

A strategy towards more Overgrown homes

Master thesis

by Mette d'Hond

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This thesis contains a healthy dose of plant

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pictures to inspire your own green spark. All pictures are made by Mette d'Hond, unless stated otherwise

"I have never tried that before, so I think I should definitely be able to do that."

- Astrid Lindgren, Pippi Longstocking

Preface

Being just a young girl, Pippi Longstocking has (in my humble opinion) one of the best attitudes to new things. "I have never tried that before, so I think I should definitely be able to do that", and that perfectly describes how I started this journey.

With Pippi's outlook on life, recovering from a concussion and having a bit more time on my hands to imagine what life could bring, I 'suddenly' found myself owning a business. Now about one and a half year later, it is an absolute pleasure to be able to look back at my graduation project that is done for my own company. I got to combine two of my passions and along the way, I got to share my experiences with many (soon to be) fellow plant parents.

Here in front of you, at the end of this journey lies my master's thesis: the final delivery of my master Strategic Product Design at the Delft University of Technology. Starting my master two years ago, it ended pretty differently than I ever could have imagined. Writing this amidst a pandemic from the kitchen table has definitely been challenging. But even from this isolated place I have never been alone.

Dear Jo and Emily, thank you for being an amazing supervisory team! For me it is still hard to believe we have actually never met in person. Every meeting we have had you have not only always provided me with a new view of the project, but you always caused a huge bump in motivation and excitement.

A huge thank you to all participants throughout my project. In all past projects, finding participants always has been one of the greater struggles. However, from the first round of interviews, many plant parents were so eager to make time for me and help out. Thank you for letting me take a glimpse into your lives and sharing your experiences. Thank you for the endless little moments of encouragement, the little check-ins and always being open to think along whenever I needed it. I feel blessed to be part of an ever growing and loving community.

Dear mom and dad, thank you for always enabling me to pursue my ambitions and believing in me. And last but definitely not least, thank you Sanne. Thank you for putting up with a partner who's only talking points (at some points in time) were plants, thank you for the late night name brainstorming with glasses of rose and thank you for proof reading my thesis word for word and thank you for always being there for me through this roller coaster of an experience. Even without any experience in design you were able provide me feedback on not only English, but also on my project.

I hope you enjoy reading!

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Executive summary

Background and problem statement

Houseplants; the little green wonders of mother nature. They have been shown to reduce stress, mental fatigue (Fjeld, 2000) and increase attention and cognitive performance (Hall and Knuth, 2019). When we look at all of the benefits of having houseplants around us, it is not hard to see why they have been around for ages already. However, over the past years they have seen a huge surge in popularity. The pandemic has been a big accelerator to this surge in popularity.

This thesis was done for Overgrown Plantshop, a small online plantshop owned by the graduate candidate. This surge in popularity has given Overgrown the opportunity to grow and thrive, but it also came with a set of challenges. The quickly changing market brought on a lot of new small plant shops, making competition fierce. In addition to this, rare plants became a lot more difficult to source in an ethical way. Meaning, in a way the generations after us can still enjoy them because we have not driven them to extinction. Because of these challenges, Overgrown wants to develop a new product, service or product-service system to expand into a new niche. As a young company Overgrown has little to no knowledge or experience about the market outside of the rare houseplant niche. This lead to the following design assignment:

"Get a deep understanding of the market and it's consumers. Use this to drive a new strategic future vision which is visualized in a roadmap and create a first product or product-service system towards realizing this future vision "

Process

To give structure to the creative process, the double diamond approach as proposed by the British Design Council was followed. A trend analysis and a competitor analysis helped get a broad view of the current market. Through broad and orienting interviews, a crucial moment was identified in the journey to becoming a plant parent: the green spark. This is a crucial part for whether a person commits to being a long(er) time plant parent, or falls back into believing they are not capable. We will call this moment "The Green Spark", to signify that it ignites the passion for plants.

A context mapping study was used to get a deep understanding of the underlying motivations, needs and barriers in and around the green spark. The results were a persona and a set of design requirements with accompanying 'how might we' questions. Lastly, the results were used to determined Ovegrown's new future vision:

"Overgrown aims to support sustainable consumption of plants by supporting plant parents to have longer lasting bonds with their houseplants"

The solution

The first step towards this future vision is Emma. Emma helps to lower the barrier for new plant parents to start their plant journey. Right now, the most common trigger that creates a low barrier is a cheap plant. In the case the plant dies, not a lot (of money) is lost. Overgrown wants to achieve a similar low starting barrier, but in a more sustainable way. Instead of offering a cheap plant that is easily replaceable (leading to more consumerism), Overgrown offers a high quality plant that is all ready to go for a smooth start.

After the purchase of Emma, Overgrown offers additional services that help the plant parent form a closer bond with their plant. These services are developed an added onto through three horizons that are laid out in a roadmap. Throughout t horizons Overgrown's focus shifts from selling plants to selling plant care. By d this Overgrown wants to take the focus away from always acquiring new trendy plants to having stronger bonds with the plants you already have. From just one touchpoint

where Overgrown sells a plant, Overgrown gets a closer bond with their customers, becoming a partner in long term plant growing.

The initial trigger has been tested with six aspiring plant parents and the first responses are positive. There is a strong indication that Emma is a good way to lower the starting barrier. The final recommendation is to get out there and embrace the learning mindset. To give Overgrown a flying start, the thesis ends with an updated business model, a service blueprint for the first horizon and a launch strategy.



CH1 Background & scope

CH1 Background & scope

1.1 Context of houseplants

Houseplants; the little green wonders of mother nature. They have been shown to reduce stress, mental fatigue (Fjeld, 2000) and increase attention and cognitive performance (Hall and Knuth, 2019). When we look at all of the benefits of having houseplants around us, it is not hard to see why they have been around for ages already.

There are records of plants being domestically kept all the way back to the Neolithic period (about 10.000 BCE) (Britannica, 2019). However, the first (well documented) surge in popularity in Europe happened in the 17th century. Settlers returned back from travels to overseas colonies and brought new exotic houseplant species with them. The invention of Wardian cages (sealed terrarium-like glass cages) allowed plants to be more easily transported from one continent to another (Keogh, 2020). As a results, tropical plants kept in households became very popular in the Victorian era.

Over the following eras, plants have gone in and out of style. Each surge of popularity marked by a different style of plant. The past years have seen a new surge of popularity in houseplants similar to the Victorian era. An ever more connected world allows us to enjoy tropical houseplants from all over the world. This is reflected in the trendy plants of the moment like the big leaves of the Monstera Deliciosa that has its roots in Mexico and Panema, to a multitude of different coloured and shaped philodendron from all over the world. Also the Wardian cage is making a comeback in the modern version of the Ikea greenhouse cabinet and small indoor greenhouses, they allow people to cultivate even more exotic species within their homes.

1.2 About Overgrown Plantshop

Overgrown is an online plant shop that has been set up in 2019 by the graduate candidate. It was set up through a love of plants and the wish to share the plant love and happiness with as many people as possible. This was done by buying and selling rare and hard to come by plants. Overgrown was able to generate revenue in two main ways: By multiplying plants through propagation (cutting of a part and growing a new part from a small portion of the mother plant) and by buying and reselling plants for profit due to a good understanding of the market. Because of this experience in sourcing and pricing plants we will consider Overgrown as an expert on the rare houseplant market in this thesis.

1.3 Current challenges for Overgrown

1.3.1 Changing market

Over the past years, the interest in houseplants has been steadily growing. This is also reflected in an increasing turnover in the annual report of Royal Flora Holland (2017) which is the world's biggest market place for floriculture. However, the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic, caused the plant market to become a very turbulent one.

When in March 2020 the pandemic hit the Netherlands, this constant growth came to a sudden holt. In what normally would have been a peak month, the export value of ornamental plants dropped drastically (Floridata, 2020). Experts worried that this might mean a crisis for the floriculture sector, but luckily, these worries turned out to be premature. August became a month with record turnover and the pandemic turned out to be cause another big spike in the interest in houseplants.

The surge of popularity of houseplants also caused the niche of rare and hard to find plants to change a lot. Not only having house plants, but also plant collecting became more popular. As a result, the niche market has grown tremendously and the supply far outstrips the demand, causing prices to rise tremendously. These steep prices made a lot of people see that selling rare plants can be very lucrative and small on-line rare plant shops started popping up all over Europe. Overgrown plant shop experienced that rare plants became incredibly hard to source and competition became fierce. What once was the unique selling point (providing hard to find plants) now is not so unique anymore.

1.3.2 Sustainable entrepreneurship

The result of this popularity is not only felt in the EU, but also where these plants originally come from. Thailand, Ecuador and Indonesia are the main countries where these high in demand plants grow in nature. The high demand has made plant poaching very lucrative for the inhabitants of these (generally poor) countries. This drives these naturally occurring species to go extinct in the wild.

Because sustainable entrepreneurship is one of the key values of Overgrown, Overgrown does not want to contribute to plant poaching and make plant ownership more sustainable. However, because Overgrown is specialized in hard to find and exotic plants, this has turned out to be a challenge. When importing plants, you often deal with local growers that usually don't speak English. This makes it incredibly difficult to determine whether the plants you import are grown in a nursery or are pulled from nature.

Perhaps the better option here would be to source plants from Dutch growers. These are most often grown from tissue culture which is an excellent way to preserve the plants in nature because they don't need to be harvested over there anymore. Another upside is that many Dutch growers have been optimizing their growing practices for over decades. This makes their growing process much more efficient and thus more sustainable. The challenge here is that these plants often don't fall under the category of rare and hard to find plants. For this reason, Overgrown would like to venture out into a new niche where it is better possible to make the more sustainable option.

1.3.3 Viable and sustainable business model

The last challenge Overgrown is facing lies in the business model and the way the current turnover is spread out. Since Overgrown was founded, the monthly turnover has been steadily growing. However, with the way the turnover is spread out, the current way of doing business is very unreliable. Overgrown has a base of returning customers. Very often, these are customers that buy less valuable plants, but do come back for Overgrown. This group makes up around 10% of the monthly turnover. The other 90% of turnover comes from selling rare plants. Often the customers who come to Overgrown only come to buy this specific plant they have been looking for. Generally they are not loyal, returning clients. They might come back for a second purchase, but only if you have another plant they have been looking for, for a price they like. This makes Overgrown's turnover very reliable on being able to predict the next trendy plant, sourcing these plants and finding (new) clients. As a results, each month's turnover is uncertain.

In the coming years, Overgrown has the ambition to grow based on a more viable and long term sustainable business model. Therefore, Overgrown want to increase their base of loyal returning customers. In order to do so, it is in Overgrown's best interest to venture out into a different niche or market

1.4 Project focus and approach

In the coming years Overgrown has the vision to grow and spread the plant love to more plant parents beyond the niche of rare and collectable plants. Overgrown wants to do this in a sustainable way. One aspect of sustainability is to enjoy them in such a way that these incredible pieces of nature are not driven to extinction. The biggest influence here is to be conscious where to source the plants and only offer non-poached plants for sale. Because this is something that happens in the supply chain of getting plants to the customers, this is not a focus point for this graduation project. Other sustainability

aspects will be an important focus point. Overgrown wants any new products or services to afford sustainable consumption behaviour.

Because Overgrown is a young and single person operated company, the knowledge of the market outside of the niche of rare and hard to find plants is limited. Therefore it is important to focus on getting a better understanding of the current market outside of this niche before designing a new future vision and the first steps towards this future vision. This leads to the project assignment:

"Get a deep understanding of the market and it's consumers. Use this to drive a new strategic future vision which is visualized in a roadmap and create a first product or product-service system towards realizing this future vision "

Approach

To give structure to the creative process, the double diamond approach as proposed by the British Design Council was followed. The double diamond is a way of structuring the design process that is characterized by two diamonds that both have a stage exploring more widely (divergent thinking), followed by a stage of narrowing down to a focus again (convergent thinking) (Ball, 2019).

The diverging first half of the first diamond (discover) focuses on getting a broad understanding of the current plant market and the different types of plant parents out there. The process and results of this phase are discussed in chapter 2. The converging second half of the first diamond (define) focuses on getting a deep understanding of the underlying motivations, needs and barriers of the chosen target audience, which is discussed in chapter 3. In chapter 4 these insights are used for the first converging half of the second diamond (develop) to develop a product-service system that makes the first steps towards this future vision. The last diverging half of the second diamond focuses on testing out and improving the final solution.



Overgrown is a young company that is specialized in rare and hard to find houseplants. Because of this, the knowledge of other customer segments in the plant business is little to none. Therefore, the discover phase focuses on obtaining a broad understanding of the trends, competitors and market with all of the different types of plant parents.

Subchapters

2.1 Orienting interviews 2.2 Trend analysis 2.3 Competitor analysis



2.1 Explorative interviews

Because Overgrown is a young and single person operated company, the knowledge of the market outside of the niche of rare and hard to find plants is limited.

Participants

Participants were recruited through a call for participation in the form of an Instagram story on a plant themed account. 39 people responded to the call. Out of these, 15 people were selected to participate, of who 13 were interviewed (cancellations were related to Corona symptoms). The selection was made to get a diverse sample from beginning to more advanced plant parents, this was done by looking at their Instagram profiles and assessing their posts to determine how advanced they were. Such factors are; how rare their plants are, how long they have been sharing plants on their Instagram and whether they are sharing tips or asking for help. The final sample consisted out of 10 females and 3 males aged 17 to 35 (mean age is 26).

Method

Because the interviews were broad and explorative, they had a very open setup to gain a broad understanding of the context. The goal of the interviews was to get insights into the different personas there are. Together with the competitor and trend analysis, the most promising direction can be chosen for a deep dive during the context mapping study.

To be able to create different personas the interviews were set up to get insight on:

- o How do people get started with plants?
- o How do plants fit into people's daily lives?
- o What plant related things and activities are gains?
- o What plant related things and activities are pains?

Depending on the personal preference of the participant, the interviews were done either in person or via Zoom. An in person setting at the participant's home has the benefit that one can see the participant's plant collection and talk about their plants and plant habits within the context of their own home. However, because of Covid related restrictions, not everyone felt comfortable doing this.

Analysis

All interviews were recorded and after, transcribed using Trint. From the transcripts, interesting passages were selected and written down on statement cards. Each statement card has a field to write down the selected quote, another field to write down the interpretation of this quote and a last field to give it a title. Figure 1 shows an example of what a statement card looks like. The statement cards were then sorted into themes in order to interpret the data and draw conclusions.

Results

However, during the analysis process it became evident that the participants were too similar to make different personas. The different behaviours, attitudes, pains and gains were more linked to the stage of plant parenting they are in rather than really being a different persona. Therefore the results were visualized in the plant parent's journey which can be seen in figure 2. Important to note is that this journey the last stage is not the last stage for every plant parent.

2.2 The green spark

On the timeline, there seemed to be one crucial part for whether a person commits to being a long(er) time plant parent, or falls back into believing they are not capable.

We will call this moment "The Green Spark", to signify that it ignites the passion for plants. Igniting the green spark with new plant parents from the very beginning can have major benefits for Overgrown as this might result into a high long term customer loyalty. In addition to this, this is great opportunity to learn people how to plant with a more sustainable mindset. Therefore, the next step will be to take a deep dive into what happens in the green spark.

Quote 1 [00:08:11] Ja, het is echt een soort van uitlaat of zo. Het is echt. Als ik gestrest en dan is het voor mij fijn om gewoon eventjes met m'n plantjes te gaan. Ja, weet ik veel, iets gaan doen? Dat ik iets ga over potten of dat ik deze baby'tjes die eruit gaan halen of zoiets?

Interview #3

Plants as relaxation

Planten zijn een uitlaatklep, er mee bezig

Quote 2 []

zijn ontstresst.

Figure 1 – Example of a statementcard

Typical events and actions



2.3 Trends

Over the past years, we have experienced a huge plant renaissance. This is both visible in also confirmed by plant growers Overgrown has spoken to. As recent as 5 years ago, it was very hard for them make a good number of sales. However, over the past years they have had the chance to grow bigger and bigger as plants were making their comeback.

The pandemic was a big accelerator to this surge in popularity. With this rise in popularity, rare and hard to find plants also have become much more available. From having to beg collectors for even a cutting of a special plant, new and interesting plants are becoming more and more widely available. The suddenly increased interest in plants is not a new phenomenon, a surge of green happiness was also experienced in the 17th century when the settlers brought back home plants from all over the world (Keogh, 2020). To get more insight into what factors played into the rise of plant popularity and subsequently what the future may look like, a trend analysis was conducted. This chapter discusses the trends most relevant for this project.

Burnout society

Our society is becoming increasingly more stressful and more competitive. However, this hustling culture is starting to more and more receive backlash over the last years. There is more awareness for improving the workplace and designing for wellbeing to alleviate stress and anxiety (TrendWatching, 2019). Additionally, the pandemic has a big impact on peoples mental health. "First data from China and Europe indicate that symptoms of anxiety and depression and perceptions of stress rise significantly as a consequence of the pandemic" (Veer et al., 2020, p. 3). These trends are a strong indication that a calming plant experience with a focus on alleviating stress and anxiety might be well received in the current market.

E-commerce still on the rise

Whilst the offline industry is declining, the online shopping industry continues to grow (Delmee, 2020; Emerce, 2021). In addition to this, international e-commerce also is growing and promising market. Experts predict that in 2022, almost a quarter of every online order is international (Delmee, 2020). This rise is also felt in the plant sector. Whilst plants would not be the first thing one would think about ordering online, more and more online plant shops are opening and being successful.

Plant related trends

Lastly, Overgrown has identified interesting plants related trends over the past years.

Out with the succulents, in with the aroids

Next to the general rise in popularity of plants, it is interesting to see that specifically the large leaves of aroids have drawn in many plant enthusiasts. Where we first saw a mix of cacti and succulent on window sills, these are now making place for big and lush leaves, transforming homes into true urban jungles. Overgrown has to remain aware of these changes in taste in plants in order to remain relevant in the market.

More awareness of the ecological impact of the plant hobby

Even though one of the purposes of surrounding ourselves with plants is to feel closer to nature, many aspects of the hobby have a negative impact to our surroundings. The combination of lots of plastic pots, pesticides and peat based soils make this hobby not ecologically friendly. Over the past year, more people are becoming aware of this and interest for products with a lower ecological impact are becoming more mainstream. More seasoned plant parents are more open to using predatory mites over pesticides and start experimenting with different types of substrates that have a lower ecological impact. There might very well also be interest for this with beginning plant parents, but Overgrown's assumption that it is too advanced and uncertain for them to start dabbling in these types of practices.

Optimizing care routines

A big collection of plants can over time become stressful. Plants get pests, rounds of watering are forgotten and those once so beautifully growing plants are not doing their best. Products that make plant care easier are becoming more popular. A big current hype is the combination of Lechuza Pon and self-watering pots. The pre-fertilized easy care substrates in combination with self-watering pots seems to be the ultimate low care option for those plant parents who do want to have a lot of greenery around, but don't have enough time for the upkeep. This way, the urban jungle can be enjoyed with a lot less worry and hassle.

2.4 Competitor analysis

When Overgrown was founded, it's unique selling point was that Overgrown supplied special plants that were hard to find. At the time there were very little plant stores doing this. However, during the houseplant craze that took off during the pandemic, the demand for these types of plants rose and as a result the prices increased drastically. The combination of a high demand, high prices and a high willingness of consumers to pay these prices made the rare and hard to find houseplant niche very lucrative. More hobbyists saw this and a lot of small online stores that focus on harder to find houseplants were founded all throughout Europe. As a result, Overgrown's unique selling point is not unique anymore.

To remain competitive, Overgrown wants to expand (or even completely move) to a new niche. Because the field changed so much in a relative short time, Overgrown needs a better understanding of its current competitors. This analysis was also used again at the end of the project to help with Overgrown's repositioning in the market. More about this can be read in chapter 5.4 Competition.

Competitors were found using the following market definition: Shops or services that support people's plant hobby.

After the initial search, competitors were divided into three levels. Figure 3 shows the competitors based on these levels. These levels were defined as:

Level 1 – Level one competitors are defined as plant shops that are (partly) specialized in rare and hard to find plants within Europe. Only European shops are considered because shipping plants outside of the EU is very complicated due to laws and regulations. Because of this it is done so little that shops outside of the EU are not seen as competition. Throughout the last year so many small plant shops have popped up, that figure X only shows the biggest players in the current market.

Level 2 – Level two competitors are defined as plant shops that offer a 'little bit more'. The traditional plant shop often only sells a plant and after this the plant parent is on their own. These shops offer different ways of support to help the plant parent. The most common way is an app of a blog.

Level 3 – Level three competitors are defined as companies that provide plant related products or services. Competitors that fall into this category are plant consultants, plant care courses, plant parent communities, companies offering plant related workshops or activities and apps that aid in plant care.



Figure 3 - Competitors

CH 3 Define

Subchapters

3.1 The green spark 3.2 Context mapping study 3.3 Future vision



The second phase of the double diamond (define) focuses on developing the information that is found in the discover phase (Ball, 2019). This phase takes a deep dive into what happens at the green spark. A context mapping study allowed me to get deep insight into the needs and dreams of prospective users (Visser et al., 2005). This chapter describes the process of setting up and conducting the context mapping study. This chapter concludes with the results: a new future vision, a persona and a set of themes with accompanying "how might we...?" questions.



The contextmapping study zoomed in into the events that happen around the green spark. In this phase, something special seems to happen. During the orienting interviews there were already a couple of influences identified that made people continue into their plant parent journey (their green spark is successful), or go back to believing they are not capable (their green spark is unsuccessful). The context mapping study takes a deep dive into what happens at the point of the green spark.

3.1 The green spark

To gain a deep understanding of the different types of plant parents and their needs, the approach of a contextmapping study was chosen. In order to yield deep insights from a contextmapping study, the research stimuli should allow a certain focus of the topic (Sanders & Stappers, 2012). This context mapping study focuses on what happens during "The Green Spark"; the moment the passion for plants is ignited.

The green spark could also be described as the moment where new plant parents get 'hooked' on plants. Plants almost become a product that plant parents cannot go without anymore. They capture out attention and make people engage with them out of sheer habit. A model that shines light on the patterns that lay below these kinds of behaviours is Nir Eyal's 'Hooked'.

Hooked

To better understand the events in and around the green spark, the Hooked model was used, as the moment of the green spark can be seen as the moment where plant parents become hooked. In Hooked, Nir Eyal (2014) gives insight into why people love to products to the extent that they get hooked. The hooked model has four stages: the trigger, the action, a variable reward and lastly an investment. By finding out for each of these phases what these mean for plants parents I hope to be able to dig deeper into what happens at the green spark. Or, why do people get hooked on plants?

3.2 Context mapping study

3.2.1 Approach

Participants

Participants were recruited through a plant themed Facebook group (five participants) and from the personal circle of the researcher (three participants). This mix was chosen to make sure that not all participants were already involved into plant themed social media channels. Because there were a lot of people interested in participating, each participant was asked to tell a bit about their previous experiences with plants and what plants mean to them in their day to day lives. This way, the right types of participants could be selected. The final sample consisted out of 8 females aged 22 to 31.

Sensitizing

To be able to get to the deeper layers of understanding, participants need to have been involved in the problem prior to the interview (Sanders & Stappers, 2013). This was done through sensitizing materials consisting of small assignments that participants were asked to fill in prior to coming to the interview. Because of Covid-19 related restrictions the entire context mapping study was planned to be online. The sensitizing materials were made as a fillable Google



Figure 4 – The hooked model combined with the path of expression.

slides template. Google slides was chosen over Power Point because one participant indicated she did not have Power Point. An added bonus of using Google Slides was that it was possible to follow the participant's progress through the materials and send a reminder to continue filling in the materials if needed.

The sensitizing booklet contained assignments for four days. Each day sensitized the participants to one of the quadrants of the Hooked model. The assignments were ordered in such a way they followed sensitizing materials het path of expression as described by Sanders & Stappers (2013). The path of expression "serves as a framework for planning the path that the participant will take in a generative design research session, culminating their ability to imagine and communicate their hopes, dreams and fears for the future" (Sanders & Stappers, 2013, p. 56). According to the path of expression you always start at the now, to then go into memories (the past) to only then be able to dream about the future.

The final order of the assignments can be seen in figure 4. Figure 5 gives an impression of what a filled in template looks like. The full sensitizing materials as well as the preparations can be seen in appendix 2.



Figure 5 – An impression of one of the filled in sensitizing slide decks.

Method

Right after the last day of the sensitizing activities were completed, the interview was conducted. Because of Covid-19 related restrictions all interviews were done through Zoom. Whilst talking about the different booklet pages, the booklet was shown through screen share. Each interview took between half an hour and an hour.

3.2.3 Analysis

All interviews were recorded and after, transcribed using Trint. From the transcripts, interesting passages were selected and written down on statement cards. The statement cards were then sorted into themes in order to interpret the data and draw conclusions. The outcomes of this process were 5 themes with corresponding design questions or guidelines and a persona.



3.2.2.2 Discovered themes and design requirements

A low risk starting barrier

Before contemplating whether to take on the responsibility of taking care of a plant, there are some worries and barriers people experience. (How) will they be able to keep the plant alive?

The way of lowering the starting barrier that was mentioned most often is to make the monetary investment small. This takes away the pressure of having to do well because the loss when things go wrong is not so big. A product that was often mentioned is the 'kneusjesbox' from plantje.nl. This is a surprise box that contains 12 plants that have been sitting on the shelves for too long. Because of this they are sold for a very low price. Getting to start by trying out a lot of different plants for very little money was the start of their plant parenthood for many of those who started keeping houseplants during the pandemic. Even though it undeniable that this is an effective way to get people started having plants, it promotes plants as a consumable which is not an ecologically sustainable solution.

Another common way to get started is to get a plant gifted. This removes the starting barrier al together, rather than making it low risk. However, sometimes the risk experienced is even higher because now you have this plant to care for, no idea how to do it and a friend who is possibly disappointed when you fail.

The last way of lowering the starting barrier is to give a certain amount of security and assurance things will be just fine. Some participants mentioned that having a friend who was into plants and they always could ask questions made them want to try plants one more time.

This need for assurance can also be seen when looking at buying behaviour of the current Overgrown customers. A post about why and how to use worm castings for happy and healthy plants was followed by a surge in sales of worm compost. The next explanatory post repeated this pattern: a post explaining how to sow and care for Stephania Erecta bulbs was followed by all of them being sold out the day after.

These insights lead to the following HMW question:

• How might Overgrown enable a low starting barrier in a sustainable way?

Plant care as a want to do, not a have to do

The favourite plant care activity is actually... just looking at them. Activities like repotting, pruning and spraying the foliage were also mentioned as calming, but only when the plant parent chooses to this him or herself instead of it being an obligation. On the other hand, when the participant feels a need to wind down but there is nothing to do anymore, this is also seen as a let-down.

This also is one of the worries expressed by multiple participants for when the pandemic is over. There is always something to do and they worry whether they will still be able to dedicate as much time to the plants as they are now, and if this will be enough time to keep the plants healthy.

These insights can be translated to design requirements for a new plant related product-service system. There have to be some activities ready when the user want them to be there, but it has to be on their own terms. The activities should never feel like an obligation.

Learning versus exploring

Learning how to care for plants can be fun and it gives the confidence to try out new things and take on more plants. When these new things succeed (for example growing your own cuttings) it adds a lot to the sense of accomplishment plants can bring.

The favourite and most common way of learning plant care is through trial and error. By trying out or implementing that tip you heard from your neighbour, facebook, friend, (grand)ma.

Some participants specifically mentioned not being interested in a course or things that entail intense reading. These things feel too much like active learning, whilst plant activities should be something chill to wind down from a busy day.

These insights lead to the following HMW question: How might Overgrown enable learning new plant knowledge through exploration?

Planting is a social thing (but not always)

There are a couple of social factors and activities that add to the positive experience of keeping houseplants. The most often mentioned factor is that houseplants are a great way to bond over a common interest. This can be done with already existing friends, but this is also a great way to cultivate new friendships.

Having a social circle that also is into plants also is a good backup for when things go wrong. In addition to this, giving advice to other rather than receiving it also is seen as a very positive experience.

Another social plant activity that was often mentioned is sharing plants and cuttings. Plant swaps and cutting swaps is a great way to connect with fellow plant parents, as well a way of keeping the hobby more budget friendly.

These insights lead to the following HMW questions:

keeping the product-service system possible to do on your own?

New growth is the most exciting and fun thing

Every single participant mentioned the joy that new growth can bring. The majority of participants actually mentioned it as the most fun thing of having house plants. But sadly, it does not always happen. Plants are living beings and in the end, a lot can go wrong. Also, in the winter plant growth is often little to none due to the lack of light.

These insights lead to the following HMW question: How might Overgrown offer more positive feedback than 'just' well growing plants?

How might Overgrown facilitate plant parent activities in a social setting whilst also

3.2.2.3 Conclusion

The context mapping study has given insights what the ideal client looks like in the form of a persona. The themes have lead to HMW questions as inspiration for how to design for the ideation phase. Figure 6 shows the summary of these design questions placed within the hooked model.

3.3 Future vision

To give more direction to the ideation process, this chapter concludes with Overgrown's new future vision:

"Overgrown aims to support sustainable consumption of plants by supporting plant parents to have longer lasting bonds with their houseplants"

How might Overgrown enable a low starting barrier in a sustainable way?



How might Overgrown enable learning new plant knowledge through exploration?

How might Overgrown offer more positive feedback than 'just' well growing plants?

How might Overgrown facilitate plant parent activities in a social setting whilst also keeping the product-service system possible to do on your own?

Figure 6 – HMW questions placed in the Hooked model based on the insights from the context mapping study.



CH 4 Develop

Subchapters

4.1 Ideation 4.2 First concept 4.3 Testing the trigger 4.4 Emma



The third phase of the double diamond (develop), focuses on developing, testing and refining potential solutions (Ball, 2019). This chapter starts by showing the ideation and the first version of the concept that resulted from this. Next, the trigger of this concept was tested.

4.1 Ideation

The define phase ended with a new future vision, a persona and a set of themes with accompanying "how might we" questions. These elements were taken as the starting points of the ideation sessions.

The original plan was to have a creative session with a bigger group, but due to covid-19 related restrictions, a different format was chosen. Instead, two one on one brainstorm sessions took place. One session was with a plant parent who only recently had her "green spark" ignited, the other plant parent already had more experience. Afterwards, the strongest points of each concept (based on the persona and design criteria) were combined and altered to fit the Hooked framework leading towards the first concept: Henk

Session one: Experienced plant parent

The first session was conducted with a plant parent who already had more experience. In addition to this, she is a graduate interaction designer. Because of this, a more loose and unstructured brainstorming approach was taken. Because it was only a session of two people, the Covid-19 related distancing rules could be honoured. Therefore we made the decision to conduct the session in a live setting rather than through Zoom. After being introduced to the project and the aim of the design, we dove straight into a series of brainstorming exercises. Based on the design criteria the best fitting concept was chosen.

De Ontzorg pot (translation: the Care free planter)



This concept's main focus is to take away the pain of being scared that one is not capable of taking care of their plant.

Even though the session ended in concepts that mainly touched upon her own plant struggles, these are very similar pains that hold people back from getting started with plants to begin with. The 'Ontzorg' pot could be a very good way to lower the barrier to start. However, this concept will not get plant parents hooked. The sense of accomplishment that one gets through learning and exploration is removed, the pot does this for you so the reward aspect from the hooked model is not there. Therefore the Onzorg pot was mainly used as inspiration to design the trigger of the first concept.

Session two: Plant parent in the green spark

The second session was done together with a plant parent who was still at the beginning of the green spark and had no design experience. This session was done through Zoom and Miro was used as a shared online whiteboard.

In order to empathize with the target audience, we started by mapping out her own experiences and assumptions about long term plant parenting in the hooked model. The points that were mapped out were very similar to the context mapping results, so we used this version as input for the brainstorming session. Creative techniques like brainwriting, guided fantasy and story boarding were used to give more guidance to the creative process.

The main focus of the session ended up being about learning about plant care. She wanted to learn about plant care, but only when the lessons were applicable to her situation. However, at this moment in time a lot of the available information is either hard to find, contradictory or non-conclusive. The barrier to buying a plant can therefore be lowered by bundling the plant with a service that gives the plant parent the right information at the right time. The final defined concept is omni plant.

Omni plant : The super extended plant help database



Omni plant is a spin off from more traditional plant courses. Traditional plant courses like those created by Houseplant Journal or Homestead Brooklyn can be very daunting to start. They can give the impression that plant care is a lot to deal with and it feels more like a big piece of homework rather than a fun journey to go on. Omni plant is an extended database that is there for you when you need it. Worries about a yellow leaf? Omni plant is there to help you through it in an explorative way. This way a new plant parent can get to know their green companion in a slower pace.

Omni plant is aimed to both lowers the starting barrier, as well as giving new plant parents a little push to learn more about their plants. It gives plant parents a safer feeling, knowing that when things do not go well, there is always the perfect help available.

The downside of this concept is that it has a high likelihood to reinforce the perception that taking care of plants is really difficult. Therefore the learning nature of this concept is used in the final concept, but it is not taken as the main focus point right from the first introduction.

Conclusion

From the two sessions, the best points were combined into one concept. After this, additional alterations were made to create a concept that encompassed all four stages of the Hooked model. This will give the biggest likelihood that the concept will truly get new plant parents hooked on plants. The first iteration is described in Chapter 4.2 Henk.

4.2 First concept: Henk

The best elements of the two concepts that resulted from the creative sessions were combined into one and altered a bit to create a product-service system that encompasses all of the four steps from the Hooked model and touched upon all of design criteria mentioned in .

The resulting concepts presents plants as a service. Henk is a plant that does not need much from the get go, lowering the barrier to get started., this way the new plant parent knows that everything is taken care of. Henk is offered in the form of subscription based model. The first thing the new plant parent will receive is their own personal Henk all potted up and ready to go. Every quarter of the year, the plant parents receives products that are needed to take good care of Henk. In between these terms, the new plant parent receives support that helps them to get to know Henk better in a fun and explorative way.

4.2.1 Henk and Hooked

The trigger

According to the findings of the orienting interviews and the context mapping study, the traditional trigger for people to get the green spark is a low starting barrier. The most common trigger that creates a low barrier is a cheap plant. In the case the plant dies, not a lot (of money) is lost.

Overgrown wants to achieve a similar low starting barrier, but in a sustainable way. Instead of offering a cheap plant that is easily replaceable (leading to more consumerism), Overgrown offers a high quality plant that is all ready to go for a smooth start. The hypothesis here is that a slightly more expensive plant which is easy to look after, has the same low barrier of entry of a cheap plant that might die, whilst also being more ecologically sustainable.

Offering a plant that has a low starting barrier is the external trigger for a new plant parent to give plants one more try.

The Action

When designing products and services that get people Hooked, it is important for the action to be as streamlined, delightful, and simple as possible. The most important thing is to eliminate as many steps as possible from the process. Henk does this by removing the majority of hurdles that the traditional plant buying process entails. Normally, a new plant parent has to choose the right plant for the right spot, immediately repot the plant and figure out the care all on their own. Through Henk's service, the right plant is chosen for the right spot. Overgrown gives the customer a fully ready to go plant, giving them a streamlined experience.

This way the traditional action that is too elaborate and can be overwhelming is simplified to only unpacking the plant, putting it in the chosen spot and enjoy the view.

The variable reward

The best reward (and mentioned by almost every participant in all interviews) is the moment that your plant is growing. It is a sign that you as a plant parent are doing well and as a result your plant gets even prettier. However, it does not always happen when the plant is not in the right spot or treated wrongly. Because Henk is exactly right from the start, good growth is a guarantee.

The investment

Over the time that Henk is with the plant parent, the investment comes in many ways. Initially, the plant parent only has to water the plant. After they have been together for a longer time, it is possible to ask for a higher investment. Through the subscription based model the plant parent will receive a bigger pot and accessories to repot Henk when he has grown sufficiently. Next to the basic plant care needs, Overgrown can guide the new plant parent in trying out new experiences. For example, making cuttings to share, fun

facts about their green companion or eventually even ordering a family expansion.

4.2.2 Initial alterations

Before the concept was tested, it was discussed with three already more experienced plant parents to get initial input. These conversations were held one to one via a video call, rather than in a group. Based on the discussions, additional changes were made.

Firstly, the name was changed from Henk to Emma. Henk was chosen to be a simple name to further reinforce the idea that this is a plant that easy going. By giving the plant a 'human' name, it might feel more like a little mate rather than an accessory. However, because Henk is a very Dutch name, the Swedish plant parent found it very odd. To make it more suitable for both the Dutch and the international market the name Emma chosen. This is name that is both simple and common in a lot of European countries.

Secondly, the concept of Henk was missing out on the social aspect that plant parenting can bring. In the next iteration, this aspect was added as well. However, to be able to test the trigger, this aspect is not important. Therefore, this is further discussed in chapter 5: deliver.

4.3 Testing the trigger

The discussed first concept is based on introducing a trigger that relies heavily on the assumption that a slightly more expensive plant which is easy to look after, has the same low barrier of entry of a cheap plant that might die, but is easily replaceable. Therefore a small scale user test was done to test the trigger of the concept.

Primary research question

Does the designed trigger lower the barrier for new plant parents?

Indications that were looked for to answer the primary research question are: Does the participant feel capable of caring for the plant that is selected for

- them?
- What are factors that makes the participant perceive the barrier to be lower?
- What are factors that makes the participant perceive the barrier to be higher?
- Do the participants feel comfortable with the used language?
- Through one on one consults that Overgrown has every now and then with aspiring plant parents it became apparent that the choice of words is important when talking to aspiring plant parents. Especially new plant parents are unfamiliar with final version that was tested during this user test contained only simple language. By following their journey through the website it was possible to see if the simple language realised the goal of a "streamlined, delightful" action that results in a perceived low starting barrier.
- Does the participant show intent of buying the selected plant?

Secondary research questions are:

- What are the participant's first impressions about the proposed subscription model?
- Does the used language enable the participant to select a suitable plant?

Participants

For the user test, a purposeful sampling was used. According to Patton (2002) this sampling method is to be used in qualitative research to identify and select informationrich cases for the most effective use of limited resources. The goal was to find participants who did have interest in plants, but whose green spark had not yet been ignited. Initially 3 participants were recruited. After these interviews were analysed, further participants were recruited until nothing new was learned and thus saturation was reached. The final sample consisted of 6 participants. The final sample consisted out of 4 females and 2 males aged 24 to 37 (mean = 28).

the correct terms. Therefore, during these consults different terms were tested. The

Method

Because of restrictions related to the pandemic, the trigger was tested fully online. Because of this it was not possible to use a traditional wire-framing method. Instead, a little bit more time was spent on making a fully functioning MVP of the Emma selector. Appendix 4 shows the questions the participants had to go through in order to get to their perfect Emma. During the video call, the participant was asked to share their screen so I would be able to see what they were seeing.

At the beginning of the test, participants were asked to go emmadeplant.nl. Then they were asked to purchase a plant whilst thinking out loud and explaining the reasoning behind their actions. At the end they were presented three options of plants to choose from with prices that were more or less expensive depending on the option. The first option was just a plain plant without any extras, the second option was a fully taken care of Emma and the last option was the subscription based version of Emma. The plant parent was asked which option they would want and why. After this, the work of Bandura et. al (1999) was used to indicate the participants self-efficacy.

After the interview was 'over', a thank you present was offered to the participants. They were offered a 50% discount code to buy any plant they wanted right at that moment. This way, there would be a stronger indication on whether the new plant parent would want to buy any of the offered products. To conclude the interview, participants were asked why they did or did not want to buy their chosen product.

Analysis

Due to time constraints, the interviews were not transcribed. All interviews were summarized based on the initial research questions to be able to make conclusions.

Results and conclusion

Lowering the barrier

Five out of six participants showed indications that they perceive the barrier to starting plants to be lower than when having to select a plant for themselves the traditional way. The last participant labelled themselves as a 'lost and hopeless case'.

Three out of six participants already stated to be more confident before the questions surrounding self-efficacy were asked. The plant being very personalized and tailored to their need by someone or something that knew what they were doing gave them a safer feeling.

Factors that were mentioned that added to a perceived lower barrier are: a high level of personalisation (both for the plant and the plant parent behaviour) as well the promise of an easy but fun looking plant. However, one participant indicated that she still was unsure. She was doubtful about the accuracy and correctness of the test.

Lastly, two participants expressed concerns about a plant being sent through the post. This is a concern that also was mentioned by three participants during the context mapping study. This shows that it is important to take this into account in the messaging about Emma.

To conclude: there is a strong indication that a slightly more expensive plant which is easy to look after, has the same low barrier of entry of a cheap plant that might die, but is easily replaceable. This makes this this design direction worth pursuing.

Used language

The first reactions to the used language were very positive. Five participants indicated that the language was simple enough to make them feel like they understood what the quiz was asking. However, one participant expressed concerns about the quiz being too simple. The simplicity made her feel as if it would not be capable of selecting the right plant for her.

Five out of six participants were able to make a good choice for a plant based on the questions. However, this way of determining the right plant is very unreliable. Especially the questions that had the purpose of determining the right lighting for the plant

were often answered inaccurately (by 4 out of 6 participants). Therefore, it was more a coincidence than a planned given that the participants did end up with the correct plant after all.

In conclusion, it would be worth while to explore other options to more accurately determine the right lighting. This way, Overgrown can be certain that the final match is accurate.

Plants as a service

Three out of six participant initially gave a positive impression about the subscription based model. Especially the idea of continued support was deemed to be very appealing. However, the three participants who wanted to use the discount code to make a purchase did not want to go for the subscription.

They felt like a subscription model is too high of a commitment. Two participants noted that they were unsure whether they would like it and that they did not want to be stuck to a subscription. If they would be able to cancel at any time this would help, but that would in turn raise insecurity about possibly killing their plant.

In addition to this, three participants expressed that the subscription based model made them feel less confident in themselves. One concern that was expressed, was that participants were unsure what would happen if the plant would die. Two participants expressed that a plant even needing a subscription to learn about and practice good care made them feel like keeping plants was really difficult after all. This would mean that the subscription model is in conflict with the main aim of the design which is to lower the starting barrier.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that a subscription based model is not a desired route to go. However, a more non-binding / lower commitment option for continued support is a feature that might be worth adding.

4.4 Conclusion

In chapter four, the road towards the future vision took shape in the form of a first concept. The trigger was tested and the first indications seemed promising. Some modifications to the concept were identified to strengthen the concept.

CH 5 Deliver

and a launch strategy.

Subchapters

- 5.1 Strategic roadmap 5.2 Service blueprint 5.3 Business model
- 5.4 Launch strategy

The final phase of the double diamond focuses on selecting a single solution that works and preparing it for launch. Through a strategic roadmap, a possible road to the future is shown. Next, a service blueprint was created to get a comprehensive understanding of the service and the underlying resources and processes. To make sure Overgrown is ready to kick off Emma as soon as possible, the chapter concludes with a business model and a launch strategy.

5.1 Strategic Roadmap

To visualize the road that can lead to Overgrown's future vision, a roadmap was created. This deliverable is not meant as a set in stone guide that must be followed, but more as a learning process towards a world with more Overgrown homes.

The roadmap was created by using the three horizon model of Curry and Hodgons (2008). In this model, three life cycles that run in parallell are projected to a future timeline. Each life cycle comes with a new business development (Simonse et al., 2015) to eventually end at the desired future vision.

5.1.1 Three horizons

Horizon 1: Lowering the barrier

The first horizon of a roadmap focusses on enhancing the value of current products and services (Simonse et al., 2015). For Overgrown this means focussing on lowering the barrier to start with plants by launching the designed trigger: Emma. Initially Emma is 'just' the perfect plant for you. The focus lays on allowing new plant parents to just sit back and relax. After this first introduction to Emma, Overgrown will foster the bond between Emma and the customer through Overgrown's support services.

Horizon 2 - Growing sustainable patterns

The second horizon in the roadmap acts as a bridge between the first and third horizons (Curry and Hodgons, 2008). The second horizon focusses on developing the features that support existing clients to move towards more sustainable ways of keeping houseplants. Through the Emma support functions, the new plant parent gets to learn more about their new green jewel. By adding supportive care products to the mix, Overgrown makes the first steps towards becoming a partner in plant growing rather than just a supplier of plants. Examples of these support functions and products can be seen in section 9.2 scenarios and concepts.

Horizon 3 - Building long term bonds

At the end of the third horizon the goal is to have reached the new vision on plant parenting. In this horizon Overgrown will focus on supporting plant parents to have longer lasting bonds with the plants they already have. In this horizon Overgrown does not only take the role of supplier of houseplants, but becomes a partner in plant growing. In this horizon 'de Kas' is introduced. De Kas is seen as a steady base to always come back to when a plant parent want to or needs to.

Throughout the horizons the concept develops along multiple dimensions:

- 1. Overgrown and her customer get a closer bond. Overgrown will start playing a bigger and closer part in their plant care. In the traditional model, Overgrown sells a plant and after that, the new owner is on their own. Throughout the three horizons Overgrown will become more closely involved in the long term.
- 2. The focus shifts from selling plants to selling plant care. By doing this Overgrown wants to take the focus away from always acquiring new trendy plants to having stronger bonds with the plants you already have.
- 3. The way the plants are presented is aimed to change the general view on plants. Throughout the horizons the goal is that plants are no longer seen as just an accessory, but as a living thing that they care for and can keep for a long time.

Horizon 1: Lowering the barrier

2022 - Emma 1.0

Value proposition

The first horizon services focus on giving new plant parents the confidence to start their plant journey by lowering the starting barrier. Emma is the perfect plant for you. When she arrives all you have to do it sit back and relax.

Revenue streams

• Plant (Emma) sales

Measures of success and learning objectives

The results of the user test that tested the trigger (chapter 4.3) indicate that Emma is a desirable product. The main measure of success in this horizon is whether this also translates to a bigger scale. In this case success will be measured as the amount of Emmas sold. In this phase, different types of messaging can be tested to see which version works best (has the best conversion rate). The different versions are further discussed in chapter 5.4 Launch strategy.

Scenario



A beginning plant parent enters Overgrown website. Here, they learn more about Emma. They are interested and enter the quiz to find out the best Emma for them.



The plant parents is led through a short list of questions about where Emma will live, what type of plant parent they are and what they would like Emma to look like.



The new plant parent gets a couple of plant options to choose from based on their answers. This way they can pick a plant that fits their personal style but is also the perfect plant for their home and care style. The new plant parent picks a decorative pot and Emma arrives to him in a way the only further task is to unbox, enjoy and water. During the checkout the plant parent can opt-in for the Emma support services via WhatsApp or email.





Horizon 2: Growing sustainable patterns

2023 – Emma 2.0

Value proposition

The second horizon services focus on supporting clients to move towards more sustainable ways of keeping houseplants. This is done through services that help take good care of Emma and help her grow big and beautiful. Doing this achieves two benefits. Firstly, through these services Overgrown gets closer to her customers for a longer time. This helps drive recurring purchases. Secondly, the shift from always buying new plants to the focus of selling plant care and helping one plant to live as long as possible starts the process towards a more sustainable attitude towards keeping houseplants.

Revenue streams

During the second horizon, the revenue stream of plant sales is expected to remain the same. A second revenue stream of support products is added.

Measures of success and learning objectives:

During the second horizon the support functions, as well as new products are being introduced. The measure of success is defined by the conversion rate of Emma buyers to Emma support services buyers. For the support functions, this horizon will focus on getting them up and running through WhatsApp and email. In this horizon the aim is to learn which channels are preferred and what type of support functions are most appreciated.



2022 - Horizon 3: Building long term bonds

2025: Emma and 'de Kas

Value proposition

In the last horizon Overgrown will set further steps towards supporting plant parents to have longer lasting bonds with the plants they already have. In this horizon Overgrown does not only take the role of supplier of houseplants, but becomes a partner in plant growing. In this horizon 'de Kas' is introduced. De Kas is seen as a steady base to always come back to when a plant parent want to or needs to.

Revenue streams

During the third horizon, the revenue stream of plant sales and support functions are expected to increase.



5.1.3 Strategic roadmap

Building long term bonds



Vision



A future where Overgrown supports sustainable consumption of plants by supporting plant parents to have longer lasting bonds with their houseplants.

Overgrown does not only take the role of supplier of houseplants, but becomes a parter is plant growing.



To help get a comprehensive understanding of the service and the underlying resources and processes, a service blueprint of the first horizon was created.



5.3 Business model

Over the course of the three horizons, Overgrown will expand on the offers it gives to plant parents. Over course of the three horizons the focus goes away from just a onetime sale of a plant and goes towards a commitment and support over the life span of that plant, bringing Overgrown closer to their customers. In order to get better insight of what this does to the business model, an updated version was created. Figure 9 shows the old and the new business model combined. All of the bold and highlighted parts show the additions to the old business model Overgrown was operating by.



Customer **Segments**

Plant collectors

Beginning plant parents

> Collector curious plant parents

During the 'plantboom'

5.4 Competition

To get clear insight into how the market changed over the past year and how Overgrown's positioning will change after the introduction of Emma, the main competitors were mapped out on two axis.

The naming for these axis is based on the theory of the book Contrarian Branding (Van der Vorst, 2017). By using an axis without a gradient it becomes possible to stand out against the backdrop of competitor's offerings. These axis are also used in the launch strategy (chapter 5.5) to determine what should be the core message that is setting Overgrown apart from the sea of competition.

On the Y-axis, the competitors are divided into a low and a high starting barrier. The traditional way of buying plants can bring a lot of insecurities. New plant parents are not sure whether they are capable of taking care for the plants. This results into a high perceived starting barrier. When selling more exclusive plants that come with a high price tag, this barrier is even higher. With the introduction of Emma, this starting barrier becomes lower again, making more appealing for new plant parents to buy from Overgrown, rather than from the competition.

On the X-axis, the competitors are divided into generic and exclusive. This division refers to the type of plants offered, but also to the type of service offered.

Pages 60 and 61 showcase the journey Overgrown makes with regards to the earlier identified competition based on these axis.





After Emma / new positioning



5.5 Launch strategy

At the moment of writing this, all promotion of Overgrown's new products is done via social media platforms (Instagram and Facebook). The big advantage of these platforms for Overgrown is that these are free platforms on which large amount of Overgrown's original target audience can be found. The posted content focuses on people who already gained a deeper interest in plants and are actively looking for something extra special and harder to find. These posts focus on getting organic reach, rather than using active advertising and so far this has been enough.

However, the audience that Emma is targeting is harder to find on these platforms because they are not actively looking yet. This problem was already seen during the recruitment of participants for the last user test. For the interviews and the context mapping study, all participants are in the green spark or farther along in their plant journey. This made them easy to reach through social media platforms focussed on plants. However, I did not succeed at finding people at the very beginning (or before) the green spark on these social media platforms. Therefore, the designed launch strategy has to go beyond a series of posts which is the 'normal' way Overgrown markets.

To help detail the launch strategy, the AIDA model was used. AIDA is a four-step formula first introduced by E. St. Lewis in 1898. In four phases, you get attention, attract interest, create desire so the potential customer eventually takes action (in this case making a purchase).

Goal

The launch strategy should trigger people who are interested in becoming a plant parent to get an Emma. The message of the launch strategy should be: Experience the calming green happiness of Emma.

Awareness

As mentioned before, the biggest challenge here is that the new target audience is not yet active on plant themed social media platforms. Therefore the main goal of the launch strategy is to get people to sign up for the email list or follow our social media platforms so we are able to contact them again at a later time.

The initial idea was to make an analog experience where people can experience the calm that houseplants can bring you. Perfect places this experience could be placed are outside of stations. This way, hasty people with a busy life style get the chance to experience the calm of Emma before going home. Figure 11 gives an impression of what this experience could look like.

However, considering the lower starting budget of Overgrown, this is a concept that is not very scalable. Therefore it might still be a better option to use Instagram as advertising. Normally Overgrown collaborated with plantfluencers. However, the audience that is targeted does not follow these influencers yet. Therefore, Overgrown will reach out to popular Dutch lifestyle and interior focussed instagrammers.

Interest

Once the soon to be plant parent is aware of Emma, it is important to gain their interest. This is done through the tone of voice of the posts. They should touch upon the pains and barriers that were found in the initial orienting interviews and the contextmapping study. Stimulating questions like: "Are your plants always dying?" or "Do you also want to have more green around, but does it seem like it is impossible?" are likely to make aspiring plant parents interested in how Emma can address their struggles.

Once potential new customers have become aware of Overgrown and Emma and is interested, the call to action is to sign up for Overgrowns own channels which are e-mails or Instagram.

Desire

Through Overgrown's own channels, the goal is to create further desire to own Emma. The Instagram page will contain a mix of posts that show the happiness that plants can bring and that everyone is capable of keeping plant happy and healthy. The first step is Emma. The email marketing will focus on fun plant facts to give them a teaser of what Emma's services will look like.

Action

During the desire phase, all communications will end with the call to action to go to the Emma selector. This way, the aspiring plant parent will always end up with the best Emma for them to start their own plant journey.



Figure 11 - Impression of the Emma experience Photo Eindhoven station by Rob van Esch via www.ruimtesinbeeld.nl

CH 6 Discussion & **Future recommendations**

Subchapters

6.1 Discussion and future recommendations 6.2 Personal reflection



This chapter ends the project by discussion the limitations and by making future recommendations. Lastly the thesis concludes with a personal reflection.



6.1 Discussion and future recommendations

Target group

The target group of both the orienting interviews and the context mapping study is highly influenced by the way of recruiting (through plant themes social media groups). The majority of the sample were younger females with an already existing interest in plants. However, because the final concept also is very specific and tailored to this target group, this had no further influence on the quality of the final concept. In addition to this, the majority of consumer who buy plants are young people (millennials or Gen-Z) and the vast majority is female (CivicScience, 2020; Wonder, z.d.). This is a good indicator that the current concept is viable and a good step toward an economically sustainable business model for Overgrown.

If, in the future Overgrown would want to serve a larger or different target audience, another research phase should be done to find out how much of these conclusions carry over to different users.

Initial investment and learning mindset

To set up the concept for the first horizon, an initial investment is needed. Because Overgrown is a young company that does not yet have a large capital for investments like this, this might feel like a big step. However, in the roadmap it can be seen that as time goes on, the investments start from smaller to larger. So even though the trigger is only tested with a relatively small sample group, the results are strong enough to go ahead with the first investments.

Throughout the roadmap it is important to adopt a learning mindset. The roadmap and the service blueprints are not set in stone guides of how it should be, but more guidelines of what the future could look like. The best way from the beginning to the end is to learn by doing. It is important to stay connected to Overgrown's clients and use the existing client base and community to gather data and input for further growth and shape and adjust the roadmap along the way.

Emma as a brand extension or as a new brand?

Through the introduction of Emma, Overgrown has gone into a new niche of plant parents. However, at this moment, Overgrown is still known as a rare plant store. Therefore Overgrown could introduce Emma as one of two ways: as a brand extension or as a completely new brand.

One possibility for Overgrown is to introduce Emma as a brand extension. Brand extensions are assumed to be a less risky form of innovation. Because customers already are familiar with Overgrown, acceptance may be higher. A brand extension would also bring along the big benefit that a brand extension can help keep the brand fresh and relevant. However, the introduction of Emma might also cause customer confusion and cannibalization of Overgrown's sales outside of Emma and surrounding services (Beverland, 2018).

Therefore a new brand (just Emma) could be a better option. In the case of a failed extension, this route is less likely to hurt the parent-brand equity (Beverland, 2018).

Making a well informed decision between these two options, could well be a full new graduation project. However, considering that Overgrown still is a young company, the brand equity is not yet very strong. Therefore the risks that a brand extinction brings are relatively small.

COVID-19 constraints

With this project being conducted and written in the middle of a pandemic, there naturally were a lot of constraints influencing the project.

Due to social distancing recommendation, physical meetings were difficult or even not possible. Because of this often an online format was chosen. Even though the online

format does work out, it is a lot harder to make a deeper connection and get the creative energy flowing through a screen.

In addition to this, interviews, creative session and little moments of feedback in between cost more time and effort to set up. As a result, I ended up making fewer iterations than I would have wanted. Also, the other phases of the Hooked model that make up the rest of the concept were not tested with plant parents. This is something that Overgrown has to be aware of when making Emma ready to launch. This further underpins the importance of Overgrown going into launching Emma with a learning mindset.

6.2 Personal reflection

For my master thesis I wanted to find a project within a topic that I am passionate about and in which I could combine the different skills I have learned throughout my bachelor and masters. I am happy to now reflect on a project where this definitely happened.

First act, then think First think, then act

One of my strengths as both a designer and entrepreneur is that I will give everything my 110%. I put a high value on just going out there and seeing what happens. However, every now and then this enthusiasm becomes my biggest disadvantage. I tend to act before I think, bringing myself more work than needed or is sometimes realistic. A good example of when this happened is during the orienting interviews. Doing this giant amount of interviews was not really needed. Had I thought before I acted, rather than acted before I tought, other parts of the project could have gotten more attention.

Both as a student, entrepreneur and possibly future employer or employee it is important to keep assessing why I do things, how much time these things cost and whether there possibly is a more optimal way to do it.

Working from home

Because this graduation project was done during a pandemic, it was done almost entirely from home. Although the company of hundreds of plants is very nice, they don't quite talk back as much as fellow design students you meet whilst standing in line for the coffee machine or during a lunch break. This has made me more than ever realize the important new insights that new perspectives and some downtime can bring into a new project. Even though I have had many new perspectives on the project from all of the participants, every new set of eyes costs a lot more effort and energy than a 'normal' conversation would cost.

It has been very hard to make a deep connection with people through a screen, through crappy wifi connections and through the sounds of the downstairs neighbors who decide to start their renovations right when I started an interview. But somehow, by trying and trying and trying, I did manage and I am very proud of how many people were involved in the making of this project.

I am incredibly excited for the future. A future where I get to meet people face to face again. Make even more and deeper connections to know what cool and meaningful things to design. And with that I would say, thank you for reading this thesis and on to the next adventure!

CH 7 References

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CH 8 Appendix

Appendix 1 – Project brief Appendix 2 – Context mapping study preparation and sensitizing booklet Appendix 3 – Interview guide context mapping study

Appendix 4 – Questions Emma selector

ntext mapping study selector

DESIGN FOR OUT future



IDE Master Graduation

Project team, Procedural checks and personal Project brief

This document contains the agreements made between student and supervisory team about the student's IDE Master Graduation Project. This document can also include the involvement of an external organisation, however, it does not cover any legal employment relationship that the student and the client (might) agree upon. Next to that, this document facilitates the required procedural checks. In this document:

- The student defines the team, what he/she is going to do/deliver and how that will come about.
- SSC E&SA (Shared Service Center, Education & Student Affairs) reports on the student's registration and study progress.
- IDE's Board of Examiners confirms if the student is allowed to start the Graduation Project.

USE ADOBE ACROBAT READER TO OPEN, EDIT AND SAVE THIS DOCUMENT

Download again and reopen in case you tried other software, such as Preview (Mac) or a webbrowser.

STUDENT DATA & MASTER PROGRAMME

Save this form according the format "IDE Master Graduation Project Brief_familyname_firstname_studentnumber_dd-mm-yyyy". Complete all blue parts of the form and include the approved Project Brief in your Graduation Report as Appendix 1 !

family name		_ Your master programme (only select the options that apply to you):			
initials	given name	IDE master(s):	() IPD)	Dfl	SPD
student number		2 nd non-IDE master:			
street & no.		individual programme:		(give da	te of approval)
zipcode & city		honours programme:	\bigcirc		
country		specialisation / annotation:			
phone		-			
email					

SUPERVISORY TEAM **

Fill in the required data for the supervisory team members. Please check the instructions on the right !

** chair ** mentor		dept. / section:	Board of Examiners for approval of a non-IDE mentor, including a motivation letter and c.v
2 nd mentor	organisation: city:	country:	Second mentor only applies in case the assignment is hosted by an external organisation.
comments (optional)		•	Ensure a heterogeneous team. In case you wish to include two team members from the same section, please explain why.

Chair should request the IDE


APPROVAL PROJECT BRIEF To be filled in by the chair of the supervisory team.

date _____- chair signature **CHECK STUDY PROGRESS** To be filled in by the SSC E&SA (Shared Service Center, Education & Student Affairs), after approval of the project brief by the Chair. The study progress will be checked for a 2nd time just before the green light meeting. YES all 1st year master courses passed Master electives no. of EC accumulated in total: _____ EC Of which, taking the conditional requirements NO missing 1st year master courses are: into account, can be part of the exam programme _____ EC List of electives obtained before the third semester without approval of the BoE date _ name signature

FORMAL APPROVAL GRADUATION PROJECT

To be filled in by the Board of Examiners of IDE TU Delft. Please check the supervisory team and study the parts of the brief marked **. Next, please assess, (dis)approve and sign this Project Brief, by using the criteria below.

- Does the project fit within the (MSc)-programme of the student (taking into account, if described, the activities done next to the obligatory MSc specific courses)?
- Is the level of the project challenging enough for a MSc IDE graduating student?
- Is the project expected to be doable within 100 working days/20 weeks ?

Title of Project

• Does the composition of the supervisory team comply with the regulations and fit the assignment ?

Content:	\bigcirc	APPROVED	NOT APP	ROVED
Procedure:	\bigcirc	APPROVED	NOT APP	ROVED
				comments
				comments

name	date _		 signature	
IDE TU Delft - E&SA Department /// Graduation pro		& study overview		Page 2 of 7



	 project title
Please state the title of your graduation project (above) and the start date and end date (below) Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your	 d simple.
start date	 end date

INTRODUCTION **

Please describe, the context of your project, and address the main stakeholders (interests) within this context in a concise yet complete manner. Who are involved, what do they value and how do they currently operate within the given context? What are the main opportunities and limitations you are currently aware of (cultural- and social norms, resources (time, money,...), technology, ...).

space available for images / figures on next page

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Initials & Name

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Title of Project



introduction (continued): space for images

image / figure 1:

image / figure 2: _____

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Title of Project

Initials & Name _____ Student number _____



PROBLEM DEFINITION **

Limit and define the scope and solution space of your project to one that is manageable within one Master Graduation Project of 30 EC (= 20 full time weeks or 100 working days) and clearly indicate what issue(s) should be addressed in this project.

ASSIGNMENT **

State in 2 or 3 sentences what you are going to research, design, create and / or generate, that will solve (part of) the issue(s) pointed out in "problem definition". Then illustrate this assignment by indicating what kind of solution you expect and / or aim to deliver, for instance: a product, a product-service combination, a strategy illustrated through product or product-service combination ideas, In case of a Specialisation and/or Annotation, make sure the assignment reflects this/these.

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Initials & Name

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Title of Project



PLANNING AND APPROACH **

Include a Gantt Chart (replace the example below - more examples can be found in Manual 2) that shows the different phases of your project, deliverables you have in mind, meetings, and how you plan to spend your time. Please note that all activities should fit within the given net time of 30 EC = 20 full time weeks or 100 working days, and your planning should include a kick-off meeting, mid-term meeting, green light meeting and graduation ceremony. Illustrate your Gantt Chart by, for instance, explaining your approach, and please indicate periods of part-time activities and/or periods of not spending time on your graduation project, if any, for instance because of holidays or parallel activities.

start date _____-

end date

- -

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Initials & Name

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Title of Project



MOTIVATION AND PERSONAL AMBITIONS

Explain why you set up this project, what competences you want to prove and learn. For example: acquired competences from your MSc programme, the elective semester, extra-curricular activities (etc.) and point out the competences you have yet developed. Optionally, describe which personal learning ambitions you explicitly want to address in this project, on top of the learning objectives of the Graduation Project, such as: in depth knowledge a on specific subject, broadening your competences or experimenting with a specific tool and/or methodology, Stick to no more than five ambitions.

FINAL COMMENTS In case your project brief needs final comments, please add any information you think is relevant.

IDE TU Delft - E&SA Department /// Graduation project brief & study overview /// 2018-01 v30

Initials & Name

Page 7 of 7

Title of Project

Appendix 2 - Contextmapping Setup

Goal contextmapping

Somewhere along the timeline/journey of becoming a plant parent the green spark happens. It is that magical moment where one goes from not being able to take care of a cactus to '<u>suddenly</u>' having a green thumb and being '<u>hooked</u>' on plants. The goal of the contextmapping study is to get deeper insights into what happens during this process.

Target audience

They are interested in plants, but they don't quite have those green thumbs yet.

The goal of this contextmapping study is to get deeper insights into

- Trigger for the start of their plant journey (based on timeline)
- Barriers for continuing their journey (based on timeline)
- Triggers to go on in their journey (based on timeline)
- What is the right balance between the effort of planting and the reward? Which efforts are experiences as positive and which ones as negative (follow-up from preliminary interviews, not (yet) part of the timeline)
- What is the right balance between being taught and experimenting (follow-up from preliminary interviews, not (yet) part of the timeline)

Scope - What does being a plant parent mean to the participants? **Focus** - What are barriers and what are [...] to being and staying a plant parent. What makes people 'hooked'?

Setup of the assignments

Om de verschillende gebeurtenissen rondom 'the green spark' duidelijker in kaart te kunnen brengen heb ik inspiratie gehaald uit hooked. Om tot een goede volgorde van de stappen en vragen te komen heb ik deze samen gevoegd met het path of expression van Stappers en Sanders (uit de contextmapping theorie). Volgens Stappers en Sanders volgen de beste sensitizing materials het path of expression: From facts to dreams; From general to specific; From current, to past and future. Ik heb de verschillende fases van het hooked canvas op het path of expression gemapped om deze fases op de juiste volgorde aan te snijden in de sensitizing assignments en tijdens het interview.



Figure 1 and 2 – Hooked model canvas (left) and the path of expression (right)



Figure 3 – Hooked canvas and path of expression combined. The numbers in the image represent the numbers of the assignment.

Practical stuff

Sommige deelnemers hebben aangegeven geen powerpoint te hebben. Hierom gebruik ik Google slides. Iedere deelnemer heeft een gepersonaliseerd (obv naam en communicatie voorkeur) slidedeck die ze via een link kunnen invullen. Op deze manier kan ik ook live meekijken hoe het invullen van de opdrachten verloopt en of ze nog een duwtje in rug of extra reminder nodig hebben.

Het doel is om 8 deelnemers te hebben. Rond de 4-7 zou genoeg moeten zijn om het model in te vullen, maar omdat 6 van de 8 deelnemers niet ken en het met het boekje invullen net meer werk is wil ik ruimte hebben voor uitvallers.

De eerste deelnemers krijgen donderdag of vrijdag hun boekje en de interviews zijn allemaal maandag-donderdag gepland. Ik maak een strakkere interview guide met timestamps zodat ik binnen de tijd blijf ik niet nog een keer uren en uren aan interview materiaal heb om terug te luisteren (ahum).

Sensitizing assignments

Assignment 1: Reward – Defining the now/What do you get out of plants Defining the now. What place do plants have in your daily life? Part of this was already asked during recruitment in order to be able to determine whether the participant indeed falls into the target audience. Therefore this question/topic was most suitable for a warmup question.

Doel voor interview

What does being a plant parent mean to the participants? / What value do plants bring to their lives.

What is the right balance between the effort of planting and the reward? Which efforts are experiences as positive and which ones as negative.

Dieper ingaan op de hoeveelheid tijd en moeite de deelnemer bereid is in planten(verzorging) te stoppen. (Bruggetje naar dag 2 – hoe ben je het liefste met planten bezig?)

Assignment 2: Action – Hoe ben je hier liefst met planten bezig? What are daily / weekly / monthly activities surrounding plants?

Doel voor interview

Dieper ingaan op de acties. Welke acties zijn triggers om door te gaan/ meer te investeren in de plantenhobby en wat zijn eventuele barrieres/nadelen?

Assignment 3: Trigger – Reflective questions "Wat kan je nu, wat je aan het begin nog niet had gedacht dat je nu zou kunnen."

Doel voor interview

Bij het interview inzoomen op waarom dit zo is gekomen (trigger). Focus op gebeurtenissen / het proces en welke positieve maar ook negatieve gevoelens hier bij hoorden.

Assignment 4L Investment – Defining the future Draw what your ideal plant loving home would look like in two years.

Doel voor interview

Inzoomen op verschillende factoren die hierbij meespelen/hier voor nodig zijn. Uit de interviews kwamen al: tijd en geld. Zijn er nog andere dingen misschien? En hoe veel tijd/ hoe veel geld zijn mensen bereid te investeren in de hobby en waarom?

Sensitizing booklet





Groetjes, Mette

Appendix 3 - Interview guide context mapping study

The goal of this contextmapping study is to get deeper insights into

- Trigger for the start.
- Barriers for continuing.
- Triggers to continue.
- What is the right balance between the effort of planting and the reward? > uit zich in tijd maar misschien ook nog andere dingen??
 Negative and positive aspects.
- What is the right balance between being taught and experimenting (follow-up from preliminary interviews, not (yet) part of the timeline)

[Inleiding]

[Bewust maken dat interview word opgenomen]

Thema 1: Action and Reward

Inleidend thema dat in gaat op de plek die planten hebben in het leven van de deelnemer.

Dag 2 erbij halen - Collage

Op de tweede dag heb je een hele collage gemaakt, kan je me hier iets meer over vertellen?

Doorvragen op wat specifiek positieve aspecten zijn. Doorvragen op wat specifiek positieve aspecten zijn.

Wat betekenen planten dan voor jou? Wat haal je eruit?

En hoe veel tijd stop je er dan in?

Dieper ingaan op de hoeveelheid tijd en moeite de deelnemer bereid is in planten(verzorging) te stoppen. (Bruggetje naar dag 1 – hoe ben je het liefste met planten bezig?)

Dag 1 erbij halen - Foto's van planten to do's

Welke planten taken stop je dan graag wel tijd in en welke niet?

Hoe veel tijd dan? Van wat hangt deze hoeveelheid tijd af?

Welke acties zijn triggers om door te gaan/ meer te investeren in de plantenhobby En wat zijn eventuele barrieres/nadelen?

Thema 2: Trigger(s) en barrieres om planten te hebben

We hebben het nu gehad over hoe je nu vooral bezig bent met planten. Kan je me iets vertellen over hoe je bent begonnen met planten?

Wat is dan het kantelpunt geweest wanneer je planten had tot dat je jezelf nu echt plantenouder noemt.

Je hebt 3 dingen opgeschreven waar van je zegt: aan het begin had ik nog niet gedacht dat ik dat zou kunnen.

Waarom dacht je eerst dat je dit niet zou kunnen?

Wat is er veranderd waardoor je het nu wel kan? (omstandigheden, kennis ...?) Hoe heb je dit geleerd/ gedurfd?

Focus op gebeurtenissen / het proces en welke positieve maar ook negatieve gevoelens hier bij hoorden.

Thema 4 Investment - Defining the future

Draw what your ideal plant loving home would look like in two years.

Dag 4 erbij halen – Foto's van future plant loving home.

Kan je me iets meer vertellen over de tekeningen die hebt gemaakt? Wat denk je dat nog nodig is om tot dit put te komen?

Inzoomen op verschillende factoren die hierbij meespelen/hier voor nodig zijn. Uit de interviews kwamen al: tijd en geld. Zijn er nog andere dingen misschien? En hoe veel tijd/ hoe veel geld zijn mensen bereid te investeren in de hobby en waarom?

Appendix 4 – Questions Emma selector

Homepage

Dit is

EMMA

Emma doet niet zo moeilijk en laat je weten wat ze wil.

P2 Waarom is Emma niet zo moeilijk - Worstel jij nog met je planten?

Bij Emma hoef je niet te raden wat ze dan wel wil. Met Emma kun je rustig stoeien.

Long version

Vind je planten wel leuk maar nog moeilijk? ledere week water, of toch om de week. Dan 100 militer, een scheutje, een halve gieter. Een beetje zon, toch wat meer, help een blad is geel.

Ben jij net aangestoken door de plantenbug? Wil je ook graag groene vingers kweken, maar is het allemaal nog net een beetje lastig? Houd jij je planten soms wel in leven maar vaak toch ook niet en weet je met alle tips die je om de oren vliegen niet zo goed wat je er nou mee aan moet? Ben jij op zoek naar de volgende stap in jouw plantenouderschap?

Short version

Meer water, minder water... een geel blad... HELP! Wil je ook groene vingers kweken, maar is het allemaal nog net een beetje lastig?

< Vind jouw Emma >

P3 – Hoe ga jij om met jouw Emma?

- Oh, had de plant water nodig? Oops vergeten.
- Meer liefde is meer water... toch?
- Als het regenwoud, met een droog en nat seizoen.

P4 – Waar mag Emma wonen?

ID magic > Lux meten.

Slider 1

- Emma gaat voor de volle bak zon
- Emma heeft een ochtend zonnetje
- Emma heeft een middag zonnetje
- Emma heeft een avond zonnetje
- Emma krijgt weinig tot geen zon
 - Emma wil altijd wel een beetje zon, dat is haar eten. Weet je zeker dat je geen ander plekje voor Emma hebt?

Slider 2

- Lekker chillen in de vensterbank
- Een paar passen van het raam

P5 – Hoe zie je Emma graag?

- Lekker groot en hoog
- Klein maar fijn
- Hangt er leuk bij

P6 – Per Emma opties