money, transparent.** Most of them are more performance-oriented and functional. At the same time, the salient product characteristics such as quality are also interpreted differently in the minds of customers. It might be interesting to add more meanings to those product features and create corresponding associations. Besides, more imagery characteristics should be added to No label's brand meaning. Strong brands blend product performance and brand imagery to create a rich, varied, but complementary set of customer response to the brand(Keller, 2001).

Figure 4.4: A screenshot of No Label's cost breakdown

Figure 4.5: Favorable brand characteristics

4.2 Future Context Research

The previous section found out the favorable brand associations of current customers. However, only focusing on reinforcing a brand's existing associations may not address shifting socio-cultural expectations or challenges faced by consumers, resulting in perceptions of irrelevance (Holt 2004). Therefore, it's also meaningful to take a foresight of the future and find out the possible brand meaning appropriate to the customers.

4.2.1 Process and Method

Aim

1. Scan the future context that customers live in.

2. Find out possible brand building directions for No Label.

Method

DESTEP
Search Areas
Secondary Research

DESTEP-factors scouts for external drivers for a company(Vos, J.p, 2005). It is based on the classic demographic, economic, political, environmental, social and technological issues. DEPEST points at interesting areas to look at, and the insights from DESTEP were mainly used to map out the opportunities for No Label. Then Search Areas were conducted to connect the relevant external future world and internal strength.

Typically, Search areas are strategic ideas for innovation and potential new business opportunities(Buijs, 2012). Here Search Areas were used to find out possible brand building directions for No Label. Because based on Erik(2010), a brand could look for other opportunities from market, customer, or technology to develop innovations and build a brand on. This process is called 'innovation-driven branding': the innovation is a foundation to build the brand on, instead of the other way round.

Process

The secondary research was conducted to find DESTEP factors. Besides, the designer also went to serval design pioneer exhibitions, for example, Salone del Mobile.Milano(https://www.salonemilano.it/en/), to get sensory insights. The results of DESTP could be found in Appendix H. After that, the DESTEP factors were synthesized to several themes(Appendix I). Those themes were used for generating Search Areas. For doing Search Areas, both top-down and bottom-up methods were applied. The Search Areas were used to look for brand building directions and envisioned brand meaning.
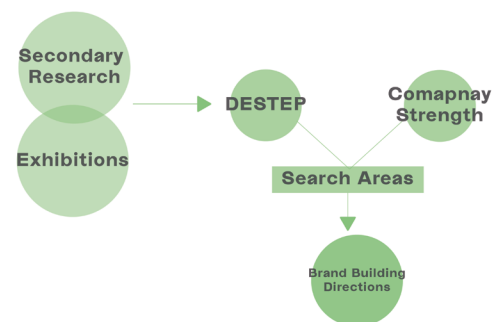

Figure 4.6: Process of looking for brand-building directions

4.2.2 Results

1. DESTEP

Anxiety about the environment

In the age of 24/7 connectivity and digital information, people are more aware of what's happening in the world. The polarized politics, the environment, trade wars, cybercrime, technological displacement, and so on cause significant anxiety of people. They are seriously concerned with social and environmental issues. A new global ethos is emerging, customers will continuously reward brands that share more social responsibility.

Pre-owned, refurbished, repaired and rental business models

The customers' insatiable appetite for fashion drives brands to produce more fast fashion products. The contradiction between customers' hunger for newness and embracing sustainability drives new business model of selling fashion products. The lifespan of fashion products is being stretched as pre-owned, refurbished, repaired and rental business models. For example, China's YCloset uses a subscription rental model to grant customers access to an array of clothing and accessories free of additional charges. The number of brands getting into the rental, resale, and refurbishment business is also expected to increase markedly (Mckinsey, 2019).

Getting Woke

From accumulative consumption to smart consumption

Younger generations are passionate for social and environmental problems.

Figure 4.7: Customers concern more about environmental and social issues

Ethical Brand

Increasingly, traditional governmental institutions are deemed to be either unwilling or unable to meet many of people's basic expectations. This has declined in people's trust in governments and created an opportunity for organizations to step up. Customers are more and more expecting brands to be ethical and do the right thing. The ethics economy is booming. Traditional brands are believed to be profit-driven, whereas they have to be more purpose-driven to meet the new expectations of customers. Many big brands are putting ethics at the heart of their strategy and operations. IKEA has created a pledge to employ refugees at production centers in Jordan. They put this as part of a long-term plan to create employment for 200,000 disadvantaged people around the world through social entrepreneurship programs (Fjord Trends, 2018). H&M launched a Pride collection in 2018 in support of the LGBTQ+ community(MiKensy, 2019). Customers are making rational judgments about purchases on the best outcome in terms of benefits for them and the environment and social issues. A new luxury for customers today may not be a logo but a product without costing someone's life or environment.

Figure 4.8: Customers are demanding more ethical brands

Meaningful brand

A strong brand today is not only here to sell something to the customers. It's also about communicating and conveying messages and values to the entire community of the brand. A meaningful brand today is transforming from "transaction" to "education." We see many successful brands today, including Lego and Nike, are on board. Lego encourages people to be creative even though you are an adult already. Nike's famous slogan, "Go beyond Yourselves" resonates with thousands of people that are struggling with life and want to challenge impossibilities.

" A product can no longer be only and purely craftsmanship plus creativity and heritage: we need to add values and emotion to it. Products need to be meaningful. "

Cédric Charbit, Chief Executive of Balenciaga

Consumers are expecting more experience in physical store

While we see a burst of e-commerce, people will still make their way to physical stores, to get experiences that they won't find anywhere else. More and more retail managers see their physical store as a connection to their customers. They are offering rich, playful experiences that are more likely to engage with users. New retail concept such as Amazon go(reference), and Alibaba Hema(reference) are shaping the retail.

"At the end of the day, this is how you engage with the community, to engage with the brand, not only via transactions."

Chief executive of Balenciaga

Meaningful Brand
From transaction to education

The brand is more about conveying message and value to the entire community of the brand.
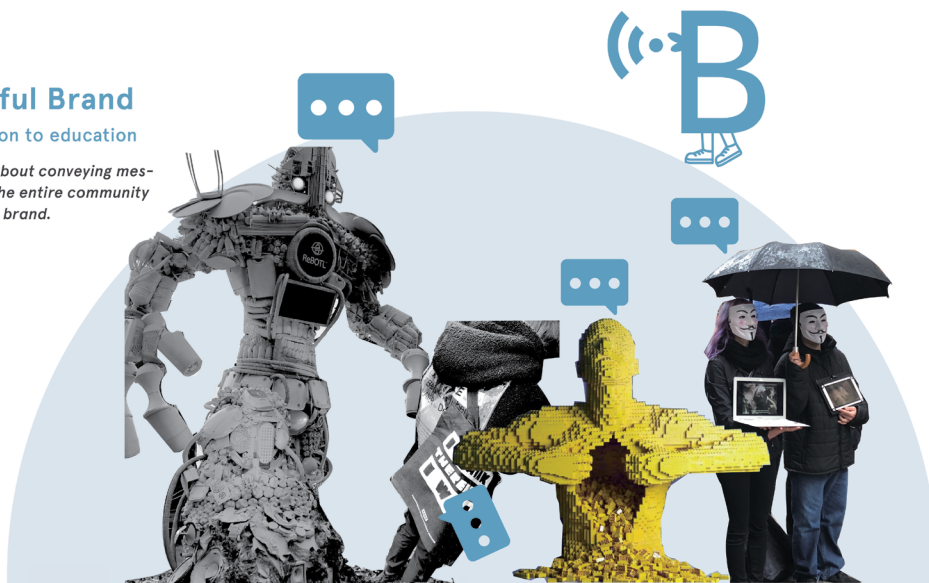
Figure 4.9: Customers expect brands to be meaningful

Gap between inspiration and purchase

Besides, the gap between discovery and purchase in the mobile consumer journey has become a pain-point for a more impatient fashion consumer. They are inspired by some fashion influencers or videos but probably can't find a brand to buy. Or they see a brand but are not inspired enough. Consumers are more likely to find inspiration from external sources (e.g., influencers, friends, TV) than directly from the brand or retailer.

Radical Transparency

After years of having personal data owned and handled by businesses, a burst of anxiety about data privacy cause more disappointed and distrusting customers. They now expect companies to reciprocate with radical transparency and sharing of information. Besides, the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) fundamentally reshape the way in which data is handled, from private enterprise to public organizations.

In the fashion industry, transparency is also an increasingly important priority. This coincides the rising desire to alleviate their impact on the environment of some customers. Given the need to regain the trust from customers, fashion players must face the fact that radical transparency is coming soon across the supply chain. The one who is left behind would face the risk of losing customers.

Correspondingly, some brands are taking the initiatives to be more transparent, in many cases specifying costs of materials, labor, transport,
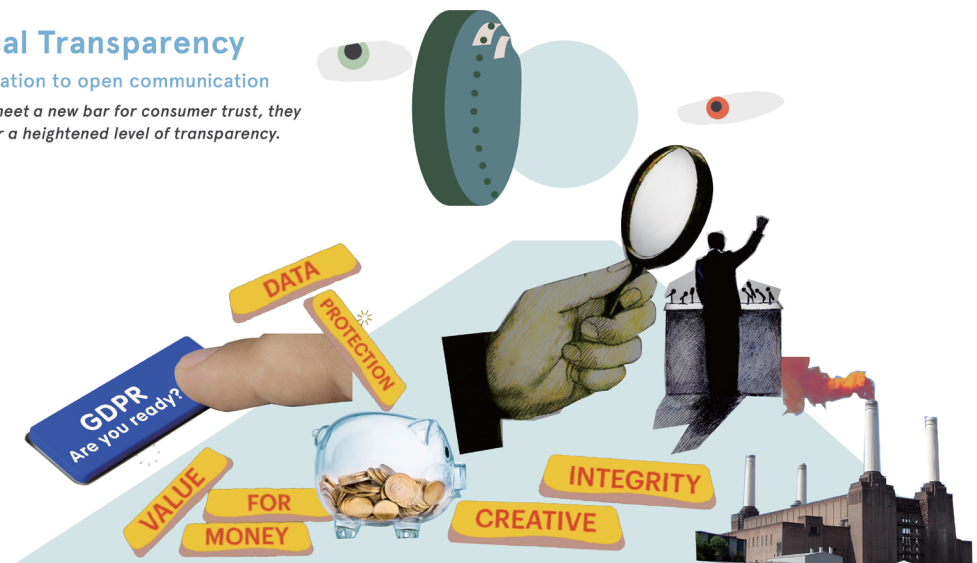

Figure 4.10: Radical transparency of company

Technology: Automation/Personalization

Automation

Face recognition/ voice recognition/image recognition

Automation of hunting, negotiating, purchasing, delivery arrangements and more.

Automation and data analytics have enabled a new breed of start-ups to achieve agile made-to-order production.

Micro warehousing, where retailers put small distribution centers close to large urban areas

Personalization

AR/ VR fitting room

Visual recognition and recommend similar garments

Machine learning algorithms use customers profile, location, item local availability, and chatbot answer to recommend relevant items.

Amazon Alexa, google home for voice conversation

Conclusion

Based on the future context research, a more sustainable and ethical fashion is undoubtedly an unstoppable trend, and will even become the standard for fashion companies in the future. A brand that can realize sustainability may not stand out in the future, but a brand without sustainability will be left behind. **A brand without sustainability will definitely be left behind.**

The DESTEP results were used as opportunities for No Label in Search Areas *(Figure 4.11)*.

Opportunities

1. Anxiety about the environment

2. Ethical brand

3. More experiences in physical store

4. Radical transparency

5. Experiences and access to products

6. Personalization technology

7. Automation technology

8. The gap between inspiration and purchase
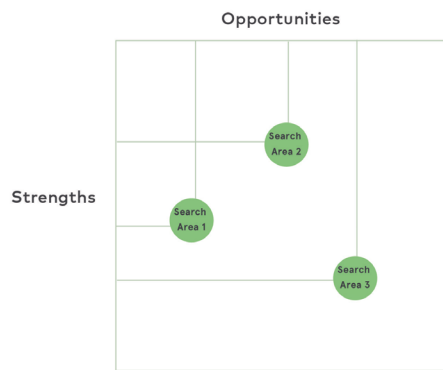
9. Meaningful brand

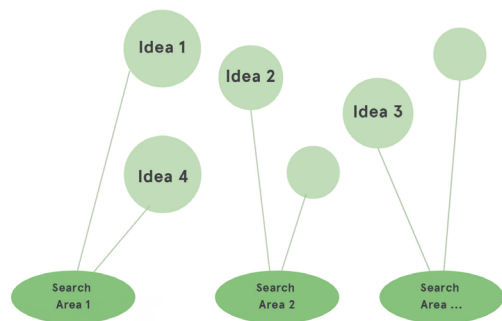**Figure 4.11: A list of opportunities for No Label**

2. Search Areas

Then Search Areas were conducted to connect the relevant external opportunities and internal strength to find out the possible innovation opportunities or brand building directions for No Label.

There are two main approaches to generating Search Areas *(Figure 4.12)*:

1. Top-down approach: from strength and external opportunities to generate development directions.

1. Bottom-up approach: from ideas to generate development directions.

Top-down Search Areas

Basically, top-down Search Areas are combinations of internal company strategic strength with external opportunities(Jan Buijs, 2012). It will use a well-known management instrument, SWOT. For generating meaningful and profitable Search Areas, it is preferable to look at the Strengths-Opportunities quadrant. The strength was coming from Chapter 2.1.

Top-down Search Areas / Results

Figure X shows the results of Top-down Search Areas. The process of doing Top-down Search Areas could be found in Appendix J.

Figure 4.12: Two approaches for generating Search Areas

Opportunities / Strengths	Anxiety about the environment	Ethical brand	Physical store experiences	Radical transparency	Experiences and access to products	Personalization technology	Automation technology	Gap between inspiration and purchase	Meaningful brand
Quality	Slow fashion		Experience quality at store	Trustworthy quality		Same garment, different quality			
Price				Price transparency		Same garment, different price			
Customer loyalty	Sustainable programs involving customers				Free trail for new products			Recommendation from loyal customers	Brand flagship store
Sourcing and manufacturing	Sustainable products	Ethical production		Transparent brand					

Figure 4.13: Results of Top-down Search Areas

Bottom-up Search Areas

Bottom-up Search Areas were generated to bring in more creativity in the project. The designer recruited eight design students together for a creative session. And among those students, four of them are possible customers of No Label. The main topic in the session was "how to make No Label more impressive to the customers? " The customer insights card (Appendix K) were provided to make them step into the shoes of customers. The session lasted for 2 hours, and in the end, 57 ideas were generated (Appendix L). Those ideas are clustered, and an idea mind map was drawn *(Figure 4.14)*.

Bottom-up Search Areas / Results

1. Associated with product usage

- Collaborate with certain companies or with certain professions (lawyer)

2. Create a brand symbol/pattern for No Label

- Use material composition as the label (It's like when you buy meat in the supermarket)

- Symbolic behavior: take off the label

3. Translate the sustainability of No Label, and make it relevant for people

- Transparent shopping experience

- The initial idea of basics: if your clothes are still very new after 6 months, then you can change for a new one

- Make the bags recyclable

- Encourage people to wear more often, Instagram shows the combination inspiration

4. Make the basics unique

- 1 fits all: show the flexibility of No Label

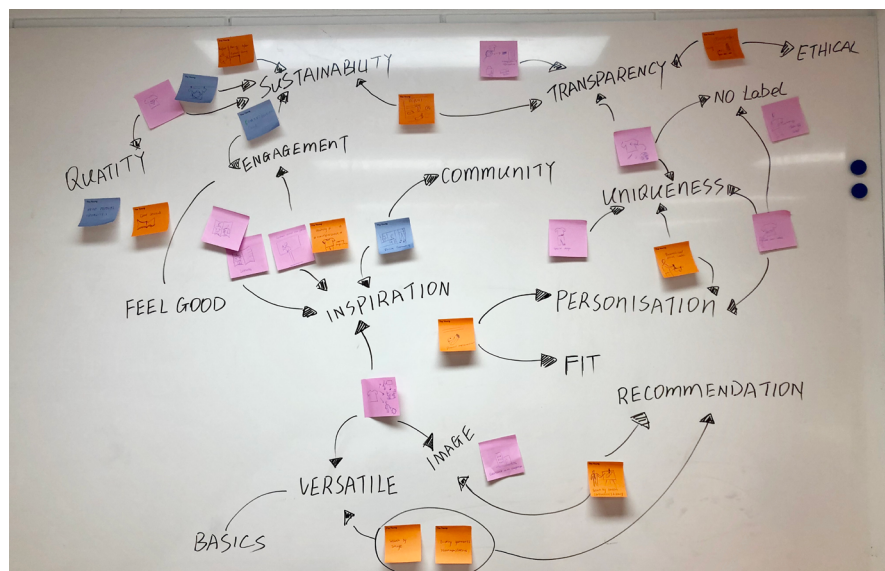- basics + unique: One part of the garment can be tailored and personalized.

Figure 4.14: Results of Bottom-up Search Areas

Synthesis

The results from the two approaches were synthesized. Three main interesting Sear Areas where No Label could build a brand arose and are depicted in this section.
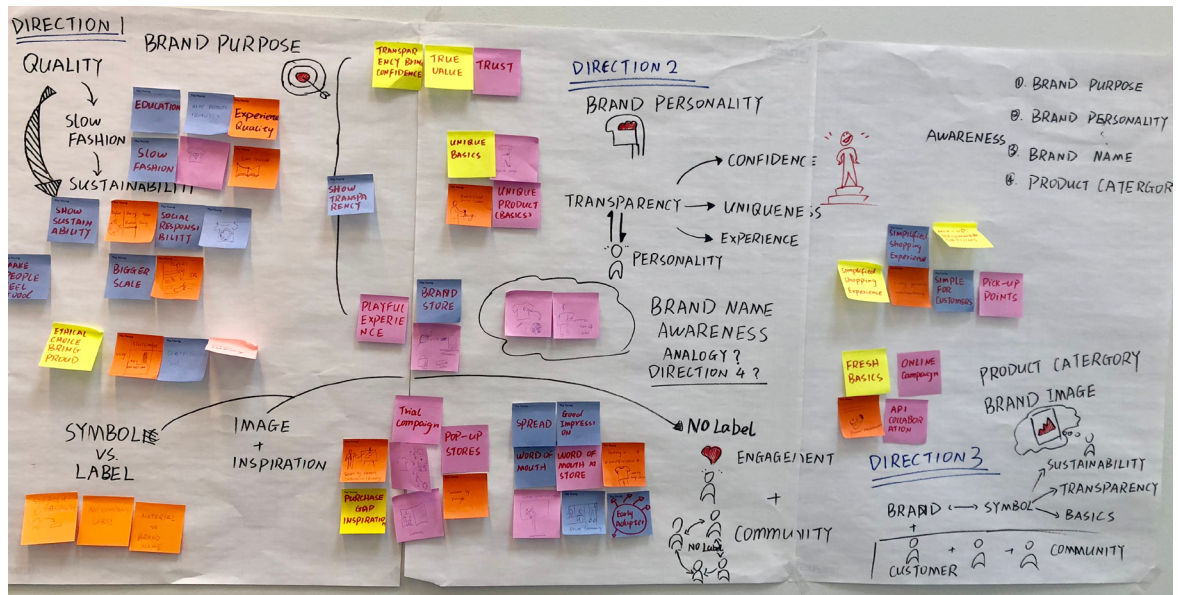

Figure 4.15: The synthesized directions from Search Areas

Search Area 1: slow fashion brand

"We promote slow fashion by delivering high-quality clothes and encouraging people to wear it more often."

New business models such as pre-owned, rental appear in the trend of customer's anxiety about the environment while craving for newness. This new business model might not apply to No Label properly because they focus on men's Fashion. Men's shopping behaviors are much different from those of women. Especially the leading target group of No Label, men between 25-40. Most of the times, they care about whether the style is right rather than how new the style is. The designer observed a similar pattern in No Label's shop. Many customers at the shop would repurchase the same style of clothing or buy the same item in multiple colors. Male customers crave for simplicity and convenience. Slow Fashion connects quality, simplicity, and at the same time, sustainability. Combined some new services/products, such as lookbook or fashion guide, No Label encourages customers to wear the clothes they bought more often. It also highlights the versatility and feasibility of the No label product.

This aspect solves the problem that the male customer has no idea about how to match clothes. Playing in a slow fashion field also make up the weakness of lacking capital, since they can keep focused and grow steadily.

The Strengths, Opportunities, relevant ideas, and coinciding intended associations are listed in *Figure 4.16*.

Strengths	Opportunities	Ideas	Intended associations
quality, customer loyalty	slow fashion, anxiety about the environment	associate with product usage. 1 fits all: show the flexibility of No Label.	versatile, **Slow fashion**, High-quality

Figure 4.16: Search Area 1 related Strengths, Opportunities, ideas and brand associations

Search Area 2: transparent brand

"We see transparent as a standard, not a trend."

Many ideas emerged in bottom-up Sear Areas in this direction. The participants were also excited about "transparency." The booming voice of people shouting for transparency in the whole market cannot be ignored. People will become more and more aware of it and support brands that could achieve transparency. This is an excellent opportunity for No Label to take the lead and win the trust of customers. An example is Everlane(https://www.everlane.com/), which is a trendsetter in this area and has won a large number of supporters.

Transparent itself is a neutral word and has to be connected with other content to be more meaningful. For example, if it is linked to the price, then it conveys the message that customers get exactly what they pay. The customers can intuitively feel they are purchasing smartly and confidently. If it is transparent in the value chain of production, it's then intended to communicate the brand ethics. For No label, it's vital to create "transparent" associations but also essential to make its "transparency" more meaningful.

Strengths	Opportunities	Ideas	Intended associations
price, sourcing and manufacturing	ethical brand, radical transparency	Use material composition as label. Transparent shopping experience.	value for money, **Transparent**, honest, trustworthy

Figure 4.17: Search Area 2 related Strengths, Opportunities, ideas and brand associations

Search Area 3: socially-responsible brand

"We want to advocate social responsibility by delivering sustainable products that ethically produced."

This direction is highly aligned with the belief of bringing sustainable and ethical alternatives of No Label. Internally, social responsibility, sustainability, and brand ethics are the core values of No Label. And they are implying their social responsibility by selecting factories that treat their employees well. However, this belief is not clearly reflected in the brand meaning and corresponding associations of customers. The reason for this is that No Label is still not sure whether it is necessary to tell their customers about their sustainability and ethics. In this direction, it would be suggested that No Label integrate social responsibility in its brand meaning. A socially-responsible brand will be embraced and supported by customers with more and more people concern about social and environmental issues.

Besides, this direction is more future-oriented and requires No Label to look for more sustainability-oriented innovations to build its social responsibility. The strength of being transparent helps in this direction. Transparent in showing the people or resources behind the product in the entire value chain brings much ethics in No Label's brand. "We want to promote our social responsibility by delivering sustainable products that ethically produced.

"We are aiming for sustainability. But we don't think our customers should pay for a higher price for this. That's why we want to offer high-quality products that last long at a fair price."

Ruben Fust, Managing Director of No Label

Strengths	Opportunities	Ideas	Intended associations
sourcing and manufacturing	ethical brand anxiety about the environment meaningful brand	Translate the sustainability of No Label, and make it relevant for people.	sustainable **Socially responsible** ethical

Figure 4.18: Search Area 3 related Strengths, Opportunities, ideas and brand associations

Interesting "Hints"

Except for three main directions for building a brand, there were also some interesting "Hints" emerging when generating Search Areas. Those "Hints" were not used right away but were referred back to in later design phases.

· Physical shopping experience engage customers more and helps build deeper connections with customers.

· Bridge the gap between inspiration and purchase.

· The quality and price could be a choice from the customer side.

4.2.3 Conclusion

This section used the DESTEP method to outline the future context of customers. And through the Search Areas, the possible characteristics directions for No Label to add in their brand meaning were explored within the context. Combined with the conclusion of the last section, the following brand characteristics could be put into the brand meaning of No Label:

Product performance:

Basics, High quality, value for money, Functional

Brand Imagery:

Smart casual, Easy-going, Transparent, Slow fashion, Socially responsible, Sustainable, Ethical.

Sustainable   Ethical
Socially responsible
Friendly   Low-key
Understated
Easy-going
Versatile
Honest   Smart casual   Basics
Clean   Simple
Transparent   No label   Slow fashion
Comfortable
Innovative   Value for money
High Quality   Confident
Fair Price   Reliable
Functional   Elegant

■ From loyal customer research   ■ From Search Areas

Figure 4.19: A conclusion of favorable brand characteristics

4.3 Vision of Company's CEO

The future context research was used for exploration but also served as Validation for the intuition, and vision of No Label. The CEO of No Label envision a sustainable No Label in the future. When defining the brand meaning for a small brand, the owner's vision should also be taken into account(Erik, 2010). Based on the interview with Ruben(APPENDIX B), a future vision illustration of No Lable is draw in Figure X.

For No Label, sustainability is something on the bigger scale. It requires a larger quantity and more capital.

"I mean you can tell everybody I'm organic, but on the bigger scope, there are still millions and billions of people that still buy cheap clothing. I truly believe if you want to make an impact in the world. We need to think bigger. "

Ruben Fust, Managing Director of No Label

Sustainability also relates to people's awareness and mindset. Most of the current people are not environmentally conscious or are unwilling to pay extra for eco-friendly products. Ruben believes that the majority is not ready for sustainability. Besides, a brand should provide affordable, sustainable products.

"If this is what I want to do, it's me not my customers should pay the bill."

Ruben Fust, Managing Director of No Label

This is a wonderful vision, and No Label is taking a path toward sustainability. However, this vision also, to some extent, only exists in the mind of Ruben. **Internally, it's not clearly defined. Externally, it's not well communicated.**

Figure 4.20: A image showing the vision of No Label's CEO

4.4 Create brand meaning for No Label

Those brand characteristics are divided into three categories: Product Performance(High quality, value for money, functional clothing, daily Basics), Usage Imagery(smart casual, easy-going, slow fashion), Brand Value (transparent, ethical, sustainable, social responsibility).
Usage imagery and brand value belong to brand imagery. Based on Keller (2012), the building blocks for brand meaning could have hierarchies. It's logical to link primary characteristics and related features and then articulate usage imagery and at last, abstract brand associations of personality could be formed. Thus, those three categories were put into 3 Horizons, and each Horizon builds at the basis of the last Horizon. It is a superimposed process. With more abstract characteristics added to the brand meaning of No Label, it's positioning, and role for customers will change.

In the first Horizon, No Label is a functional clothing brand, and its focus is on delivering high performance-price ration products for customers. In second Horizon, it transits to a Slow Fashion brand that facilitates a slow-fashion lifestyle for people with high-quality basics. In the third Horizon, No Label will integrate more sustainability and ethics in its brand. It will prove to the fashion industry and customers that there is a better way of making clothes. In the end, it will become a new standard of social responsibility of making clothes.

As shown in *Figure 4.21,* the vertical axis presents the brand characteristics that should be included in brand meaning, whereas the horizontal axis expresses time changes. **In the end, No Label is envisioned to be a socially-responsible brand that sets the standard for the whole industry.** It could be expected that the depth of the link between customers and brand evolve with higher hierarchical characteristics added to No Label's brand meaning.
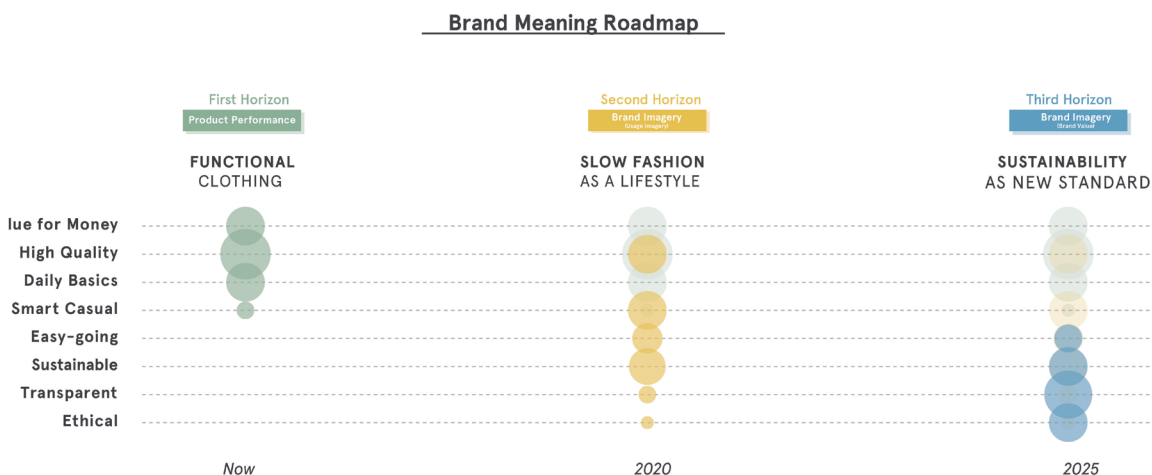

Figure 4.21: Brand Meaning Roadmap

Horizon 1: Functional clothing

Product Performance: high quality, value for money, daily basics

Functional clothing: serving the needs instead of pursuing the fashion

Value for money: high efficiency and effectiveness of the purchase

High-Quality: comfy, good material, well-cut
Daily Basics: basic, clean

This is the main brand characteristics of No Label at present. The core brand meaning is "functional clothing." It means that No Label's clothes focus on serving the needs instead of pursuing fashion. They make products in good quality and last long. The relationship between No Label and its customers are mainly about functional needs and transactions. The possible expression message of this brand meaning is as follows:

"Purely supplying your demand in basics. It's functional, it's what you need. It's high-quality, it's comfortable. Wherever, whenever, No Label makes sure your outfit helps you be confident in achieving the goal, and feel comfortable."

Figure 4.22: Moodboard of Functional Clothing

Horizon 2: Slow Fashion

Product Performance: high quality

Usage Imagery: smart casual, easy-going

Slow fashion: a lifestyle of quality over quantity

Smart Casual: casual with a chic edge, easy to combine, timeless

High-Quality: long-lasting

Easy-going: relax shopping, carefree fashion

In Horizon 2, more characteristics of usage imagery were added. Those product and usage characteristics are combined to drive No Label to become a brand that promotes Slow Fashion and facilitates slow fashion lifestyle for customers. The connection between No Label and its customers become more emotional. The possible expression message of this brand meaning is as follows:

"We don't follow the trend, we follow the heart. We don't focus on the label, we focus on the product. We deliver clothes that won't be out of fashion and can last longer. We want to make everything easy for you."

Figure 4.23: Moodboard of Slow Fashion

Horizon 3: Social responsibility

Brand Value: transparent, ethical, sustainable, social responsibility

Social responsibility: sustainable fashion and mindful consumption

Sustainable: recyclable, Eco-friendly

Ethical: ethical production, fair trade

Transparent: honest, transparent in production, material, people and money

The 3rd horizon is the final step to integrate the brand meaning. It's also the highest hierarchy.

It aims to create a vivid image of No Label in the minds of customers. It expresses No Label's value and personality. This horizon makes No Label more meaningful to its customers. As a socially responsible brand, No Label is going to become educational of changing the mindset of customers. The possible expression message of this brand meaning is as follows:

"We are making clothes what they should be: the right clothes that serve your needs. Clothes that were made sustainable. We only collaborate with environment-friendly factories. We are honest in telling you that. By being transparent in showing the production journey of your clothes and people behind what you wear, we together, make an impact."

Figure 4.24: Moodboard of Social Responsibility

4.5 Conclusion

Till now, the first project goal has been achieved.

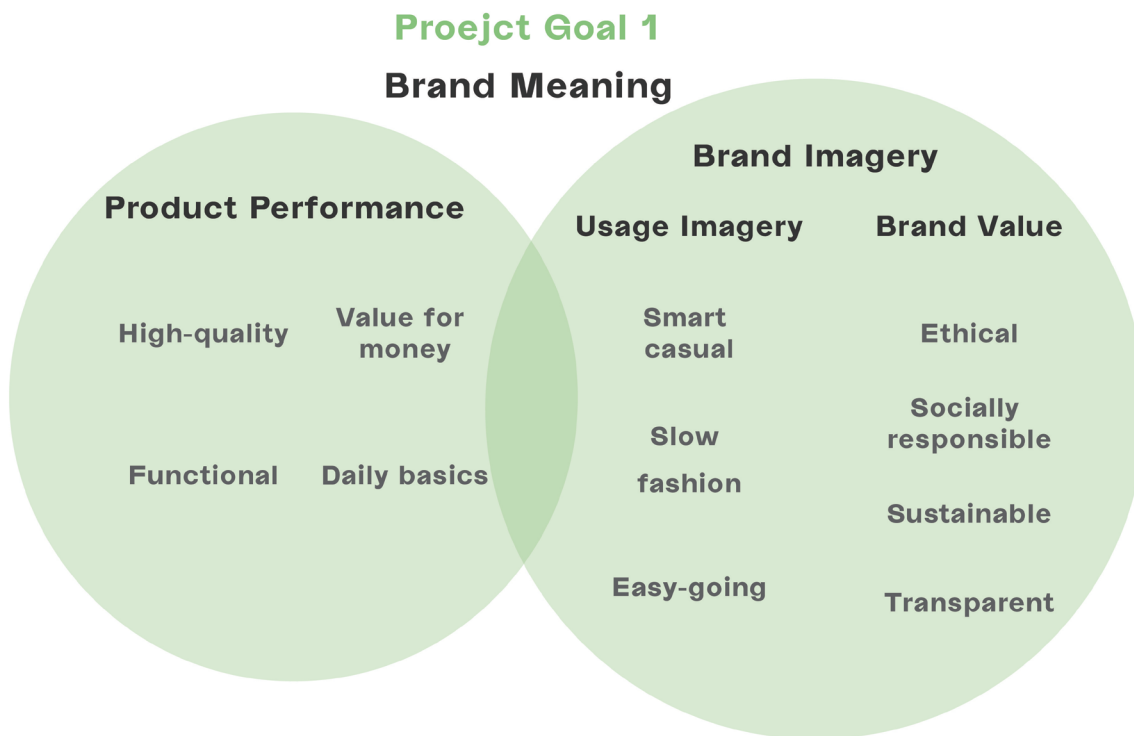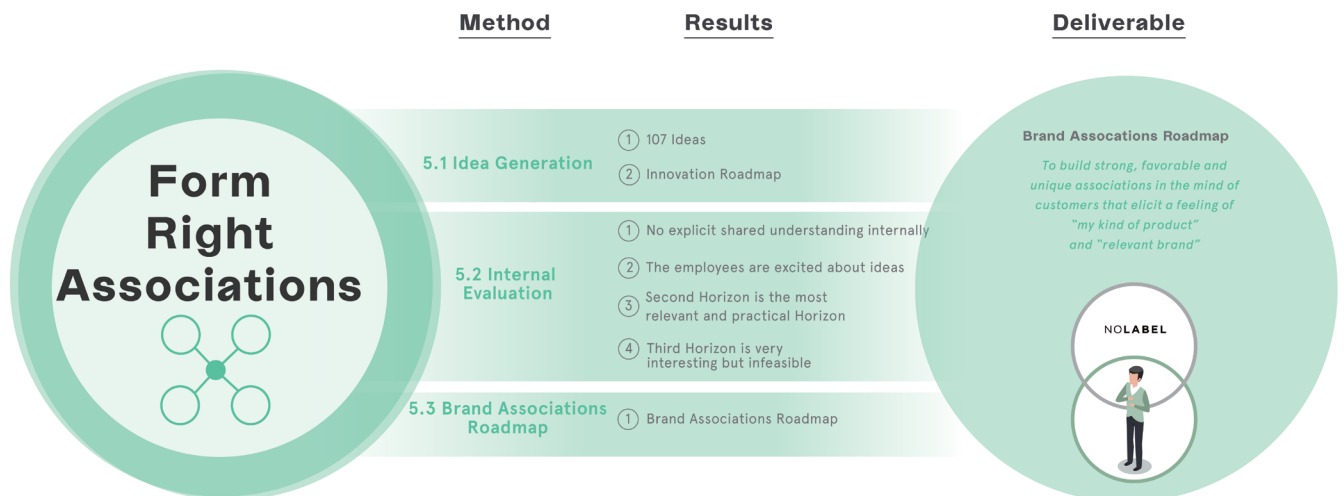**Create appropriate brand meaning, including product performance and brand imagery, for No Label.**

Proejct Goal 1
Brand Meaning

Brand Imagery

Product Performance

Usage Imagery   **Brand Value**

High-quality   Value for money   Smart casual   Ethical

Functional   Daily basics   Slow fashion   Socially responsible

Sustainable

Easy-going   Transparent

Figure 4.25: Project goal 1

5

Form Corresponding Associations

This chapter connects branding and design. It demonstrates how design helps to fulfill the brand promise and form the right brand associations.

	Method	**Results**	**Deliverable**

Form Right Associations

5.1 Idea Generation
1 107 Ideas
2 Innovation Roadmap

5.2 Internal Evaluation
1 No explicit shared understanding internally
2 The employees are excited about ideas
3 Second Horizon is the most relevant and practical Horizon
4 Third Horizon is very interesting but infeasible

5.3 Brand Associations Roadmap
1 Brand Associations Roadmap

Brand Associations Roadmap
To build strong, favorable and unique associations in the mind of customers that elicit a feeling of "my kind of product" and "relevant brand"

NO**LABEL**

5.1 Idea Generation

After creating brand meaning, a brand can form corresponding brand associations through direct/indirect contact with customers. This section focused on looking for proper products/services/experiences innovations or communication means to form appropriate associations in the minds of customers.

BRAND MEANING   **PRODUCT/ MARKETING**   **BRAND ASSOCIATIONS**
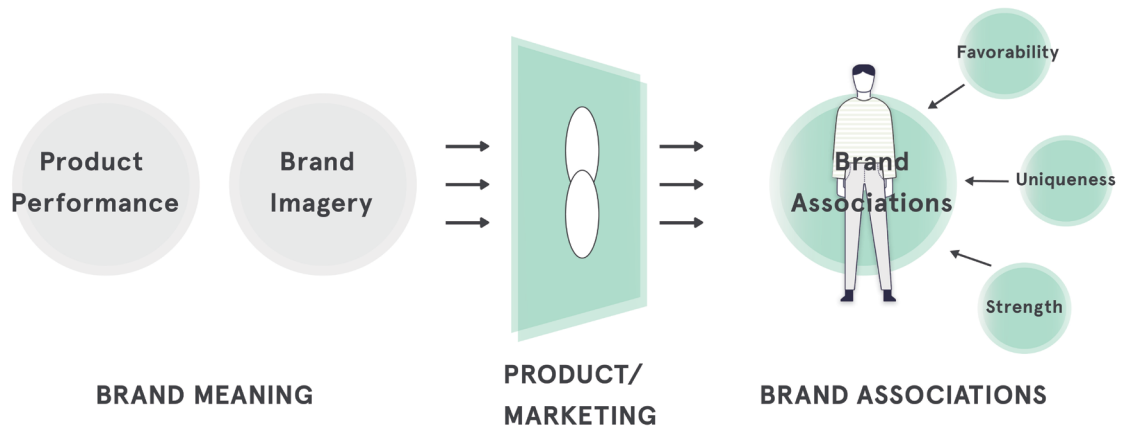
Figure 5.1: The process of forming brand associations

5.1.1 Process and Method

Aim

1.   Look for products/marketing programs to form brand associations in the minds of customers.

Method

Creative Session
Ideation sessions were facilitated to gain a diverse range of ideas. Besides, the ideas that the designer had during the whole process of the project were also documented.

Process
In total, 3 ideation sessions were held for 3 Horizons. Every session has 5 people, including the designer. Each session consisted of 2 parts. 1st part was sensitizing, to give general information about the project and briefly introduce the Brand Meaning Roadmap. The 2nd part was brainstorming about how to form desired associations in the minds of customers. The ideas that the designer created were used as idea inspiration cards(Appendix O) during the session. In all three sessions, 107 ideas were generated. Among them, 36 ideas were generated for "Functional Clothing," 29 were generated for "Slow Fashion," 42 ideas were generated for "Social Responsibility." The ideas were categorized. In the end, three idea themes appear in the first horizon; six idea themes appear in the second horizon; five themes in the third horizon. Based on the idea themes, an Innovation Roadmap was constructed.
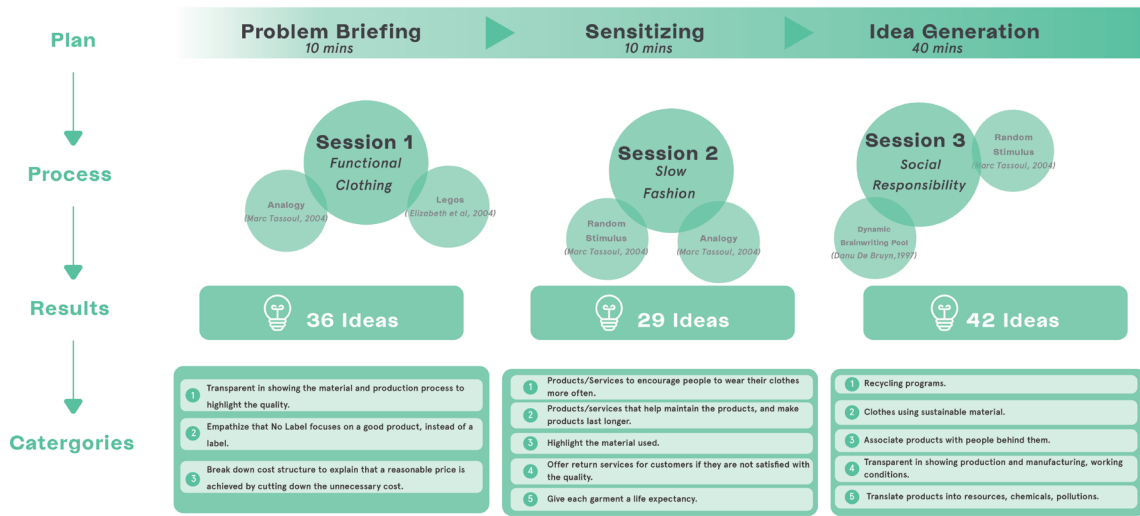
Plan	**Problem Briefing** 10 mins	**Sensitizing** 10 mins	**Idea Generation** 40 mins

Process

Session 1 *Functional Clothing*
Analogy (Marc Tassoul, 2004)
Legos (Elizabeth et al, 2004)

Session 2 *Slow Fashion*
Random Stimulus (Marc Tassoul, 2004)
Analogy (Marc Tassoul, 2004)

Session 3 *Social Responsibility*
Random Stimulus (Marc Tassoul, 2004)
Dynamic Brainwriting Pool (Danu De Bruyn, 1997)

Results

💡 **36 Ideas**
💡 **29 Ideas**
💡 **42 Ideas**

Catergories

1. Transparent in showing the material and production process to highlight the quality.
2. Empathize that No Label focuses on a good product, instead of a label.
3. Break down cost structure to explain that a reasonable price is achieved by cutting down the unnecessary cost.

1. Products/Services to encourage people to wear their clothes more often.
2. Products/services that help maintain the products, and make products last longer.
3. Highlight the material used.
4. Offer return services for customers if they are not satisfied with the quality.
5. Give each garment a life expectancy.

1. Recycling programs.
2. Clothes using sustainable material.
3. Associate products with people behind them.
4. Transparent in showing production and manufacturing, working conditions.
5. Translate products into resources, chemicals, pollutions.

Figure 5.2: Session structure and results
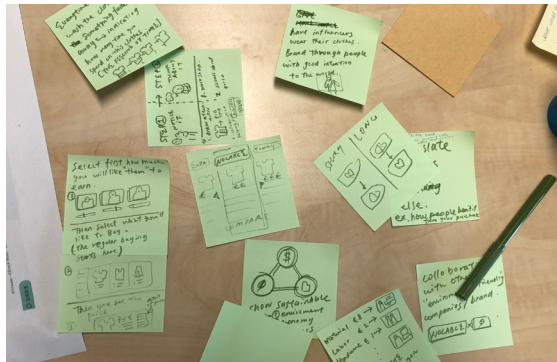
Figure 5.3: Creative ideation session with students

5.1.2 Results

Innovation Roadmap

To better connect those ideas with customers and brand, the designer looked at the Brand-driven Innovation method (Erik, 2010). According to Erik's brand-driven innovation, a strong brand has to demonstrate a clear understanding of the people, and they aspire to deliver what these people find valuable. It implies a commitment of the organization to its user group, which might be expressed in the following way: 'I understand what you find valuable, I understand my role in delivering that value to you, and I will do my best to perform that role.' In brand language, this is called 'the brand promise.' **A brand promise is both essential internally in the company and externally for the customers. Internally, it looks closely at the company capability and guides innovations to put the promise into action.** Those are new products, services, or experiences that full-fill the brand promise. At the same time, the company also look at the customers. They communicate brand promise externally to aspire their expectations.
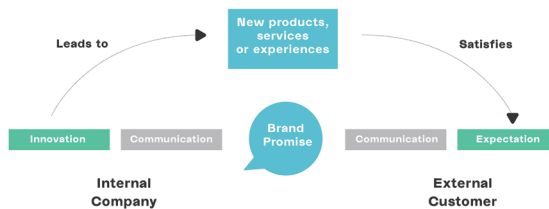
Figure 5.4: Brand-driven innovation process

ACTIONABLE

Now

First Horizon

FUNCTIONAL CLOTHING

Offer high-quality basics
to fulfill the needs of customers.

BRAND PROMISE

HIGH QUALITY, FAIR PRICE.

PRODUCT

High-quality basics
Smart casual style

COMMUNICATION

1. Transparent in showing the material and the production process to highlight the quality.

2. Break down cost structure to explain the reasonable price comes from cutting down the unnecessary cost.

3. Empathize that No Label focus on good product, instead of label.

According to the capability of No Label, the idea themes were put into a Roadmap from actionable to imaginable. Each Horizon has a Brand promise, product innovations that fulfill the brand promise, and communication that convey the brand promise message to customers.

Innovation Roadmap

IMAGINABLE
2025

Second Horizon

SLOW FASHION

Deliver good enough products for customers to make them buy less, use more.

BRAND PROMISE
SMART CASUAL, SLOW FASHION.

PRODUCT
Clothes with good design and good material that could last longer.
1. Products/Services to encourage people to wear their clothes more often.
2. Products/Services that help maintain the products, and make products last longer.

COMMUNICATION

1. Highlight the material that used.

2. Offer returning services for customers if they are not satisfied with the quality.

3. Give each garment a life expectancy.

Third Horizon

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Stimulate customers to think and reflect before their purchase.

BRAND PROMISE
RADICAL TRANSPARENCY, MODERN LUXURY.

PRODUCT
1. Recycling programs.
2. Clothes using sustainable material.

COMMUNICATION

1. Associate products with people behind them.

2. Transparent in showing production and manufacturing environment.

3. Translate products into resources, chemicals, pollutions

Figure 5.5: Innovation Roadmap

Here are more details of each Horizon.

Horizon 1: Functional Clothing

Brand Promise: High quality, Fair price

Communication:

Theme 1: Transparent in showing the material and production process to highlight the quality.

Theme 2: Break down cost structure to explain that a reasonable price is achieved by cutting down the unnecessary cost.

Theme 3: Empathize that No Label focuses on a good product instead of a label.

1. Transparent in showing the material and production process to highlight the quality.

2. Break down cost structure to explain that a reasonable price is achieved by cutting down the unnecessary cost.

3. Empathize that No Label focuses on a good product, instead of a label.
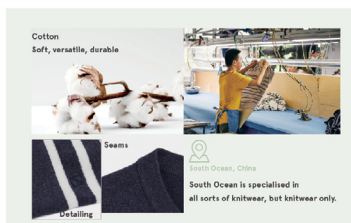
No Label' Quality

A high-quality knitwear comes from a smooth fabric, neat seams, beautiful detailing and professional manufactures. Put that information together to show the quality of No Label's product.

No Label's Price

The fair price of No Label comes from cutting down the cost in middle retailer and marketing. You get exactly what you paid.

Take off Label

"Take off label" is an iconic behavior for No Label. After buying No Label's clothes, customers will take off the Label.

Figure 5.6: Example ideas for communication in Horizon 1

Horizon 2: Slow Fashion

Brand Promise: Smart casual, Slow fashion

Product:

Theme 1: Products/Services to encourage people to wear their clothes more often.

Theme 2: Products/Services that help maintain the products, and make products last longer.

1. Products/Services to encourage people to wear their clothes more often.

No Label Lookbook

Yearly lookbook that could give customers inspirations about how to reuse their old clothes.

1. Products/Services to encourage people to wear their clothes more often.
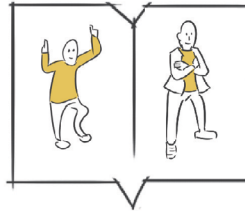
No Label Matching Guide

Matching guide for showing how could they wear same clothes in different ways.

2. Products/Services that help maintain the products, and make products last longer.
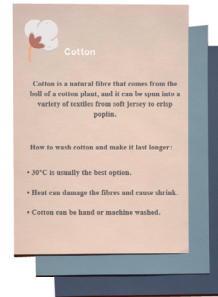
No Label Care Guide

Care guide for people to maintain the product.

Figure 5.7: Example ideas for product in Horizon 2

Communication:

Theme 3: Products/Services to encourage people to wear their clothes more often.

Theme 4: Products/Services that help maintain the products, and make products last longer.

Theme 5: Give each garment a life expectancy.

3. Highlight the material used.

Material Label

Use material's visual as woven Label to highlight that No Label focuses on good material. The contradiction between no label and the material label will trigger discussions.

4. Offer return services for customers if they are not satisfied with the quality.

Return Bag

Every shopping bag will have an exact date recording the buying day. In 1 month, customers can return the product regarding any quality problem.

5. Give each garment a life expectancy.

Fading Sign

Every garment has a fading sign. The more you wash the clothes, the more it fades. The sign gives you information about whether you wear clothes often.

Figure 5.8: Example ideas for communication in Horizon 2

Horizon 3: Social-responsibility

Brand Promise: Radical transparency, Modern luxury

Product:

Theme 1: Recycling programs.   **Theme 2:** Clothes using sustainable material.

1. Recycling programs.

2. Clothes using sustainable material.
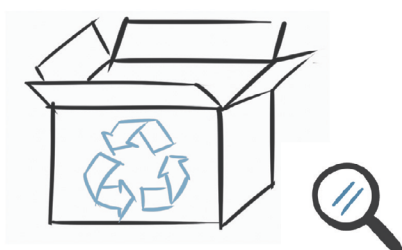
Recycle Box

Every No Label shop has a recycle box for old clothes. Customers can also trace the recycling process.

Bio-based dyes from Nature Coatings (USA).

Tipa (Israel) is developing 100% compostable plastic.
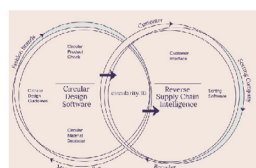
Join in force with companies developing sustainable technologies and materials.

Figure 5.9: Example ideas for product in Horizon 3

Communication:

Theme 1: Associate products with people behind them.

Theme 2: Transparent in showing production and manufacturing, working conditions.

Theme 3: Translate products into resources, chemicals, pollutions.

3. Associate products with people behind them.

4. Transparent in showing production and manufacturing, working conditions.

5. Translate products into resources, chemicals, pollutions.

I made your clothes

I was paid €15 per day
I worked 8 hours a day

I Made Your Clothes

Customers are able to see where their clothes were made, how they were made and who made them. New luxury today is not a logo, but a product I know has not cost someone's life.

No Label Vlog

Make a Vlog about how No Label chooses the factories and how the clothes were made in the factories. Share it via Instagram or Facebook.

1 T-shirt

2700 Liter water   5 kg CO_2 5000 kinds of chemicals

Figure 5.10: Example ideas for communication in Horizon 3

5.2 Internal Evaluation

The Internal Evaluation was conducted to validate whether the created brand meaning aligned with the internal culture of No Label. Besides, it was also used to optimize current ideas and help the designer to make go/no-go decisions.

5.2.1 Process and Method

Aim

1. Test whether No Label's people have a shared understanding of their brand-building vision.

2. Ideate with No Label's employees and optimize current ideas.

3. Evaluate current ideas and make decisions on which idea to develop further.

Method

Product Concept Evaluation

Interview

A Product Concept Evaluation could serve different purposes: concept screening, concept optimization, and go/no-go decisions (Schoormans and de Bont, 1995). And it could be conducted in various forms: textual concept, Pictographic concepts, Animations, Mock-ups. The designer used pictographic concepts. The sketching of the ideas was presented in a booklet. No Label's employee was asked to fill in the booklet. After that, an in-person interview was conducted separately.

Process

The innovation themes and example ideas were discussed together with the employees of No Label internally. Currently, there are in total of 20 people in No Label. Seven of them were chosen to fill in an inquiry booklet. Those seven people are in the position of customer service, social media strategy, and intern. And the managing director of No Label, my mentor in this project, also filled in the booklet. The booklet can be found in Appendix O; the interview outcomes can be found in Appendix P. The evaluation gave the designer a lot of insights about the current feasibility of No Label and how internal people think about the future of No Label.

Figure 5.11: Evaluation with No Label's employees

5.2.2 Results

No explicit shared vision internally

No Label's people are very enthusiastic in this small team. They understand that the main strength of No Lable's lies in quality and price. And they all believe that No Lable is bringing value for its customers. However, when talking about the future and vision of No Label, they have different opinions. For example, some of them believe "Slow Fashion" is where No Label is going ahead, whereas others think that increasing the quality will weaken No Label's price advantage. It implies that for future direction, people do not explicitly reach a consensus.

The employees are excited about ideas

Currently, No Label's way of doing business is more in one-way. They do not involve customers much. Besides, there is no brand manager or UX designer at No Label currently. Therefore, the designer's way of thinking brings in creativity and inspirations to them. They love most of the ideas and also bring up some new ideas. Most idea directions were deemed to be meaningful and interesting for the company.

Second Horizon is the most relevant and practical Horizon

"I like Horizon 2 the most. It sounds very promising and it's most relevant for No Label."

Photographer, Tatchatrin

"Second Horizon is very interesting, because just last time I was discussing with another design agency that we should only have 20 items a year."

Managing director, Ruben Fust

"The second one. It's direction we are going ahead."

Happiness manager, Sharon

"The second one is really about how you change you business model. Because if you want to sell less items with higher quality, then you have to raise the price."

Intern, Jesse

Third Horizon is very interesting but a bit infeasible for now

"The last one I like it, but I am not so sure about it. I'm wondering wether our customers care about this? Do they care the ethical and sustainable part of the company? I am not sure. That's why I feel a bit afraid to go this direction."

Managing director, Ruben Fust

"I was surprised that our customers actually do appreciate the sustainable things we are doing. Once we by accident used the organic cotton, and they liked it very much. So I think we should do more things like this."

Customer service, Milo

"I like the second one most. But I also like the third one very much. It's more ethical and more transparent. And you can attract more people who care about the sustainability. Those customers are not our customers now, but I think they could be our customers in the future."

Happiness manager, Sharon

"And for the third one, I think we can do much more. We could make our product traceable and show more about the fabric. I can imagine people do care about that. At least they are going to care."

Photographer, Joris

5.2.3 Conclusions

The test proved that the created brand meaning map is relevant and promising for No Label. The Innovation Roadmap also revealed the potential and possibility of No Label. The feedback helps to optimize those ideas and support designer to choose ideas that would be further developed.

Besides, it helped to demonstrate the impact of this project. There are four main impacts:

1. Bring in customers' perspective.

2. Create a vision that could facilitate the shared understanding of No Label's internal people.

3. Serve a long-term branding plan and suggest a future brand-building direction. This could at the same time trigger No Label's people to discuss and reflect.

4. Show them the power of design in product/ service/experience innovations.

5.3 Synthesis_Brand Associations Roadmap

Based on Brand Meaning Map and Innovation Roadmap, a synthesized map that represents the brand meaning, corresponding associations, and Innovation that help to build associations was created, in *figure 5.12*.

The Roadmap demonstrates the focused brand meaning in different Horizons. This is a process of superimposing functional performance, usage imagery, and Brand Value in the brand meaning of No Label. Through the Innovation Roadmap, the resulted brand associations and brand relationship were presented in the middle. The more detail of the implementation blueprint could be found in Innovation Roadmap (*Figure 5.5)*. It is expected the brand relationship will go from more functional to more emotional, and in the end, value-driven. The final vision of this Roadmap is also the goal of the whole project: To establish strong, unique, and favorable associations that could elicit the belief of "relevant brand" and "my kind of product" in the minds of potential customers.

Rendered in the same way as the previous framework *(Figure 2.8)*, the Roadmap was split into three diagrams. Each presents the brand meaning, product/service innovation, marketing programs, brand associations, and brand relationship in different Horizon*(figure 5.13, figure 5.14, figure 5.15).*

Brand Associations Roadmap

Brand Imagery
(Usage Imagery)

SLOW FASHION
AS A LIFESTYLE

Brand Imagery
(Brand Value)

SUSTAINABILITY
AS NEW STANDARD

Quality over quantity — Confidence of simplicity — Effort-less — Versatile casual

Genuine — Eco-friendly — Self-identity — Socially responsible — Right thing to do — Trustworthy

tomers will associate LABEL with quality, plicity, thus purchasing it for both functional ds and emotional ease.

Customers will associate NO LABEL with social responsibility, a new standard for the industry, thus choosing NO LABEL for a personal belief.

An alternative way to pursue fashion and demonstrate lifestyle

A new standard to challenge the status quo; the right choice to take action

Smart casual, Slow fashion.

Radical transparency, Modern luxury.

iver certain numbers of smart casual items each year. ose items are sufficient and versatile on different occasions.

er matching guide/care guide to inspire customers less, use more.

hlight the quality of the product and the usage ations of the products.

Deliver clothes what they should be: fit, good, sustainable.

Transparent in showing the resources used for producing clothes and people that made the clothes.

NOLABEL

MY LABEL

Strategic roadmap to establish and enhance No Label's brand associations in the minds of customers

- VISION -

To build strong, favorable and unique associations in the mind of customers that elicit a feeling of "my kind of product" and "relevant brand"

NOLABEL

Figure 5.12: Brand Associations building Roadmap

Horizon 1: Functional clothing

In the first stage, No Label's brand meaning is Functional Clothing, along with Daily Basics, Value for Money, High Quality. To make customers associate No Label with quality and fair price, No Label created a brand promise of "High quality, Fair price" that aspires the expectations of customers. And it is doing well in delivering products that fulfill this brand promise. Therefore, in this Horizon, No Label should focus more on conveying the message to customers. The primary communication strategy here is to highlight the material used and the production process, that will prove the quality to customers.

Besides, they could also break down the cost to explain that the fair price of No Label comes from cutting down marketing cost. The more details about how to implement those ideas can be found in Chapter 6.

In this process, customers will strongly associate NO Label with quality and price, thus purchasing No Label for functional needs. Correspondingly, the relationship between No Label and his customer at this time is more inclined to the relationship between functional and transaction.

Daily Basics

FUNCTIONAL CLOTHING

High Quality

Value for Money

Offer high-quality basics to fulfill the needs of customers

Brand Promise
High quality Fair Price

Product

Communication
Transparent in showing product process and break down cost structure

BRAND MEANING

PRODUCTS/MARKETING

Customers tend to associate NOLABEL strongly
with its high quality and fair price, thus wearing
NOLABEL serves a daily functional need.

A resonable choice
for functional wearing
of daily dress need

Worthy

Good quality

Fair price

Reliable

Basic
collection

Comfortable

NO**LABEL**

BRAND ASSOCIATIONS

BRAND RELATIONSHIP

Figure 5.13: Horizon 1 diagram

Horizon 2: Slow Fashion

In the second Horizon, No Label's brand meaning is Slow Fashion, along with Smart Casual, Easy-going, High Quality. No Label will have a brand promise of "Smart casual, Slow Fashion."In this stage, the brand positioning of NO Lable is to facilitate a slow-fashion lifestyle for people with high-quality and smart casual products that last long. To achieve so, No Label should deliver long-lasting products and encourage people

to use more, buy less. For example, No Label will offer care guide for customers to take good care of their clothes. Correspondingly, customers will associate LABEL with quality, simplicity, thus purchasing it for both functional needs and emotional ease. And the brand relationship will be more emotional and interactive.

High Quality

SLOW FASHION

Smart Casual

Easy-going

Deliver sufficient and versatile smart casual items timely

Offer matching guide/care guide to inspire customers buy less, use more

Brand Promise

Smart casual Slow fashion

Product

Communication

Highlight the quality of the product and the usage situations of the products

BRAND MEANING

PRODUCTS/MARKETING

Customers will associate LABEL with quality,
simplicity, thus purchasing it for both
functional needs and emotional ease.

An alternative way
to pursue fashion and
demonstrate lifestyle

Long
lasting

Quality over
quantity

Confidence
of simplicity

Effort-
less

Versatile
casual

NOLABEL

BRAND ASSOCIATIONS

BRAND RELATIONSHIP

Figure 5.14: Horizon 2 diagram

Horizon 3: Social responsibility

In the last Horizon, No Label's brand meaning is Social Responsibility, along with Transparent, Ethical, Sustainable. No Label will have a brand promise of "Radical transparency, Modern luxury." The focus in this phase is to become a standard for the fashion industry and promote mindful consumption. No Label is expected to appeal to more customers concerned with environmental and social issues.

This phase requires No Label to deliver the right products that use sustainable material and produce clothes in an eco-friendly way. No Label could be transparent in showing the resources used for producing clothes and people that made the clothes. As a result, customers will associate No Label with social responsibility, a new standard for the industry, thus choosing NO LABEL for a personal belief.

Ethical

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Transparent

Sustainable

Deliver clothes what they should be: fit, good, sustainable

Brand Promise

Radical transparency

Modern luxruy

Product

Communication

Transparent in showing the resources used for producing clothes and people that made the clothes

BRAND MEANING

PRODUCTS/MARKETING
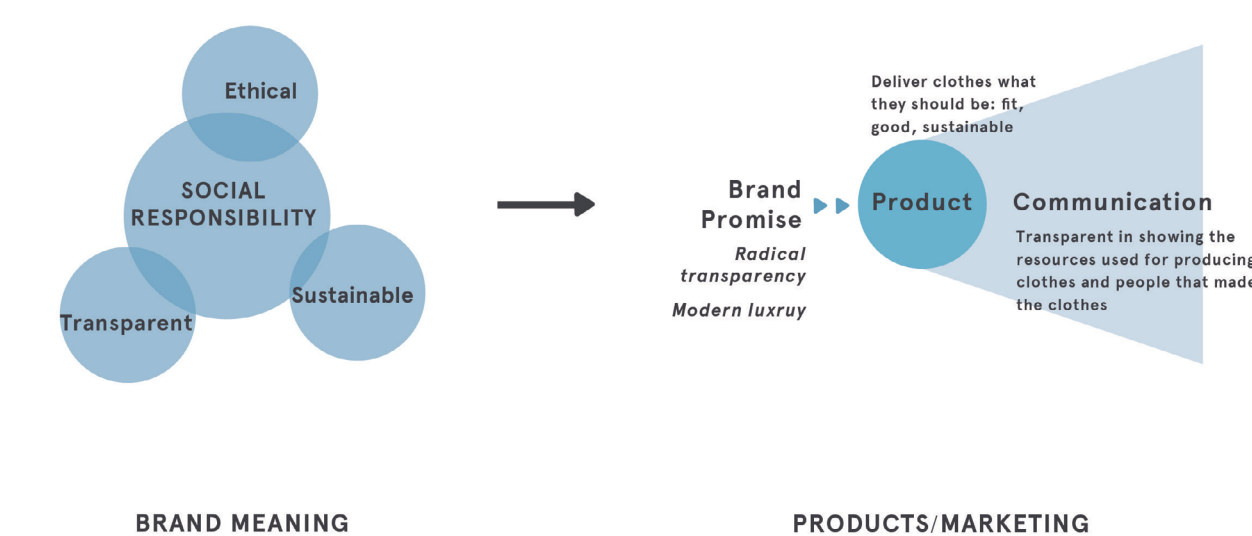
Customers will associate NOLABEL with social responsibility, new standard for the industry, thus choosing NO LABEL for a personal belief.

A new standard to challenge the status quo; the right choice to take action

Eco-friendly

Genuine

Self-identity

Socially responsible

NO**LABEL**

Right thing to do

Trustworthy

BRAND ASSOCIATIONS
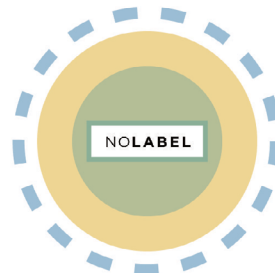
BRAND RELATIONSHIP

Figure 5.15: Horizon 3 diagram

6

Concept Elaboration

This chapter elaborates the four concepts from Innovation Roadmap. Two concepts was developed and iterated.

Concepts

Concept Elaboration

6.1 Concept Directions

6.2 Concept Development

① The Journey of Clothes

③ "Spark" Fashion

② Make My Own Clothes

④ Shop for Good

6.1 Concept Directions

People from No Label like most of the ideas, and they also ideate some relevant ideas. Combined with the innovation themes, there were four main concept directions that are promising to develop. In this section, the detail of the concepts will be discussed and evaluated.

The Journey of Clothes

The concept

The journey of garment
Customers will be able to see the whole journey of the garment, from raw material to a finished product. Every garment will have a code on the inside label, customers can scan the label with an installed device at the shop. The screen on the device will show the product information. It starts with the information of the raw material, for example, the place of production. And then the manufactures and the production process. Besides, customers are also able to see how No Label's people work in the warehouse, stockroom, and in the end, bring the garments at the shop.

Effect

A high-quality product comes from a smooth fabric, neat seams, beautiful detailing, and professional manufactures. This concept put that information together to highlight the quality of No Label's product. Customers could be confident about their choice. Besides, showing the people inside No Label will give customers a sense of intimacy. Since many men are insecure and a bit afraid of fashion, they will love to see the real people inside No label. Besides, No Label's way of working will also give customers a feeling of professional, reliable, and easygoing. Those are the characteristics that No Label's customers value much. This will also contribute to the transition to slow fashion, as customers could hold stronger brand associations with high quality via this concept.

Figure 6.1: Sketch of "Journey of Clothes"

Make My Own Garment

The concept

Find out the price philosophy

"Make My Own Garment" is a virtual game that customers can play. The game allows them to make a garment themselves. During the process, they are able to decide the cost of material, labor, transport, and so on. In the end, based on the cost, a final price for a garment will be calculated. Customers could compare to the cost and the price of No Label.

Effect

The concept creates an interesting and interactive experience for customers to better understand the price philosophy of No Label. The fact that No Label's fair price is realized by cutting down unnecessary cost on middle retailer and commercials will also be expressed during the game. The "fair price" impression would be stronger and last longer in the minds of customers. The pitfall is that the profit part would still be obscure to talk about. Then the customers would consider it just a trick of the company, not the real truth.
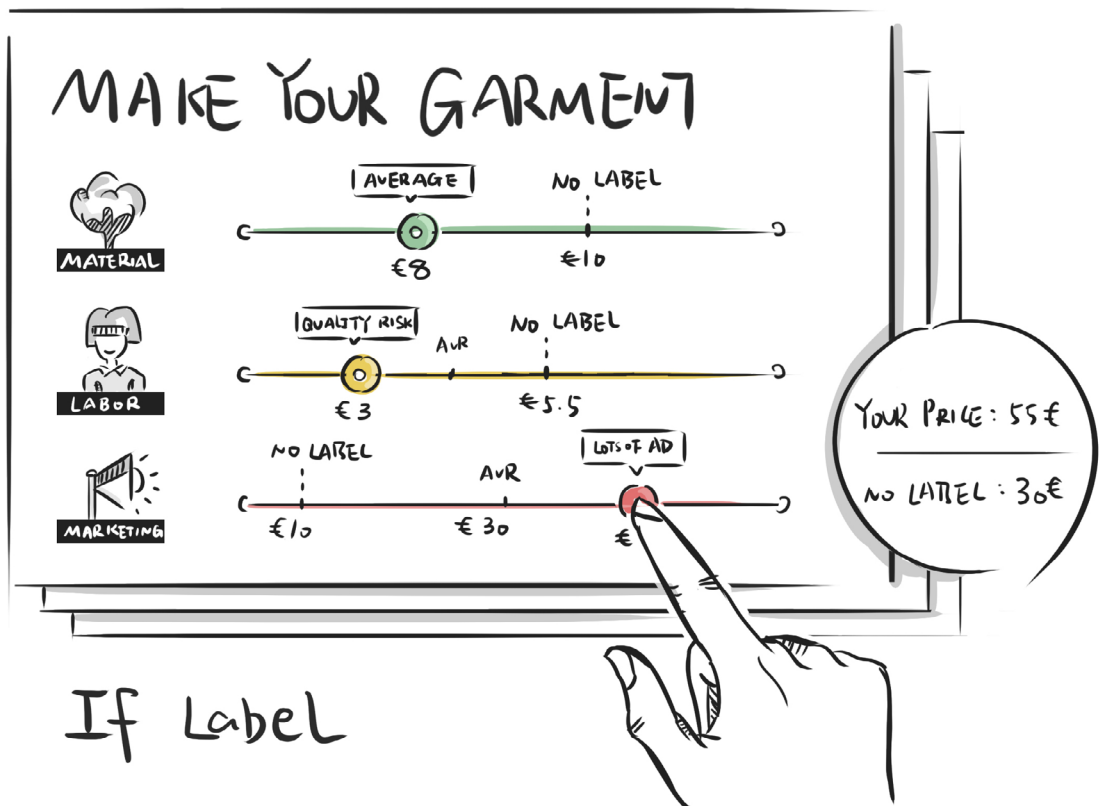
Figure 6.2: Sketch of "Make My Own Clothes"

"Spark" Fashion

The concept

A slow fashion guide

"Spark" Fashion is a set of Lookbook for customers to get inspirations about how to match the clothes and how to dress in different occasions. In the website, there will be one fixed section for No Label seasonal Lookbook. Based on trend and seasonal theme, the Lookbook will inspire people about how to wear new clothes as well as reuse the old clothes of No Label. And customers can always find the advisable dressing style on different occasions, such as for party, presentation, business travel, etc.

Effect

This concept solves the problem that most men have no idea about how to match clothes and what to wear. At the same time, it encourages people to wear clothes they already have more often. It helps to convey the "slow fashion" message of No Label. Besides, based on customer research, one of the biggest reason that customers love No Label is that it can fit on different occasions. The look book can, therefore, make the customers more active and loyal.
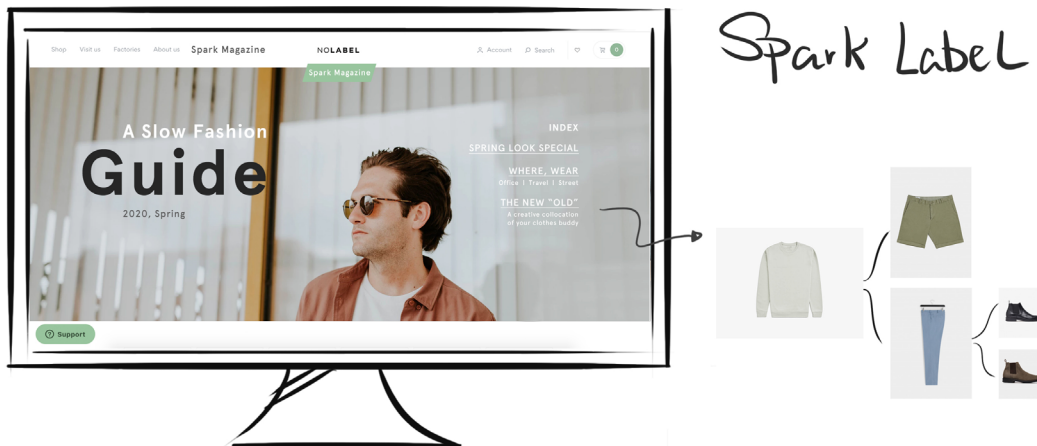
Figure 6.3: Sketch of "'Spark' Fashion"

Shop for Good

The concept

A mindful shopping experience

New luxury in the future is not measured by sales price, rather an ethical and considered production. "Shop for Good" creates a new online shopping experience for people. When shopping, customers can see the resource used for one garment, as well as the pollution produced. They could also interactively assess the environmental impact of their shopping, wearing, and washing behaviors. Besides, No Label will be transparent in presenting what they are doing to improve the current situation with their profit.

Effect

The concept creates mindful consumption awareness in customers' minds. It's transparent in revealing the environmental impact of the fashion industry. This radical transparency will win the trust of customers. It also strengthens the brand image of being ethical and transparent of No Label. The proactive actions from No Label will draw the attention of many new customers who care about sustainability and win their support. The number of those customers is believed to be snowballing.
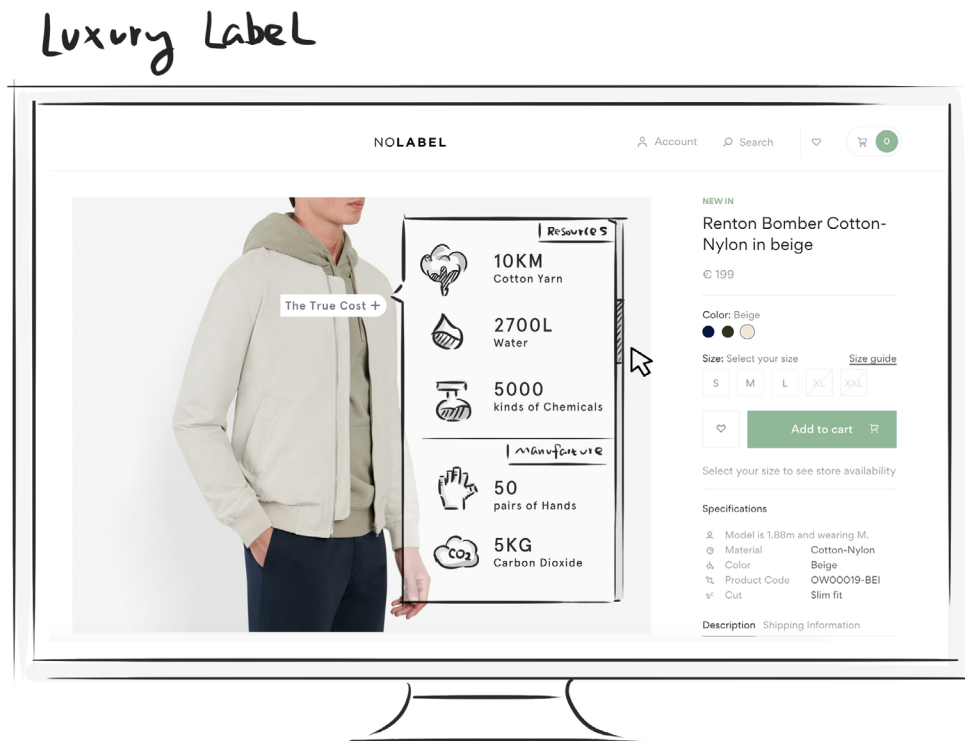
Figure 6.4: Sketch of "Shop for Good"

6.2 Concept Development

"The Journey of Clothes" and "Shop for Good " were chosen for further development. The reason for choosing those two concepts were:

1. The quality of the product is the main strength of No Label's product and its also the most important product features throughout all three Horizons.

2. Most of the ideas in the second Horizon are easy to understand and realize for No Label's people, whereas the ideas in Horizon three are new and more creative. My role as a designer was taken into consideration in this project. Therefore, I decided to develop an idea in 3rd Horizon.

[The Journey of Clothes]

Horizon 1

Goal: To build strong associations of "high quality" and "professional brand" in the minds of customers.

Channel: Offline store

Main Description: The customers will be able to see the whole journey of the garment, from raw material to a finished product. A high-quality product comes from a smooth fabric, neat seams, beautiful detailing and professional manufactures.

Step 1: Scan the code

There will be a code on every garment of No Label. When customers scan the code with the device in the shop, they will be able to check the detailed information of the garment.
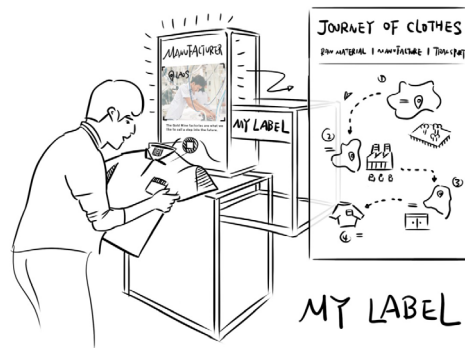
Figure 6.5: The code on the garment

Step 2: Trace the journey of the garment

Customers could trace the location of material, manufacture, and No Label's office. By clicking the icons on the screen, they could also check the details of material, production, and No Label's people.

Figure 6.6: Interface of the device screen

Step 3: Origin of material

A video introduces the origin, features, and production process of the garment's material. Most of the video source is coming from online, and some from No Label. The design cut and edited them together. The video will only be used for academic purpose.

No Label's quality begins with the fiber.

Pima cotton is the most premium cotton in the market. It is only found in mild, warm, and dry climates. In the American Southwest, California, we found our perfect Pima Cotton. Comprising only 3% of American yearly harvest, Prima Cotton is rare and far more expensive than standard cotton. Being 50% longer than those of standard cotton, Pima is also the strongest of all cottons, making fabrics that are durable and long-lasting. Through the spinning and weaving processes, raw cotton crops are turned into finished material. A longer fiber length means that fewer fiber ends are exposed on the surface. It results in a finished woven product that is stronger, softer and longer-lasting. Wearing incredible soft knitwear from us.

Figure 6.7: Some screenshots in the video

Step 4: Manufacturing factories

A video introduces the factories, people who made the clothes, and production process of the garment. The video source belongs to No Label. The designer cut and edited them together. The video will only be used for academic purpose.

A High-quality knitwear comes from right manufacturer.

South Ocean is specialised in all sorts of knitwear but knitwear only. Started in March 2000, the factory does over 1.2 million garments each year. They are able to make any sweater, jumper, cardigan or vest in the widest range of quality. From the finest Pima cotton in a 16 gauge quality for a beautiful Summer polo-shirt to thick heavy waffle knits in scarfs and beanies, their knitting skills are what we like to call: "unparalleled." Walking through their factory shows us passionate people with extraordinary skill sets, they are dedicated to making the high-quality garments we love. Wearing incredible soft knitwear from us.

Figure 6.8: Some screenshots in the video

Step 5: No Label's people

A video introduces the No Label's store and people who work at No Label. The designer shot the videos and edited them. The video will only be used for academic purpose.

Enjoy the knitwear full of our passion and professionalism.

Back in 2013, we started a brand with No Label. Our goal was simple: purely supplying your demand in basics. A perfectly basic collection of essential wardrobe pieces at fair prices yet with exceptional quality. We are a small and driven team of perfectionists who believe in simplicity without becoming mainstream. Today we are a team of 20 whom all share the same passion when it comes to clothing. Every member of our crew has its own role to play, but we do not succeed by the individual endeavor, our strength lies in the collective. Together we make awesome things happen. In every aspect of our business, whether it's the big picture or the smallest detail, we try to achieve the extraordinary.

Figure 6.9: Some screenshots in the video

[Shop for Good]

Horizon 3

Goal: To arise sustainable awareness of customers. To build social-responsibility related associations in the minds of customers.

Channel: Online webshop

Main Description: "Shop for Good" is a new online shopping experience that dedicated to arousing the sustainable awareness of customers. When shopping, customers can see the environmental impact they would have and the corresponding resource consumption. Building upon this, No Label will encourage people to take actions for sustainability as well.

Main Features:

1. It is a link in current Webshop. Customers can try a new way of shopping.
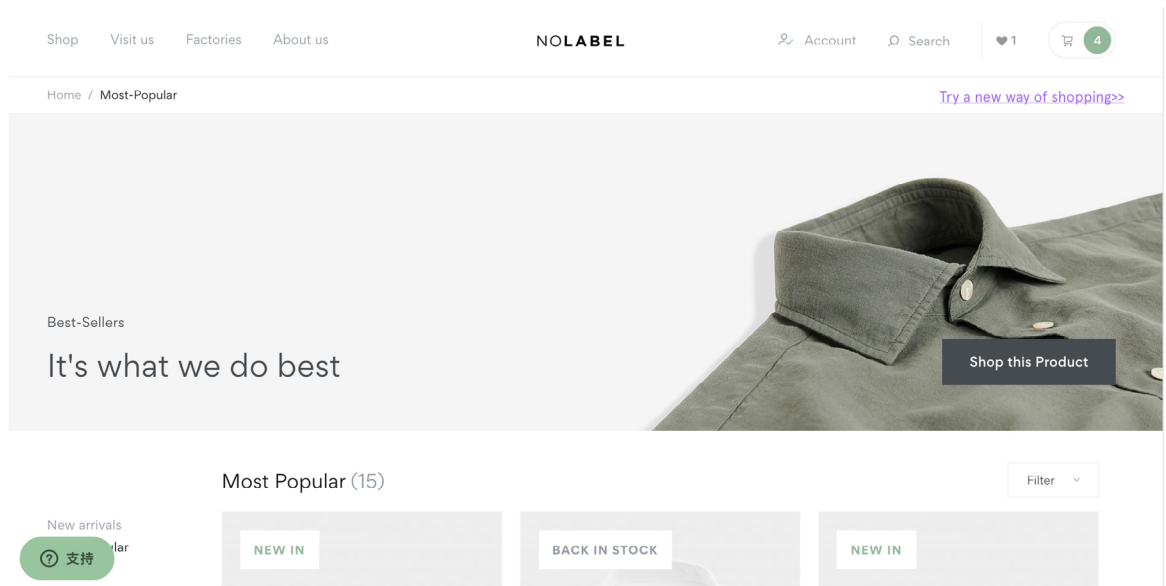
Figure 6.10: Current Webshop of No Label

2. The garments are filtered by sustainable/non-sustainable material, dye and the average wage for labors who made the clothes.

MATERIAL
☐ Organic Cotton
☐ Conventional Cotton
☐ Cotton Blend
☐ Recycled Fiber
☐ Polyester
Check how we make progress

COLOR
☐ Undyed
☐ Natural dyes
☐ Bio-based dyes
☐ Chemical dyes
Check how we make progress

LABOR
☐ € 8
☐ € 10   Average: € 4
☐ € 12
Check how we choose factory
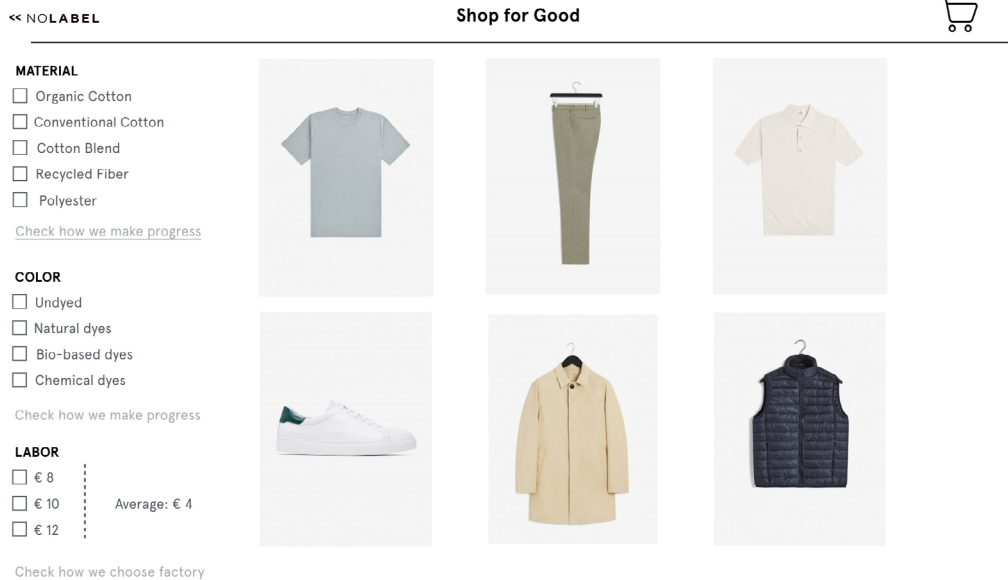
Figure 6.11: New shopping website_Homepage

3. No Label is transparent in showing the environmental impact of producing a garment.

Kaos Plain Cotton in black
€ 29

Size
S M L XL XXL

Color
Bio-based dyes

Material
Organic Cotton

Story
Organic cotton is cotton that is produced and certified to organic agricultural standards. Its production sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people by using natural processes rather than artificial inputs.

	This T-shirt	Industry average	Savings
Water	450 Liters	2700 Liters	2250 Liters
CO2	1.2 Kg	6 kg	4.8 Kg
Energy	0.6 Kwh	1.8 Kwh	1.2 Kwh

Add to cart

Figure 6.12: New shopping website_Product details

How to create a sustainable customer growth strategy for a small brand?

4. Customers are able to see their total consumption, in terms of money, energy, water, and Carbon dioxide.
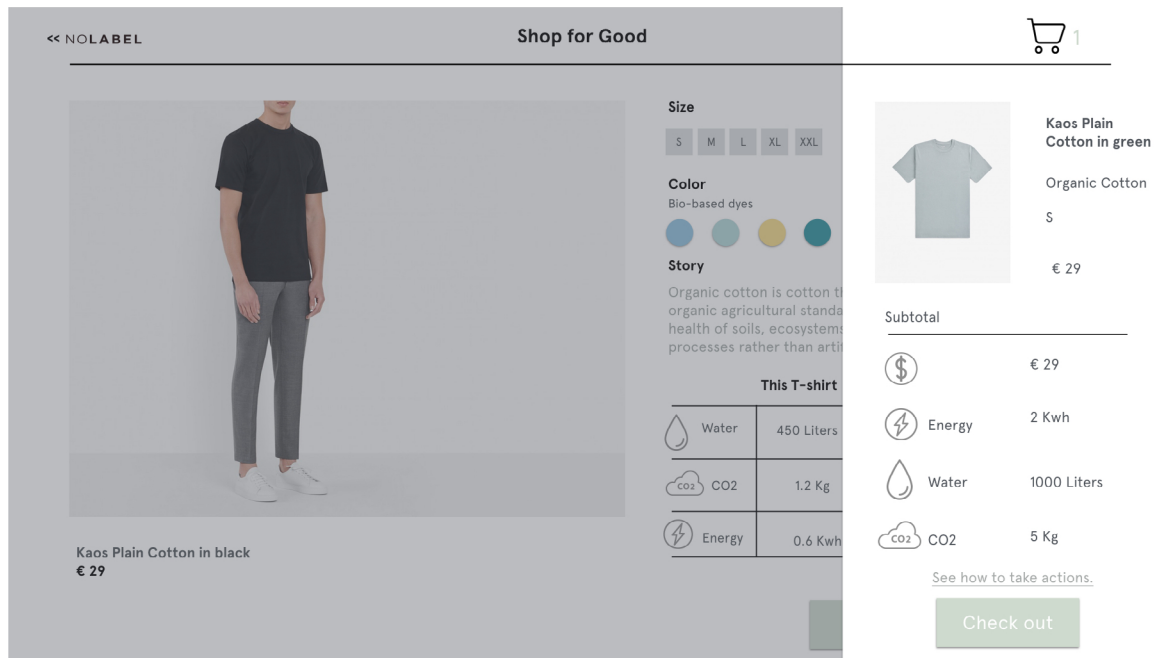
Figure 6.13:   New shopping website_Shopping cart

5. Customers can also see how to take actions to decrease their environmental impact.
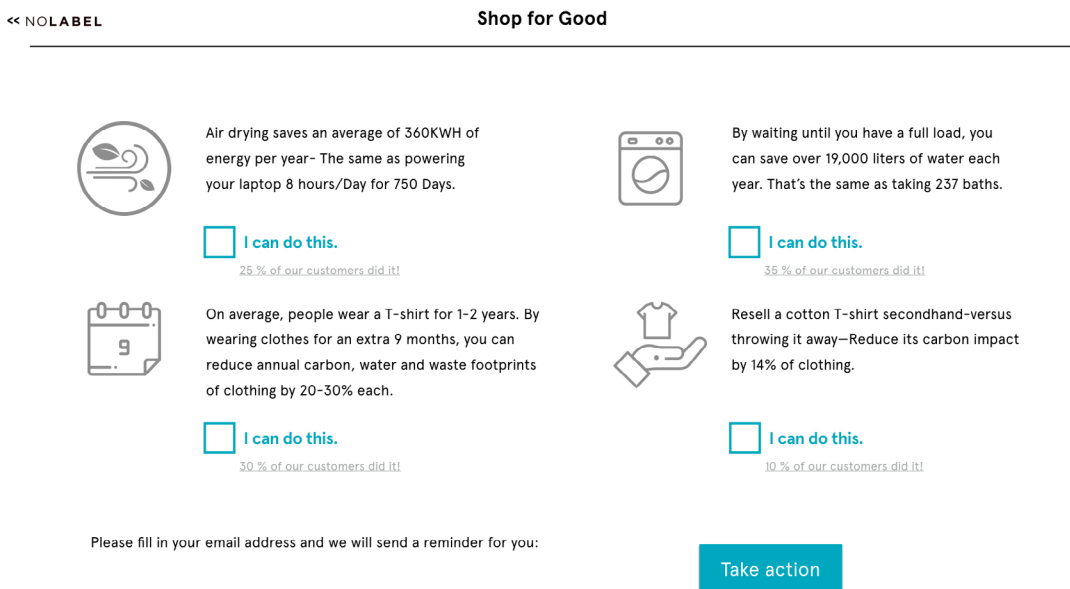
Figure 6.14: New shopping website_Take actions

6. No Label will be transparent in their profit and how are they making progress to be socially responsible.

« NO**LABEL**   **Shop for Good**

Profit report
&
Sustainability progress

2019

*"At No Label, we are happy report
our profits and give you an update on how we are progressing
towards sustainability."*

3750 *Garments sold*

Profit: **€ 90,000**

30% of the profit was put into our new
program with The Infinited Fiber

No Label **X** The Infinited Fiber

We are happy to ally with the Infinite Fiber this year!
They created a technology that turn textile, cardboard
and agricultural waste to new natural fiber. Thus we can
reduce the usage of new virgin materials.
Together we make change!

Has a natural high
quality feel like
cotton

High color uptake

Needs
considerably less
water

Natural antibacterial
properties

Impact so far

20%
No Label's material replaced

Equivalent savings:

Energy

Water

CO2

200 Kwh

20,000 Liters

5000 Kg

Figure 6.14: New shopping website_Progress

7

Validation

This chapter presents the process and results of the validation of the concept "The Journey of Clothes."

Method **Results** **Conclusion**

Validation

T-Test
Likert Scale

① "Quality" perception decreased

② Purchase intention significantly increased

③ Concept Improvement

④ Limitations

The concept "The Journey of Clothes" is meaningful in building brand associations and increasing customers' purchase intention. It would be recommended for No Label to present those videos at the physical shop.

7.1 Concept Validation

To validate whether the concepts can help customers better understand the brand story of No Label, and thus increasing their purchase intention, the concept "The Journey of Clothes" was validated with 50 potential customers.

7.1.1 Process and Method

Aim

1. Test whether the concept helps to increase the perception of "quality."

2. Validate whether the concept contributes to raising customer's purchase intention.

Method

Likert Scale

T-Test (Quantitative Research)

T-Test: A t-test is used to test whether two conditions have significantly different means. In this project, it was used to test the significant difference of intention purchase with the help of "The Journey of Clothes."

Participants: Participants: 50 male master students participated in this study. Because of the feasibility and time limitation of the test, the students were chosen to make sure the participants don't hold the pre-knowledge about No Label. Customers' prior knowledge will influence affective reactions their purchase

decisions (Bettman & Park, 1980). The master students were within the age range of No Label's main target group. Based on the 100 customer research from The Young, the biggest difference between student customer and main customers of No Label lies in the price. Hence, the participants were asked to ignore the price during the test.

Two conditions: Two conditional groups were included in the test. Each of them had a sample of 25 participants. Based on the sample size rules of thumb, 30 participants per group will lead to 80% power of the ordinary study in T-Test (VanVoorhis & Morgan, 2007). And a total size between 30 and 500 at 5% confidence level is generally sufficient for many researchers (Altunısık et al., 2004,s. 125).
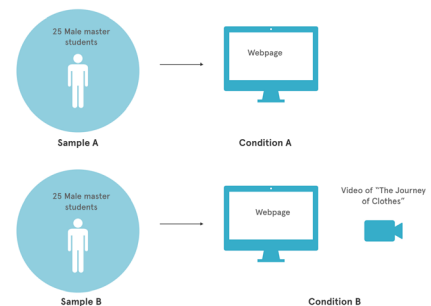
Figure 7.1:
Condition 1/only view webpage of a knitwear product VS Condition 2/View webpage + video

Measurement: The perception and purchase intention was measured via a seven-point Likert Scale. The overall quality was measured from four dimensions: material quality, reliable production, professional brand, and overall quality judgments. Those four dimensions were aligned with "the journey of the garment", that No Label's quality comes from good fiber, right manufacture, and professional employees.

To strengthen the reliability of the main dependent variable, purchase intention, a four-item, the seven-point semantic scale was used(Sucharita & Vicki, 2005). The detail of the scales can be found in Appendix R.

Process

The sequence of events in this study is as follows: in condition 1, the researcher introduced the setting of the test. Next, participants viewed the webpage of No Label. After they felt confident to fill in the scale, they completed the scale. In the end, a small interview was conducted. The whole process took 5-7 mins and was recorded through a voice recording program. In condition 2, participants took the same procedure, with one step extra. They watched the videos of "The Journey of Clothes", after viewed the webpage, See *figure 7.3*.

The test process pictures can be founded in Appendix S. The test results were analyzed in SPSS.

Figure 7.2:
Items used to measure quality and purchase intention
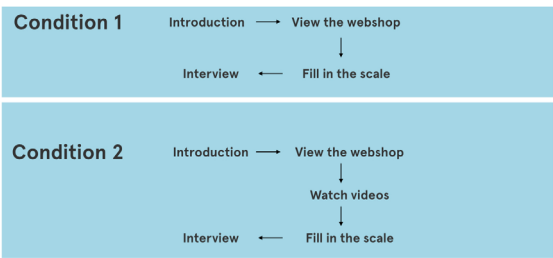
Figure 7.3: Process of test in two conditions

7.1.2 Results

"Quality" Perception

Overall, after watching the videos, the perceived quality decreased by 0.1, whereas the purchase intention increased by 1.3 *(Figure 7.4)*.

In condition 1, participants gave an average score of 5.8 for product quality. This score was mainly because of the product pictures, product description, and website presentation. However, this score decreased in condition 2, especially the rating for "professional brand," see *figure 7.5*. The video release the signal that No Label is a startup. Thus will weaken participants' perception that No Label is professional. Besides, the fidelity of the video also affected the quality of No Label. To make high-quality videos will be a suggestion for No Label if they are going to implement this concept in the future.
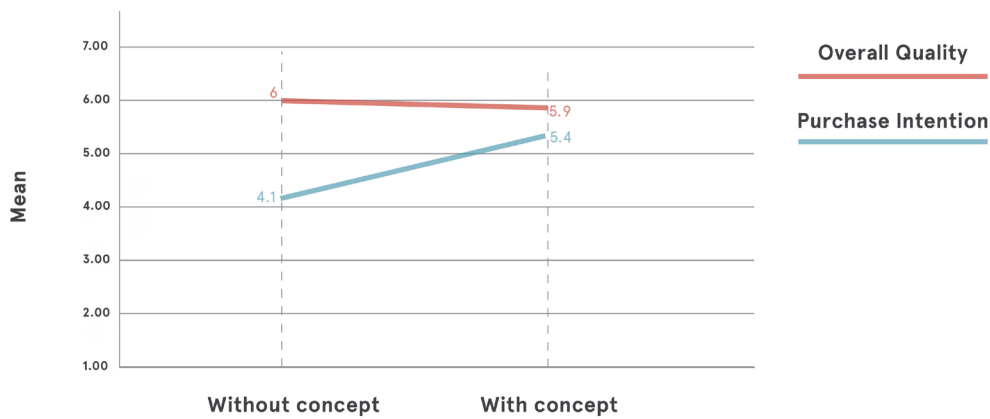
Figure 7.4: The mean of Purchase Intention and overall Quality
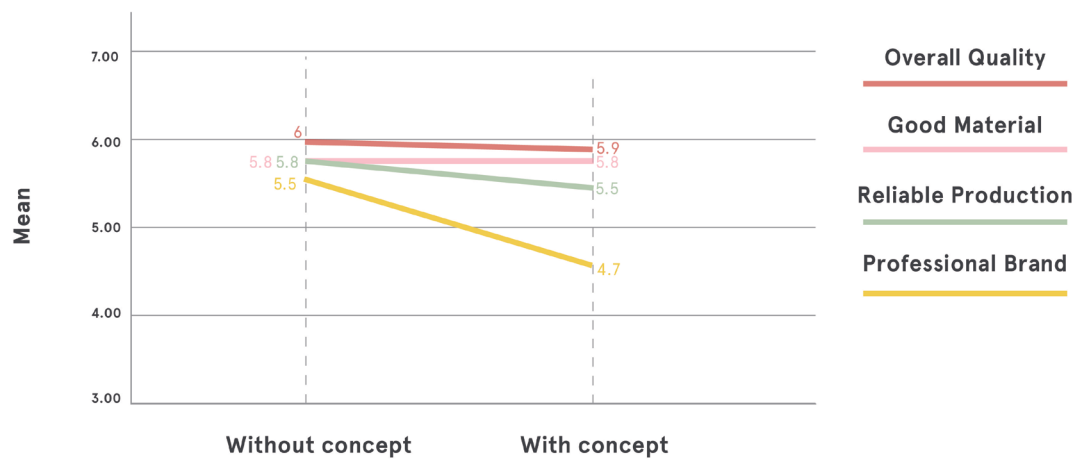
Figure 7.4: The mean of Overall Quality, Material, Production, and Brand

Purchase Intention

To further verify whether the videos in concept 1 has a significant influence on the user's purchase intention and quality perception, the data was analyzed in SPSS. The result has shown in *Figure 7.6 and 7.7*. It could be concluded that videos have no significant effect on quality, but has a significant impact on purchase intention. It means that, with the videos, people will be more willing to purchase the products of No Label. And this test result can be applied for the whole customer group.

The interview revealed the reason for this significant increase. Through these videos, the frequency of participants mentioned the brand was significantly increased. These videos help them learn more about the brand, their favorability of the brand increased. This favorability enhanced their purchase intention even if they don't have functional needs at the moment. At the same time, the video will make the quality and price of the product more understandable. For those participants who were doubting price and quality of NO Label, the video also helped. This also proved that the concept would help especially at the shop, where people don't have access to the brand story and more information about the product at the moment.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Quality

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	,020[a]	1	,020	,025	,874
Intercept	1716,980	1	1716,980	2168,817	,000
Condition	,020	1	,020	,025	,874
Error	38,000	48	,792		
Total	1755,000	50			
Corrected Total	38,020	49			

a. R Squared = ,001 (Adjusted R Squared = -,020)

Figure 7.6: T-Test result of Quality

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Intention

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	10,125[a]	1	10,125	6,729	,013
Intercept	1053,405	1	1053,405	700,131	,000
Condition	10,125	1	10,125	6,729	,013
Error	72,220	48	1,505		
Total	1135,750	50			
Corrected Total	82,345	49			

a. R Squared = ,123 (Adjusted R Squared = ,105)

Figure 7.7: T-Test result of Purchase Intention

Concept Improvement

The test also indicated improving directions:

1. Shorten the videos; right to the point

2. Put more ethical parts in manufacture video

3. Tell more about the brand story; why called "No Label"

4. Make the uniqueness of No Label explicit

5. Enhance the fidelity of videos

7.1.3 Conclusion

1. **Adding brand information will increase people's favorability of the brand emotionally and enhance their purchase intention.**

2. **The concept "Journey of the garment" is meaningful in building brand associations and increasing customers' purchase intention. It would be recommended for No Label to present those videos at the physical shop.**

Before real application of the concept "Journey of the garment," No Label could conduct a further test with a wider range of customers at the shop.
The fidelity of the videos will affect people's perception. So in the real application, higher quality videos are needed.

8

Reflection

This final chapter includes a short conclusion on the project and the main research question. Limitations to the research and project are mentioned as well as recommendations for further development and future research. The implications of this thesis for No Label and knowledge, in general, are discussed as well.

Reflection

Contribution

Limitation

Recommendations

Personal Reflection
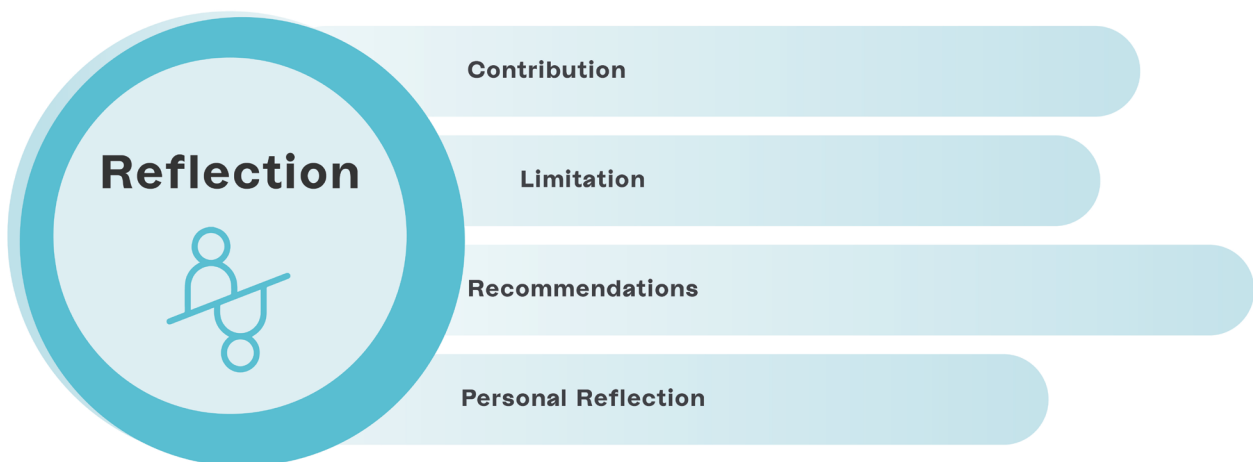
8.1 Academic Contribution

This project contributes to the academic field by connecting branding, design, and customer growth together. The customer growth and branding were connected by Keller in his Customer-Based Brand Equity Model. It pointed out that by the right marketing programs, a brand can step by step increase the purchase intention and brand loyalty of customers. But Keller's model didn't explore the details about "how" a company can apply this model. Erik (2010) introduced Brand-driven Innovation method to use brand as a driving force for innovations.

He explored the methods and process of Brand-driven Innovation in a detailed manner. However, the impact of design for customer growth and branding was not well discussed in his book. This project leveraged branding and design for sustainable customer growth and validate the power of branding and design for customer growth in the end. It's a tangible application of Keller's model and extended exploration for Brand-driven Innovation method.
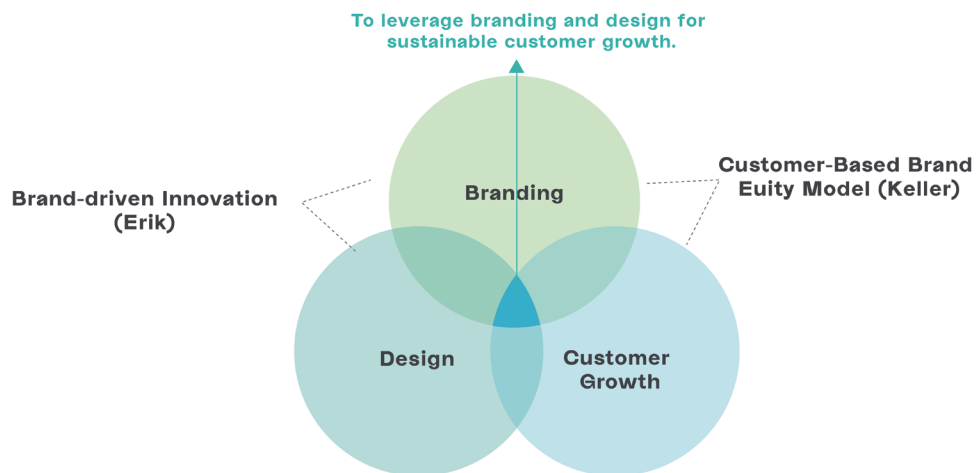
Figure 8.1: Academic contribution

8.2 Practical Contribution

External Communication and Higher Purchase Intention

The main focus of this project is to convert potential customers to real customers. The results of the concept evaluation have shown that building a strong brand in the minds of customers would significantly increase their purchase intention. Thus more potential customers can be real customers. The concepts are the manifestation of the main branding strategy. The good result of the concepts prove the effectiveness of the strategy and will give No Label a tangible showcase about how to implement the strategy.

Explicit Vision and Branding Strategy

The designer conducted abundant internal and external research during the project. Connecting CEO's vision, customer's desirability, competitors' competence, and future context, a vision of being the standard of sustainability was created.

Along with the Brand Meaning Roadmap, the vision and brand building strategy is explicit and clear. In long-term run, a vision can help to guide innovation activities.

Shared Vision and Internal Communication

The CEO of NO Label has a vision of being a sustainable brand. Currently, this vision is floating in his mind and not being well communicated internally. During the project, the designer created tangible ideas under the vision of sustainable and conducted internal evaluations about the vision and those concrete ideas. The Branding Roadmaps and ideas created in this project could serve as tangible material, which triggers the internal discussion and reflection about what they are doing and where they should go in the future. It facilitates the shared understanding of No Label's internal people.

Figure 8.2: An illustration of Innovation guidance

Figure 8.3: An illustration of Shared vision

Innovation Inspiration / Customers' perspective

Bringing in the customers' opinions is one of the main contributions of this project. The whole project was supported by customer research, and the final concept was evaluated by customers as well. The insights from customers ensure No Label better understand its customers and inspire them to take actions to improve customer experience. The designer also showed the power of design in the process. Many idea examples of product/service/experience innovations engendered in different touchpoints *(Figure 8.4)*. These examples are exciting and instructive for No Label's people.

[**PRE-PURCHASE** | INSPIRATION]

[**PURCHASE** | EXP

Word of mouth · Social Media · Webshop · Store · Store · Webshop · Product

#who made my clothes#

No Label Vlog

lookbook

More material and production information.

Price transparency.

Versatile

Sustainab

Shop for good
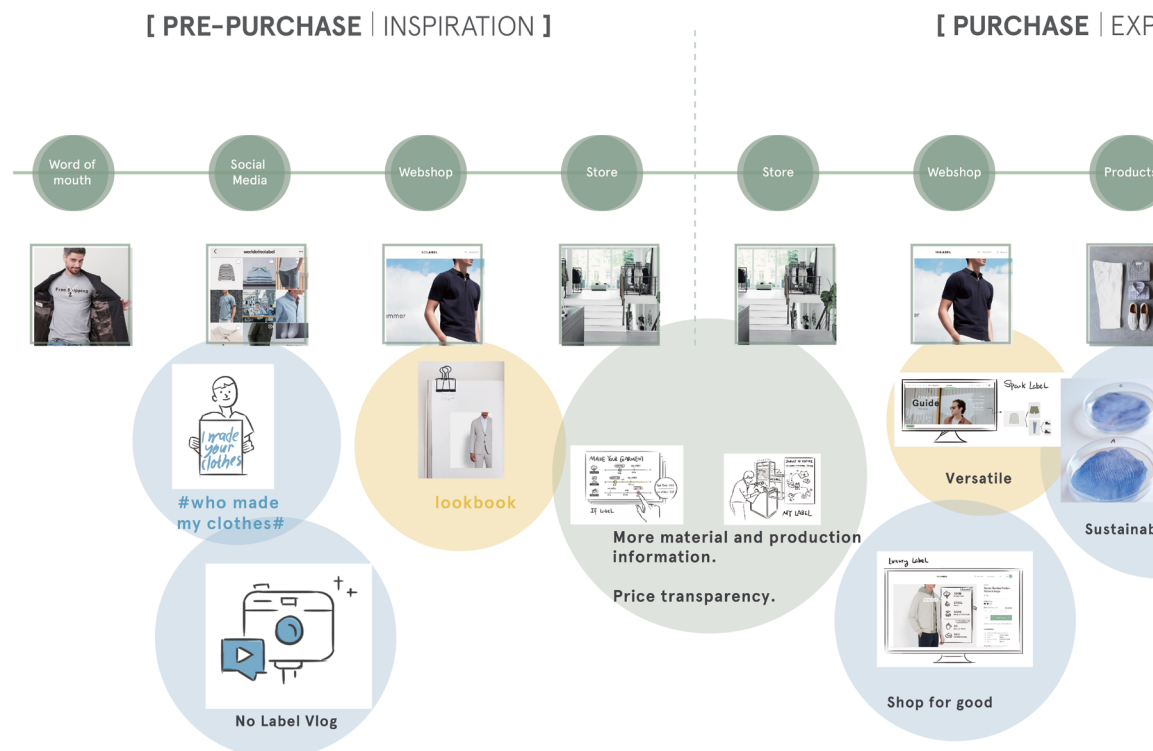
[...PERIENCE]   [**POST-PURCHASE**|CONNECTION]

Packages   Sales Person   Newsletter   Product Quality   Returning   Recycle

Sustainable package

...ble material

Matching Guide

Care guide

Fading Sign

Recycle Box
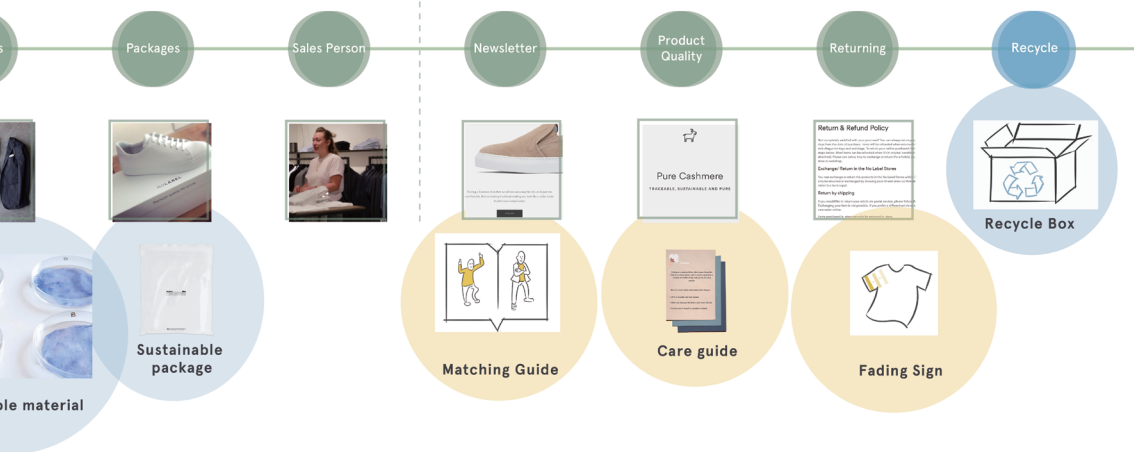
Figure 8.4: Idea examples engendered in different touchpoints

8.3 Limitation

The projected created a long-term branding strategy and made a design innovation Roadmap. In each Horizon, the main innovation strategy that fulfills the brand promise and communication strategy that conveys the message was formulated. In the end, the designer prototyped the design concept and validated the effectiveness of the concept. The whole project achieved the initial goals of creating a sustainable customer growth strategy and design concepts as a manifestation of the strategy. Looking back to the project, it is acknowledged that there are some limitations to be considered.

Execution and Touchpoint Orchestration

The project ended up with a branding strategy and design concepts. It was limited in execution: designing those touchpoints that together make up the overall desired experience. The designer generated ideas in different touchpoints, but not detailed the whole consumer journey. The project didn't explore how each touchpoint functions optimally and how they together make the overall experience.

Touchpoint Orchestration

Figure 8.5: An illustration of Touchpoint orchestration

Although the brand promise will help to check the consistency in the whole customer journey, the detail of consistency when orchestrating the touchpoints was not well explored and discussed in this project.

Limitations of loyal customer research

The customer research was carried out in forms of an online questionnaire in the email. The questionnaire was mainly made up of some multiple-choice questions. This to some degree loses the depth of the answers. The designer didn't get the chance to explore the characteristics, behaviors, and values of those customers in a more detailed manner.

Limitations of concept validation

1. The students were recruited to ensure that participants do not have prior knowledge. However, in practical applications, the main customers will also include working people.

2. Due to the limited project time, the sample size was limited. No Label could have a following test with bigger sample size.

3. The participants were limited to male customers. In real shopping situation, they will be accompanied by female customers. It would also be interesting to test how female customers react.

4. The test is limited in online, and the results may be different in an offline environment.

8.4 Recommendations

Implement Concept "The Journey of Clothes" at the physical shop

The results of the concept validation show the effectiveness of the concept. The videos help customers to strengthen the brand associations of "quality" and better understand the product. Besides, when customers know more about the brand, their emotional favourability toward the brand significantly increased. This emotionally favourable impression will enhance their purchase intention. Even for the customers who don't have the functional needs at the moment, it helps to increase their chance of choosing No Label in the future. When adopting the concept, No Label should pay more attention to the fidelity and quality of the videos, because the video itself will be a part that affects the "quality" perception.

Internal Sharing Sessions and Involve Customer Feedback

Internal sharing sessions will be meaningful to have a shared vision. The current No label does not form a unified shared vision. Different people have different ideas about the future direction of the company. And a shared vision is essential for a company to move forward and master changes (Denton, 1997). A company is like a ship, and a shared vision is a compass by which everything is guided (Senge, 1990).

Internal sharing session will also be valuable for information and knowledge sharing. For example, Milo and Sharon are the ones who reach out to customers. They know more about the complaints, feedback from customers. Those feedbacks are an important input for improving customer experience.
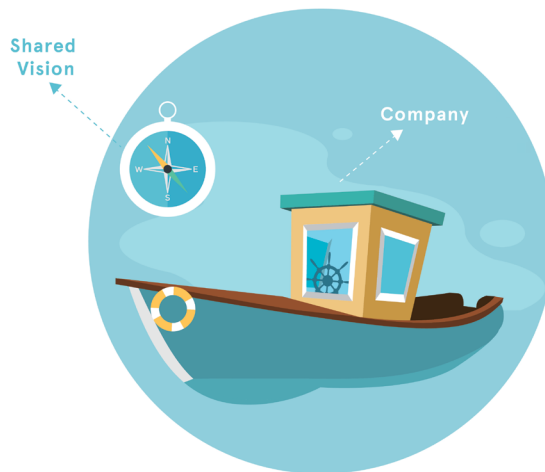
Figure 8.6: An illustration of Shared vision

Check touchpoint consistency

Since this project is not into details of the execution, it's recommended that No Label check and work on its touchpoint consistency in the future. The Brand Meaning Roadmap and Brand Associations Roadmap can serve as a reference for aligning different touchpoints toward the same purpose. For example, in the third Horizon, the goal is to make customers associate No Label with sustainable, ethical, and transparent. No Label can put this goal in the customer journey of before, during, and after purchase. This goal could light on how to optimize the customer experience in different touchpoints that could together create social-responsible perceptions in the minds of customers.

8.5 Personal Reflection

The process of the project was concluded in *figure 8.7*. No Label can use it as a reference for guiding future branding related projects and activities.

The project lasted for 6 months in total. Looking back on the project, I can confirm that it was a real explorative project but the explorations have resulted in concrete outcomes.

The project started with a broad assignment: how to realize sustainable customer growth for NO Label. As IDE student I was used to solving a given 'problem', but in the case of this graduation project, I had to find the problem by myself. So, in the beginning, the explorations were very broad and all-round.

The customer growth sounds like a business topic. How to link it with my specialist and skills of being a designer and how to connect it with my interest filed of branding also challenged me. After I read many articles about branding and together with the insights gained from the various research, the scope was clear: establishing the right brand perceptions in the minds of customers.

After Mid-term, I was encountering the problem of how to achieve the project goal with tangible design deliverables. During this process, I and my chair Marc had several discussions. He has been working hard to help me push to the design track. I had an idea session with my friends and started to form some tangible design ideas.

These ideas helped me and my supervisors reach a consensus about the final deliverables.

After clearly defining the problem, the project went more smoothly. However, during my pre-green light meeting, I found out that I have to communicate my project in an easy to understand and concrete way.

Then I started to restructure the whole project and make more concrete deliverables, such as concept prototypes. At the same time, I was eager to prove the value of what I created. I conducted an internal evaluation of the roadmap and ideas. The results gave me a lot of confidence and inspirations.

The whole assignment involved many stages, from vision to roadmaps to concept and concept validation. In the beginning, I had difficulty coping with ambiguity and fuzziness. But this learning from the trial process did give me chances to do many cool things— exploring the filed of brand and branding; taking initiatives; talking with CEO of the company; discovering the power of design; etc. The fact that my work stimulates No Label to think and reflect what they are doing gives me great feelings. I believe what I have done is valuable. Besides, the test results of showing the effectiveness of the concepts in increasing customers' purchase intention also make me happy. The knowledge and experience I have gained from this project will contribute to my future career.

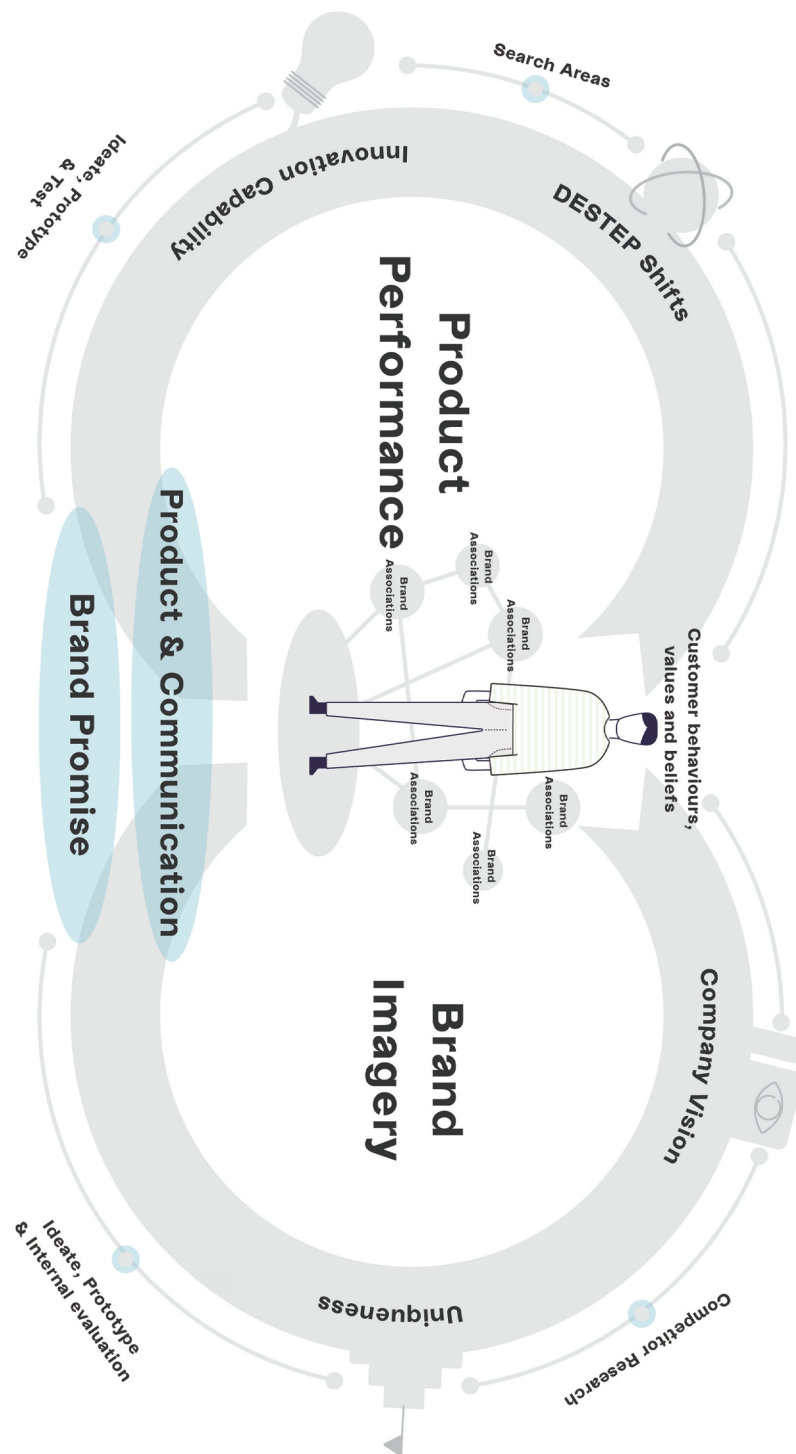Looking forward to becoming a brand specialist :)

Figure 8.7: The process for creating brand meaning and forming brand associations

Acknowledgment

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