

Vulva-genda

Exploring brand opportunity
spaces and formulation of a
concept product for Yoni for
The Young

Master Thesis

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In collaboration with
Creative brand development agency
The Young and femcare brand Yoni

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Introduction

PREFACE

Dear Reader,

The next 100 or so pages contain my final thesis for the Masters program in Strategic Product Design at TU Delft, as well as the conclusion of my studies, an observation that seems rather surreal to me as I write this.

My study period started seven years ago and has been an eventful time for me, a time of changing perspectives, gathering incredibly diverse experiences, constant learning and personal development, of which I am most proud.

I am proud to present you with my final work, which would not have been possible without the cooperation and help of the following people.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my corporate mentor, Femke De Jonge, and her partner, André Bouwman, who approached me in advance during my internship with their agency and worked with me to create an exciting project brief for them, their client Yoni, and me. I have already been able to learn so much from you and can look back on many valuable, motivating and genuine conversations. I want to thank you so much for your trust, your commitment and drive to develop better results and the climate and community you create within The Young. I can't wait to start as a full member of the team after I finish my thesis.

Then, of course, I would like to thank Mariah Mansvelt-Beck, the co-founder of Yoni, who brought me on board without reservations, shared her thoughts with me openly and at eye level, and opened up the rich world of Yoni to me. Thank you for allowing me to get to know Yoni's team so personally and for giving

me and this work the space within Yoni's to start a conversation and challenge the status quo.

And of course, I would also like to thank my supervisory team, who, unfortunately, I was only able to see digitally until my final presentation. Thank you, Pinar and Erik Jan, for your time, commitment, enthusiasm, feedback and input on how I can push my project further or get it on the right track and the reassurance I got from you. And thank you for taking this journey with me into a topic that may not be an everyday conversation.

I would also like to thank my family, friends, and partner who have stood by me over the last few months and always kept an open ear and played a big part in me not losing myself in the rumination of thoughts. Thank you, Pinar and Erik Jan, for your time, commitment, enthusiasm, feedback and input on how I can push my project further or get it on the right track and the reassurance I got from you. And thank you for taking this journey with me into a topic that may not be an everyday conversation.

I would also like to thank my family, friends, and partner who have stood by me over the last month and always kept an open ear and played a big part in me not losing myself in the rumination.

Enjoy exploring!

Marie-Theres Specht

07.04.22

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis aims to answer the question "How might a concept car look like for Yoni" as means of process and deliverable exploration for The Young. In essence this thesis is about the world and future of vulvas and which role Yoni could play to ultimately facilitate positive change in people's lives. To explore this notion the method of developing a "concept car" was used to deliver a tangible representation of this future brand scenario.

CONTEXT

For an incredibly long time, what exactly happens

between the legs of female-sex people has been a great mystery. It's not common to talk about our vulvas and how we feel about them in detailed and specific terms - and yes it's vulva and not vagina, the vulva is the entire external genital area, the vagina is merely the internal muscle canal. It's so unusual that many women lack the vocabulary to describe their genitals and the education that's practised in the school system is sporadic and often only focused on reproduction. And the vagina is by no means the star of the show and definitely not the female equivalent of the penis.

This is the clitoris, which is by no means just a little (apparently difficult to find) knob above the vaginal opening, but is a large and complex organ located beneath the skin's surface. A more or less fun fact, for example, is that it was not until 1998 that the complete anatomy of the clitoris was revealed in a study by the Australian urologist Helen O'Connell (Fyfe, 2018). In fact, most anatomical books don't even show the clitoris and therefore not depicting the vulva correctly. Let that sink in. Conversations about sexuality, well-being or pleasure find no place and lead to misconceptions, rumours and often leave people wondering „Am I normal?“.

YONI

And because the social climate is changing and brands are increasingly acting as amplifiers of cultural trends and the introduction of questions and topics into the mainstream of society. At this point Yoni joins the conversation. Yoni has been offering organic 100% cotton period products since 2015 after the founder found that the products recommended to her by her gynaecologist were not only unavailable to the majority of consumers but regular period products did not list their ingredients and were full of synthetic fibres. That's why Yoni made it its mission to offer better products, products one would trust to touch their most intimate body part. Yoni wanted to change the market for more transparency and a higher standard of menstrual products and has achieved this, especially in recent years. Big brands are now also offering organic alternatives, explaining the ingredients of their products on the packaging or at least online and other brands have followed Yoni's lead. But with the constant fulfilment of the initial mission, it is time to find a new drive, a new vision. And the time is ripe to do so, people are excited and ready to overcome their inhibitions and have meaningful conversations about their vulvas, and are eager for opportunities to learn. And the market is not yet oversaturated with offerings.

PROCESS

To answer the question of what exactly happens in the world of the vulva, this work started with in-depth research both in an interview study and in extensive literature and media research. It was about exploring the behaviour, feelings, culture, history and economy regarding vulvas and menstruation.

The market, consumer and context research resulted in four distinct directions Yoni could follow in the future to have a positive impact on their users' lives. These directions were about pushing the menstruation conversation in society further, for more social justice, to build strong communities of people with vulvas to overcome gaps of knowledge

and wisdom, to unlock knowledge about hormonal cycles beyond the binary view of period on-period off and finally to discover how to bring vulva care to the forefront of people's attention to share knowledge, facilitate experiences and overcome bodily shame.

DEVELOPMENT SPACE

In close collaboration with Yoni one direction was chosen as the means for Yoni to facilitate meaningful positive impact in the lives of their users and subsequently use this direction as a vehicle for organisational transformation and future vision. This direction is called "vulva care" and targets the redefinition of what true vulva care might mean on a time axis of 1 to 5 years. At the end of this axis stands the concept product of vulvovaginal microbiome testing and personalised vulvar care products which acts as a beacon for creative brand development.

DELIVERABLE

To make this concept product more accessible from an organisational point of view, the product was contextualised in a three step roadmap showcasing three distinct steps on how the company might develop for their current offering and structure towards a focus on vulvovaginal care using digital and care products infused with science and technology to ultimately future-proof a brand with incredible potential. At the final pages of the report you will find the translation of this concept product into a website and digital product prototype illustrating how Yoni's brand future might look like.

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INTRODUCTION

This project has been facilitated in collaboration with the brand development agency The Young and their client Yoni, a brand that is self-described falling into the domain of femcare.

THE YOUNG

The Young are an agency in the process of growing and developing their own methodology. In the course of this motivation, The Young approached me to specifically explore the method of „concept cars“ for future clients. Concept cars can be seen in this context, similar to the concept's heritage in the automotive industry, as a means of brand development. It is a tangible vision of the future for a company (in approximately 3 to 5 years) offering strategic guidance, ambitious enough to inspire and provide an anchor for future courses of action, but realistic and timely enough not to become intangible. This concept and the corresponding criteria will be further defined at the beginning of the project. Within this context, the concept car is contrary to its traditional use intended for internal organisational communication and orientation and not necessarily bound to a physical artefact. To be more specific, I will explore and define this concept using the company Yoni as an exemplary application.

YONI

Yoni is an Amsterdam-based company that offers organic tampons, pads, liners, cups and most recently period underwear “free from plastic, chemicals and shame“. Their mission is „to bring women - and other people - in the know about all things vulva“. Especially in the past, period products were laced with synthetic additives, which in the worst case can lead to toxic shock syndrome, a life-threatening condition, especially in young women. Yoni was created to overcome this danger at the inception of the company by offering better, simpler and more sustainable period products while tackling the prevailing shame associated with menstruation.

SOCIETY

Especially interesting are the changing cultural circumstances and trends shaping the demands and opportunities for companies offering female hygiene products. The world and corresponding perceptions of users are slowly changing, the lines and binary of gender are blurring, activists actively work on destigmatizing the female body and pushing for intersectionality within feminism and the public forum especially through channels of social media.

The problem

HOW IT STARTED

Yoni started out by offering something essentially different, period products that are free of any added chemicals or plastics while showcasing a distinctly different aesthetically sophisticated design and inclusive language challenging shame and discrimination (i.e. ageism).

TIMES CHANGE

But the USP of their product compared to the established competition is no longer a distinguishing criterion for the brand within its market, since the major brands such as o.b. are swiftly advancing in product innovation and are now also offering a range of organic products, for a lower price which is particularly relevant within the retail environment. This warrants a change of trajectory. Furthermore, the brand is not yet a household name, even though it has made the step into established stores such as etos, which warrants an investigation into the match with their current and desired target

AIM

This graduation aims to understand the world Yoni operates in (female care, hygiene and health, everything related to vulvas) through literature research, surveys, trend research, expert and user interviews to identify pain points and opportunities. Furthermore, it aims to define and formulate a „concept car“, a tangible representation of a near-future vision, for Yoni.

Assignment

By combining literature research, market, trend and user research I aim to paint a picture of the world relevant to Yoni, Yoni's current and potential users and their role and drive in it now and in the future. Through this open and creative exploration I aim to identify current pain points for users and developments opening up opportunity space for the brand's positioning, service or product portfolio to be influenced.

After identifying the design problem and challenges within band, user and culture, I will formulate and co-create strategic opportunity areas with and for Yoni. Finally, I will formulate a „concept car“ for Yoni with the aforementioned criteria to aid their brand development and offer strategic direction beyond day-to-day operations. This could be further supported by a roadmap and a strategy for internally communicating this within the organisation.



A1 project stakeholders

TU Delft

This thesis's stakeholders are comprised of four distinct parties. These are the scientific and methodological requirements and standards of TU Delft and its representatives, Pinar Cankurtaran (chair) and Erik-Jan Hultink (mentor), who oversaw this project.

The Young and Yoni

Furthermore, it is about the agency, The Young and their point of contact and mentor, Femke De Jonge's, creative and exploratory ambitions. Continuing with this theme, it is about Yoni and their point of contact for this project, Mariah Mansvelt-Beck, who, on behalf of Yoni, were looking for an actionable and aspirational vision for the company's future from a strategic product design standpoint. Last but not least, it is about my personal desire to create an interesting and comprehensive final project.

People

Beyond the framework of the graduation context, this project is about people. It's about creating a concept, a purpose, that may align Yoni's employees towards a common goal, a shared vision. But it is also about providing people with vulvas with products that improve their lives, close a gap, while overcoming outdated, restrictive notions and shameful taboos.

A7

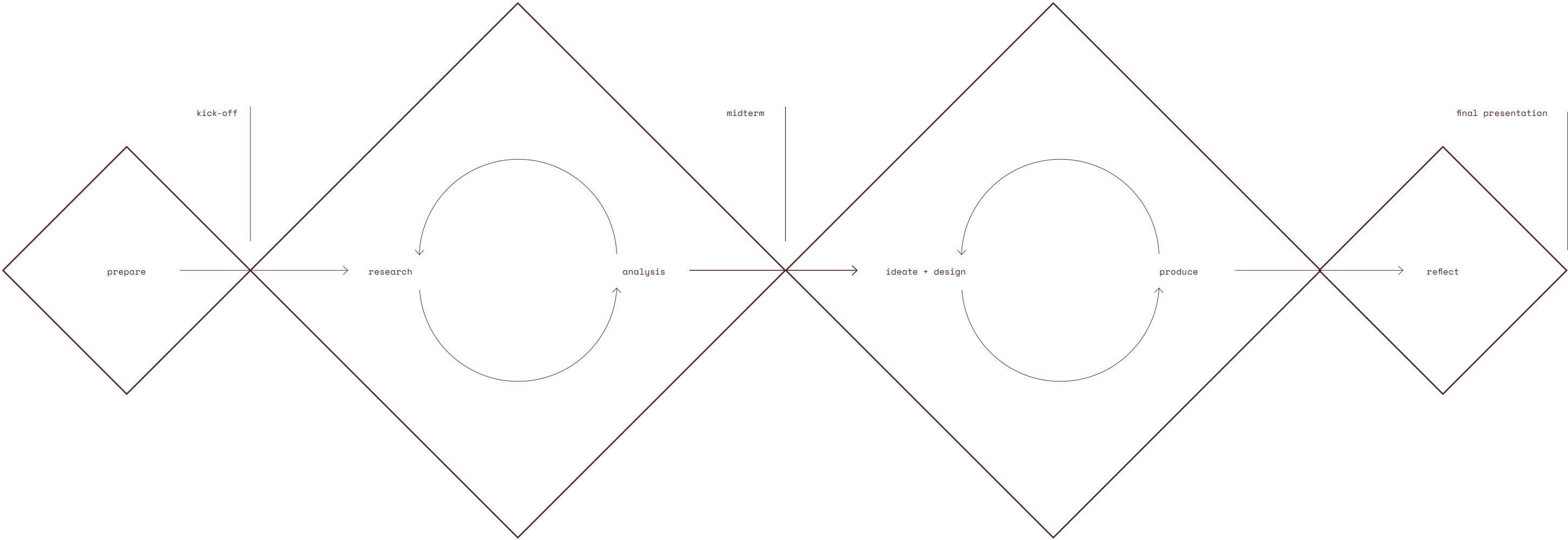
The design approach

The project’s underlying structure is based on the Double Diamond Model (Design Council, 2019), which divides the design process into four stages. The research phase begins after a phase of project preparation, which in this case was the definition of the design brief, first conversations with stakeholders, and preliminary research. Then comes analysis, ideation, and design, and finally production and delivery. It was critical for me to plan a phase

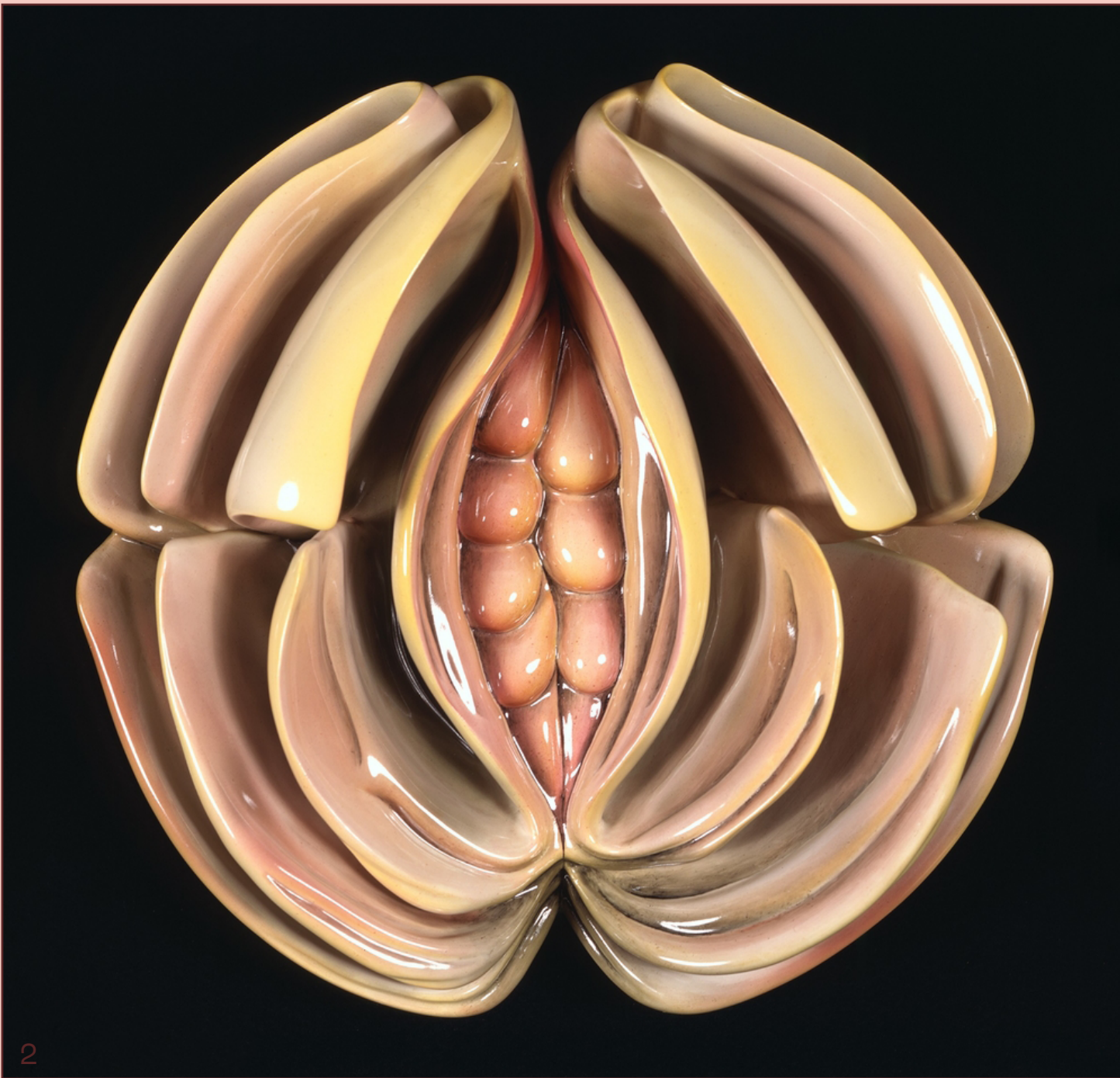
of reflection in addition to this in order to create a coherent conclusion to this work for myself. The goal of the research phase was to delve deeply into the world in which Yoni finds itself and comprehend its complexities in order to paint a picture of the cultural and economic reality. Various wicked problems were brought to light as a result of the process, which tend to be marginalised and rarely heard in sociocultural dialogue.

This exploration allows one to define a space of possibility in order to create as much positive impact as possible in the lives of its users with the means of the brand Yoni. The goal was to define Yoni’s role in the lives of its users as a combination of competences and influence. Based on the previous findings and the definition of Yoni’s role, the brainstorming and design phase investigated Yoni’s future vision and development

potential in collaboration. Following this phase of divergence, a concept was selected and formulated. After that, the concept was designed and translated into an experiential medium. Finally, implementation recommendations are made. The graphic on the right shows the rough breakdown of the process using said double diamond structure. The structure was adjusted to a quatro diamond structure to include pre- and post-processing.



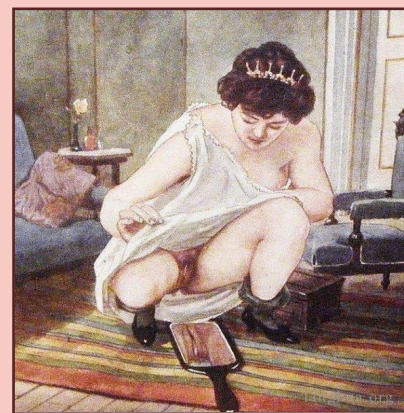
Getting started	Discover / Research	Define / Synthesis and Analysis	Develop / Concept development	Deliver / Execution	Reflection / Implications
Debrief: Defining problems and objectives	World level: Understanding the present context and future implications	Mediation level: Defining goals, opportunities and opportunity spaces	Artefact level: Developing and implementing the intervention		
<div>- preliminary conversations</div> <div>- problem and aim definition</div> <div>- literature research</div>	<div>- in-depth literature research</div> <div>- trend research</div> <div>- user interviews and expert conversations</div> <div>- brand analysis (internal + external)</div> <div>- feedback sessions</div>	<div>- formulation of concept car parameters</div> <div>- insight synthesis</div> <div>- synthesis user insights</div> <div>- formulation opportunity space</div>	<div>- brainstorming</div> <div>- client validation</div> <div>- cocreative workshop</div> <div>- collage/written scenario</div> <div>- prototype</div> <div>- customer journey</div>	<div>- decide on ideal medium for concept</div> <div>- design artefact</div> <div>- client validation</div> <div>- user validation</div> <div>- production</div>	<div>- reflect on design implications, limitations and future steps</div> <div>- prepare presentation</div>



2

To eventually answer the underlying question of this graduation, „What might a concept car look like for Yoni?“ A broad exploration of the context of this project was conducted. To do so, four research areas were investigated; concept cars, Yoni and the

corresponding market, the bigger context, including trends, developments and other relevant factors, and finally, a qualitative interview study into the behaviour and minds of users. This chapter aims to investigate, inform, and summarise.



Painting by Gerda Wegener

B

Discovering

CONCEPT CARS

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1. What are concept cars and what makes them an interesting futures technique?
- 2. What could Yoni’s future product be?

WHY CONCEPT CARS

This thesis started with the question of how The Young can employ the innovation methodology of „concept cars“ to facilitate brand development as the agency explores and redirects its trajectory and methodology approach in a tailored form for future projects and clients. For this purpose, it was essential to distil exactly what producing concept cars for their clients meant for The Young; this is also to be seen within the internal competences and future development of the company. It’s also important to figure out what the concept of concept cars can do for this thesis, which can be seen as a prototype or an example of how it could work.

THE YOUNG’S IDEA OF CONCEPT CARS

The Young define their agency based on three pillars: research, strategy, and design. They define research as a profound understanding of technology, the social environment, and the intent of a brand; strategy as the translation of today’s intent into the product or service of tomorrow; and design as an idea that can be experienced. They describe „concept cars“ as something that can be „a new thing, a new way of communicating, or a new way of doing things.“ The main criteria The Young defines for „concept cars“ are: 1: it is inspirational but achievable in the near future. 2. It is brand-relevant.3. It integrates the efforts and input of multiple stakeholders. A literature search was conducted to get a deeper understanding of the notion of „concept cars“.

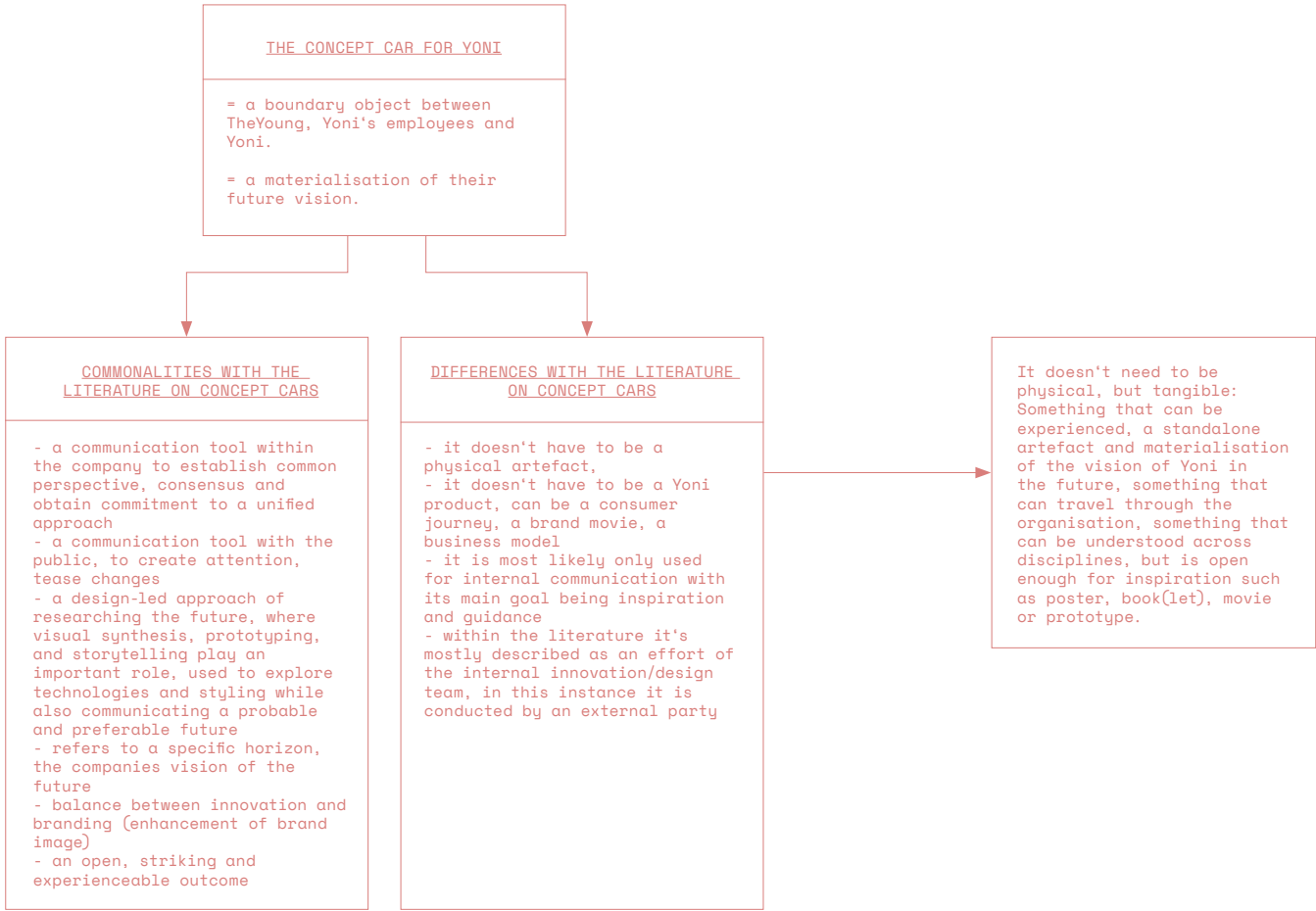
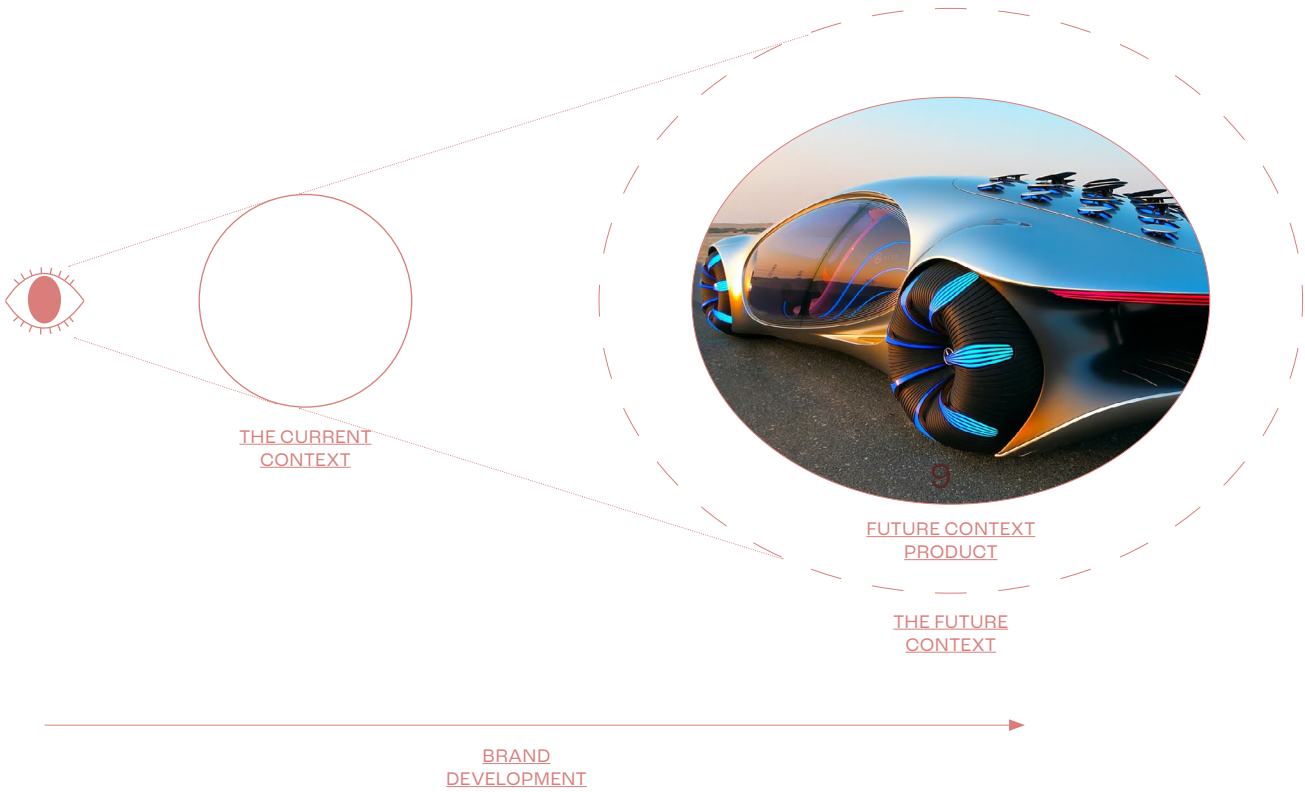
CONCEPT CARS IN LITERATURE

The term „concept car“ was originally coined within the automotive industry and has been around since the 1930’s and can be seen as a futures technique. It describes a number of artefacts with similar attributes. Concept cars are used internally or externally as a means of communication. The artefacts are often exhibited at motor shows to communicate the brand’s future path in terms of brand values or product innovation or to create a buzz of attention (Backman & Börjesson, 2006).

Their conception usually involves several internal departments and user research, as the inquiry into future representations is a key component of concept cars’ work in aiding organisational and brand transformation. It is a design-led method to formulate a version of the future. (Sarmiento et al., 2016). Concept cars are probes that concurrently study technology and styling while also articulating a realistic, reasonable, and preferable future for the respective brand in a single product prototype. In contrast to traditional managerial futures methodologies, concept cars offer tangible futures that people from a variety of backgrounds can experience and discuss. „Through futures techniques, companies „accomplish a common perspective, develop consensus, and obtain commitment in a unified approach.“ (Simonse, Buijs, & Hultink, 2015). „[...] these artefacts stimulate imagination, define new creative limits, and break boundaries regarding product design.“ (Sarmiento et al., 2016). As the conception of a concept car is rooted in trend research, it also increases the organisation’s trend and consumer behaviour competencies as well as its innovation capabilities through a learning-by-doing approach (Lv & Lu, 2012).

A MORE ABSTRACT NOTION OF CONCEPT CARS

However, in the context of TheYoung, it will most likely not be a vehicle, especially in the application for Yoni, and as concept products are also required in other disciplines, the „concept car“ will be referred to as a concept product going forward in the thesis. Furthermore, this concept product can be seen as a boundary object. Boundary objects are artefacts that enable a level of communication across language differences through their materiality. This can also be a language barrier between disciplines (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). However, they also never replace interaction and communication, because beyond their materiality, there is a certain perhaps non-obvious idea to communicate. Akkerman and Bakker therefore mention that boundary objects often benefit from an additional source of information. Also interesting at this point is the idea discussed by Tharchen et al. (2020) that design itself is already a boundary object: „design is an interactive boundary object, which enables different meaning structures to co-exist and co-inform actors from multiple disciplines and domains.“



This is an example of a concept car of Mercedes from 2020, the Mercedes Vision AVTR. As you can see it shows a new way of driving, an autonomous driving experience including a new interior and exterior design for vehicles. This product prepares both consumers and professionals within the industry for changes to come.

B2

YONI

Research questions: **(1)** What characterises the company Yoni? **(2)** What characterises the brand

Yoni? **(3)** What does the market look like in which Yoni operates? **(4)** Is there a gap for Yoni to tap into?

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Yoni's origin

FOUNDING

Let's start with the name. Yoni is the Hindu transkit name for the female genetalia and translates to „source of everything“ (Happinez, n.d.). Mariah Mansvelt Beck and Wendelien Hebly established Yoni in 2014. The company is based in the Netherlands, in Amsterdam to be exact, and started by making organic cotton sanitary pads and tampons.

THE STORY BEHIND

Mariah Mansvelt Beck, who co-founded Yoni with Wendelien Hebly in 2011, was diagnosed with early-stage ovarian cancer in 2011, which can be considered the starting point of Yoni. To avoid vaginal inflammation, her doctor recommended using organic cotton tampons or pads. Following this advice, Mansvelt Beck realized that organic cotton menstrual items were difficult to come by. Only a few organic stores carried them, and the packages of period products generally didn't disclose their ingredients. This observation inspired the co-founders to make organic and transparent products more accessible by selling them in regular supermarkets and drugstores. (Triodos Bank, 2018).

STEPPING INTO THE MARKET

After a successful crowdfunding campaign in 2014, the company started collaborating with the drugstore chain Etos. Within the Netherlands, Etos and Albert Heijn are now the main outlets for the

company's goods, with a combined 5 percent of the Dutch market (Heijkants, 2021). Menstrual goods in the Netherlands account for around 150 million euros in annual sales; therefore, the firm only serves a tiny segment of the market.

DEVELOPMENT THUS FAR

Although the firm has yet to make a profit, it concluded the year 2018 without a loss for the first time. Beyond the Netherlands, Yoni's products are also available in Belgium, Luxembourg, the UK, and Germany, where the products are sold mostly in bigger or student cities.

A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW

Yoni's communication, which begins with the language they use, is yet another distinguishing characteristic. Their communication in advertising and on their products clearly sets them apart from other more established players in the femcare market. They don't advertise with unrealistically smiling women in tight white pants and azure liquids demonstrating the absorbency of sanitary pads, breaking with the continuation of menstrual stigma. This is why Yoni challenges the status quo of period branding by using more realistic imagery as well as a direct and transparent vocabulary, explicitly using the words „menstruation“ and „vagina“ on their packaging to signify that menstruation is a healthy process in need of normalization.

B22

Yoni's portfolio

As of November 2021, Yoni offers tampons and pads in multiple absorbency degrees, two sizes of mestrual cups, period underwear, panty liners, and liners for pee leaks. As mentioned before, the brand uses organic cotton for its underwear, pads, liners, and tampons. They don't utilize plastic top layers, fragrances, plastics in general, or synthetic absorbents, unlike other companies. They also raise the issue of possibly dangerous pesticides

used in industrial agricultural output. Yoni claims that eliminating pesticides is not only healthier for the environment and farmers, but also for people's vaginas as they come into contact with the period products, as they compose one of the most absorbent forms of tissue in the human body (Yoni, n.d.). This change of composition also makes Yoni's period products biodegradable.



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This is Mariah Mansvelt Beck, the co-founder of Yoni and recurring face of the brand. The product packaging has a personal message from her for the user.

In 2021 Yoni updated their packaging as seen above. This is the main touchpoint users have with the brand as their products are sold in supermarkets and drugstores.

This is Yoni's product range in the 2021 packaging. From left to right: pads (medium and heavy), panty liners (regular and long), applicator tampons (regular and super), menstrual cups (size 1 and 2), tampons (light, medium and heavy).

This was Yoni's previous packaging. This design was changed after the brand conducted a market research in 2019 where users criticized its look as it felt too clinical and distant to them.

Yoni’s target group

PROFILE

Yoni currently targets people with vulvas between twenty-five and thirty-five living in metropolitan areas in the Benelux and the UK. Oftentimes, especially for people already struggling with vaginal irritations, try Yoni’s products. It’s a consumer interested in design, innovation, and sustainability looking for a way to make more conscious purchase decisions. Because the products are slightly more expensive than the alternatives, their consumers can be considered less price sensitive. Their consumers are intellectual.

MARKET RESEARCH

Speaking to present consumers revealed their main selling points: a distinctly different, more sophisticated visual style, a more progressive language and the softness of both the packaging and the product itself which makes them feel like they are doing something good for their body. Yoni furthermore conducted a market research study through an external party in 2019 furthermore revealing consumer’s attitudes towards their products. The main insights included: (1) the fact that Yoni is better for their body is a reason to consider

the brand. However, many people are not convinced about the brand’s protection and comfort. (2) the pricing is a barrier for the average consumer. (3) the message that Yoni products do not contain synthetics is so strong that other positive attributes, such as the products being favourable for the vaginal milieu, preventing irritation and offering more comfort, are snowed in. (4) people like that the brand is different than others using Yoni makes people feel good, but the identification with the brand could be higher. (5) their users are generally happy, but mention disadvantages of the product’s quality. (6) 33% of people with vulvas in the Netherlands didn’t see ordering period products online as an interesting offer, 28% felt neutrally about this, 39% were interested.

RELEVANCE

But since the orientation and the associated product portfolio could change fundamentally in the course of this thesis, the information gained from the market research study is only relevant to a limited extent, since it relates very much to the current status quo of the brand and the market.

Communication

CHANNELS

Yoni’s communication channels include the packaging of their products and the paper inlays, their website and the corresponding blog, their Instagram account, their LinkedIn page, and their podcast. On their website, „yoni.care,“ the user is greeted with a big image and Yoni’s current slogan, „No plastics or synthetics near your vagina, ever again.“ Here they communicate their product range with detailed information and their brand story, which includes their brand promise as well as Mariah’s personal story and the raison d’être of Yoni. The website also gives access to their blog, where Yoni informs us about what the brand is up to, topics relevant to people with vulvas (often discussed with medical professionals), and recent podcast episodes. The podcast is called „The Pussycast , ‘ and aims to „[bring] you in the know about all things vulva.“ and discusses topics such as childbirth, orgasms, periods, hormones, and birth control. The LinkedIn profile is mostly used to reshare blog posts, similarly to the Facebook profile. Their Instagram account is the most frequent means of communication, with 920 posts for their 16,6k followers.

IMAGERY

The images on the side show the look of their feed. They post mostly unretouched photos of female bodies, especially showcasing traditionally stigmatised but normal bodily details such as hair, freckles, wrinkles, folds, stretch marks, etc with the occasional colour pop, breaking the predominantly tan and brown colour code. Water is a recurring theme. Their effort to show diversity in their models is visible, but the images remain depicting dominantly slim and eurocentric bodies. Their posts are accompanied by a text prompt educating about different topics such as self love, hormonal cycles, etc. or promoting their followers with a question regarding similar topics.



The target group:
- The body conscious yoga enthusiastic professional woman
- The design and sustainability focused urban student

A view of Yoni's blog on their website. Their last four blog posts are titled „Blood, crotch sweat and pee“, „What do we mean by „chemical free“?“, „How period proof underwear changed my life“ and „Period proof underwear“

B25

Brand DNA

DOMAIN

Currently, Yoni positions itself in the domain as „a growing collection of sustainable fem care that supports every stage of reproductive life.“ Their purpose is to “unbox all things femininity”. Vulva, period, pee leaks, sexuality, gender, hormones, pregnancy, childbirth.

VISION AND MISSION

Their vision is to make organic period products accessible across stores in Europe. Their mission is to offer a growing collection of sustainable femcare products that support every stage of reproductive life. As discussed with Yoni the concrete languaging is not final and needs refinement as the analysis of the conducted research deems parts of their statements no longer up to date from a societal perspective.

A WORK IN PROGRESS

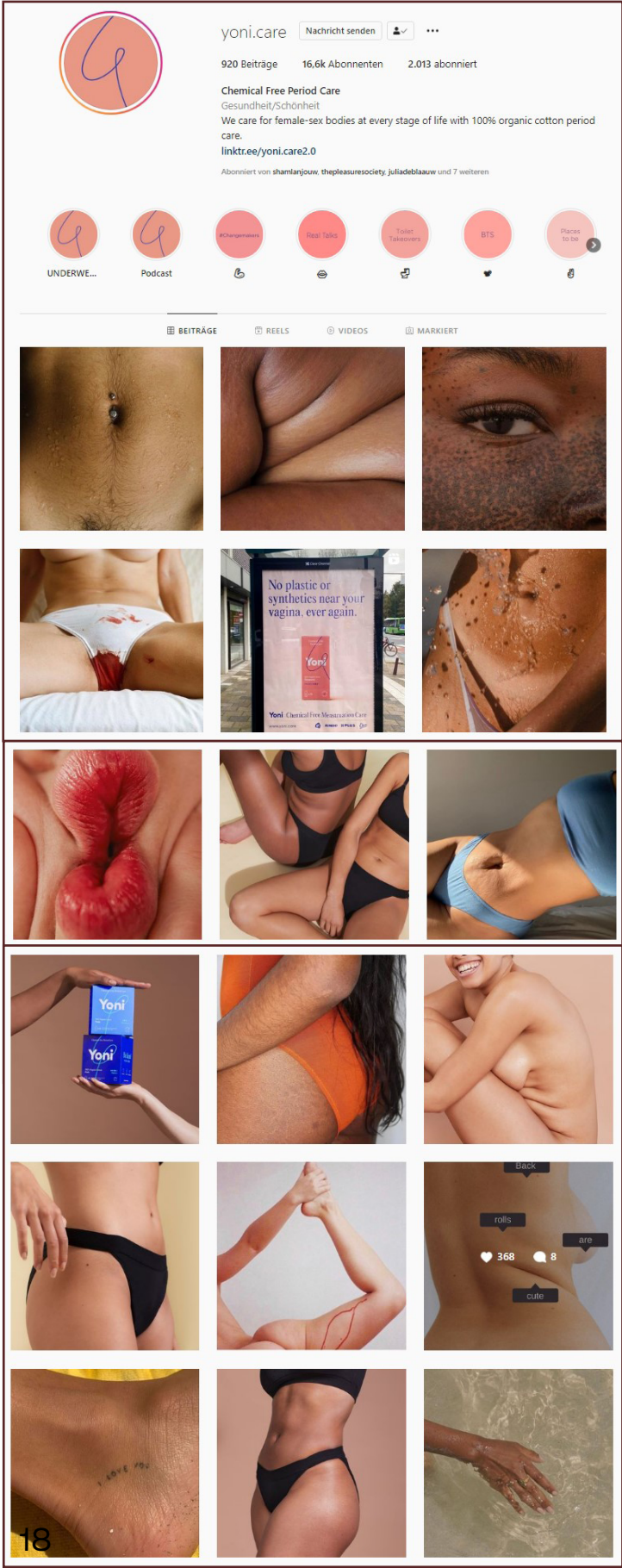
Menstruating people may not be able to able to conceive children, choose to delay conception, choose not to have children or be in a point in life when they enter or are past their menopause; the notion of focussing on reproductive life seems unnecessarilly exclusive - especially as their products are currently for menstruating people which usually indicates the absence of pregnancy. Furthermore, from a political standpoint the focus on reproduction yet again continues the narrative of women being limited to their reproductive capabilities. Another critical point is the notion of femininity, which not only did not resonate within the consumer research series, but also seems out of date in a world where nonbinaries are embraced, identities beyond the binary of femininity and masculinity.

B25

Organisation

The core of the company Yoni consists of ten employees, who are organised hierarchically according to the graphic to the side. On the one hand, there is the top of the company, Mariah Mansvelt-Beck as co-founder, Theo de Kool as investor and manager of the company and Willa Stoutenbeek as creative art director. In addition, there are primarily two departments, sales and marketing. The marketing team was headed by Gabrielle, who unfortunately dropped out for a long time due to health reasons. Working with her is marketing intern Marelôt, Izabella May is responsible for creative content especially on social media

and Catherine Lomba Vrouennaets is owner of e-commerce. On the sales level, Tessa Hop works in customer care for the shops where Yoni products are sold, Lieselotte van Belle is purchase and logistics officer, Céline Moerdijk is external sales force. In addition, there are at least two other employees who are responsible for the supply chain. Yoni’s office is located in the heart of Amsterdam in the Royal Tropical Institute. Many of the employees work on a part-time basis and, due to Covid’s restrictions, the team partly works from home.

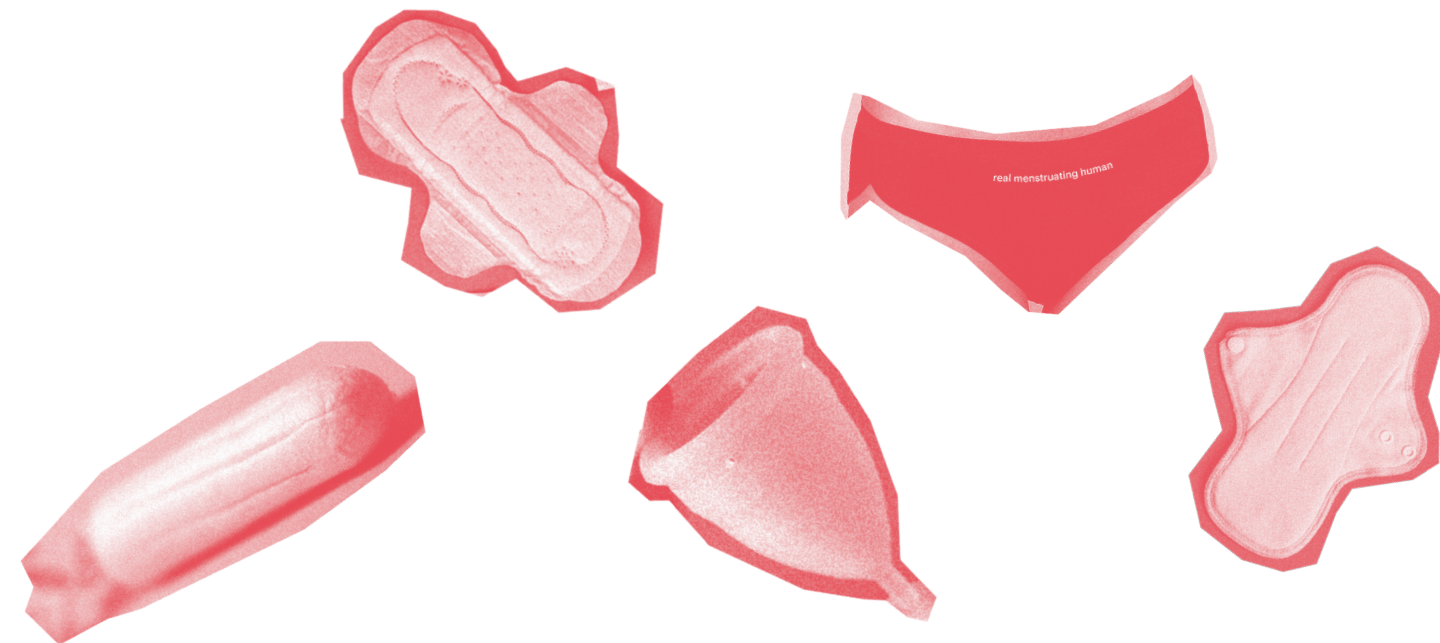
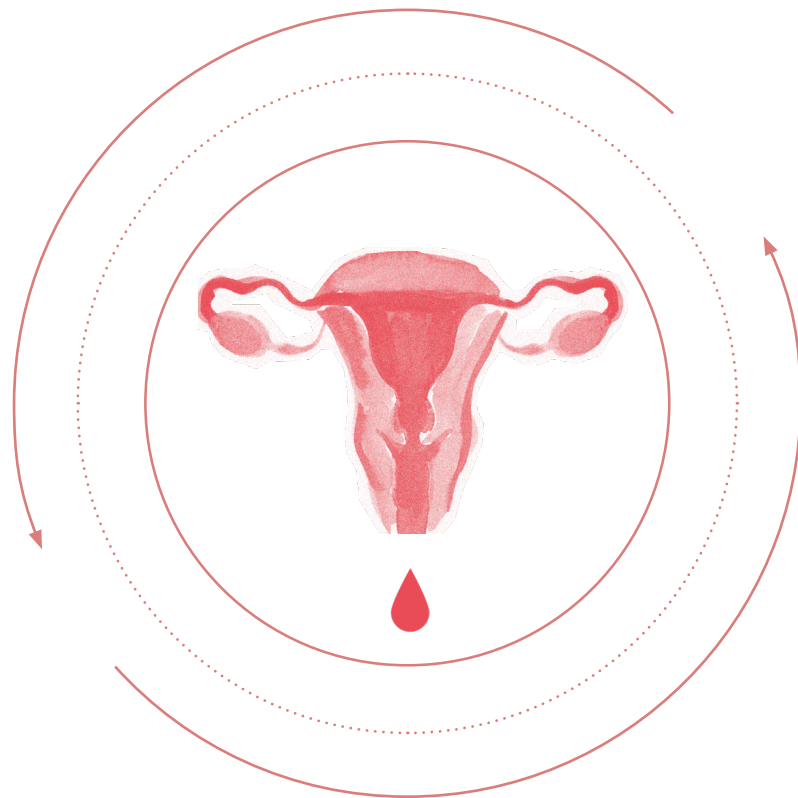
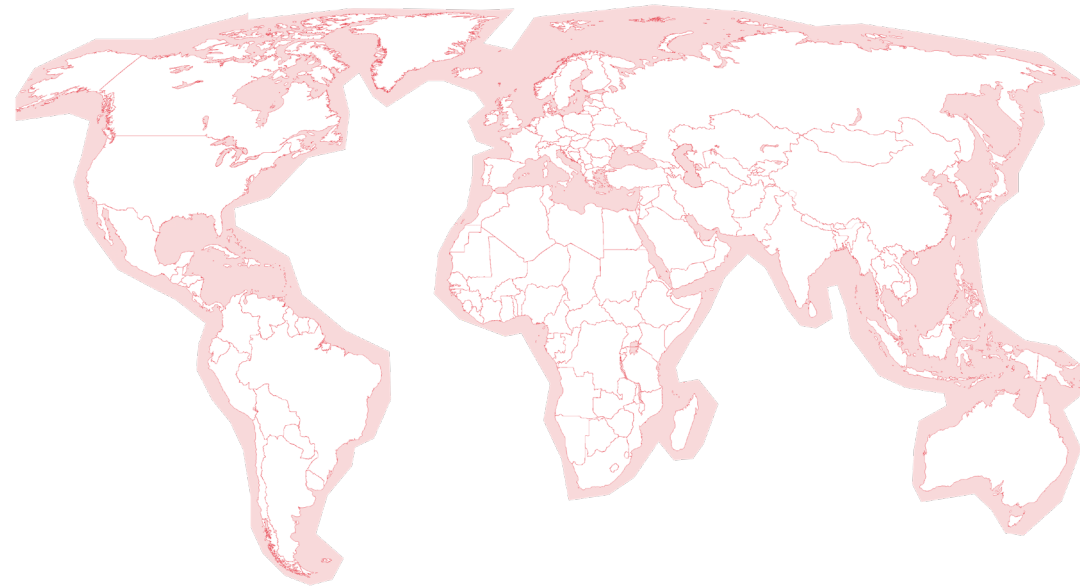


A glimpse into Yoni's instagram feed (November 2021)



A more in-depth overview of the brand's status quo can be found in the appendices.

The femcare market



GENERALS

„Female hygiene“ products are typically used for menstrual discharge, cervical mucus, or fourth trimester care (this term describes the first twelve weeks after giving birth (Barth, 2021)). The market for these products can be divided into various segments. It can be divided by product, sales channel and geography.

PRODUCT CATEGORIES

To begin, there are tampons of various absorbencies, tampons with or without applicators, tampons with additional synthetic wings (te „wings“ are a sheet of synthetic fabric supposedly catching more menstrual fluid), pads of various absorbencies, lengths, widths,, and with or without wings (the „wings“ are adhesive strips on the side of the pad to be attached to one's underwear) , reusable cloth pads, reusable menstrual underwear in various shapes, menstrual sponges, and menstrual cups. Each of these products is available in a variety of material compositions; frequently, the question is whether or not synthetic materials are included.

SALES CHANNELS

Users can purchase the products through a variety of sales channels, including pharmacies, drugstores, supermarkets, health food stores, and online. The products are available online in sex shops, wholesalers such as Amazon or bol, online pharmacies, and directly from the distributors. The products are also available for purchase on social media through Instagram shops.

GEOGRAPHIC SEGMENTS

Furthermore, the market is divided geographically into North America, Europe, South America, Asia Pacific, the Middle East, and Africa. Cultural differences in the use of period products, for example, are fascinating; in Asia, pads are far more common than tampons, whereas in Europe, the ratio is more balanced (Mordor Intelligence, n.d.). In North America tampons with applicators are the norm unlike in Europe where they are the exception.

TREND

Global awareness of female health and hygiene issues is increasing, which, according to Mordor Intelligence (n.d.), will lead to an increase in demand in the foreseeable future, particularly for low-cost period and hygiene products.

SUPPLIERS

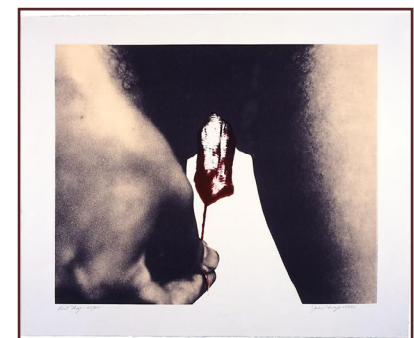
Globally, ten companies dominate the intimate hygiene market; in Europe, these companies include Procter & Gamble, which distributes Always products, Edgewell Personal Care, which is the parent company of stayfree and o.b., and Kimberly-Clark, which distributes Camelia pads (technavio blog, 2018). Furthermore, smaller, often more explicitly sustainable, products from independent brands, such as Organicup or sanature, are available in drugstores and supermarkets. On the side, you can see a list of direct competitor products in Dutch supermarkets and drugstores.



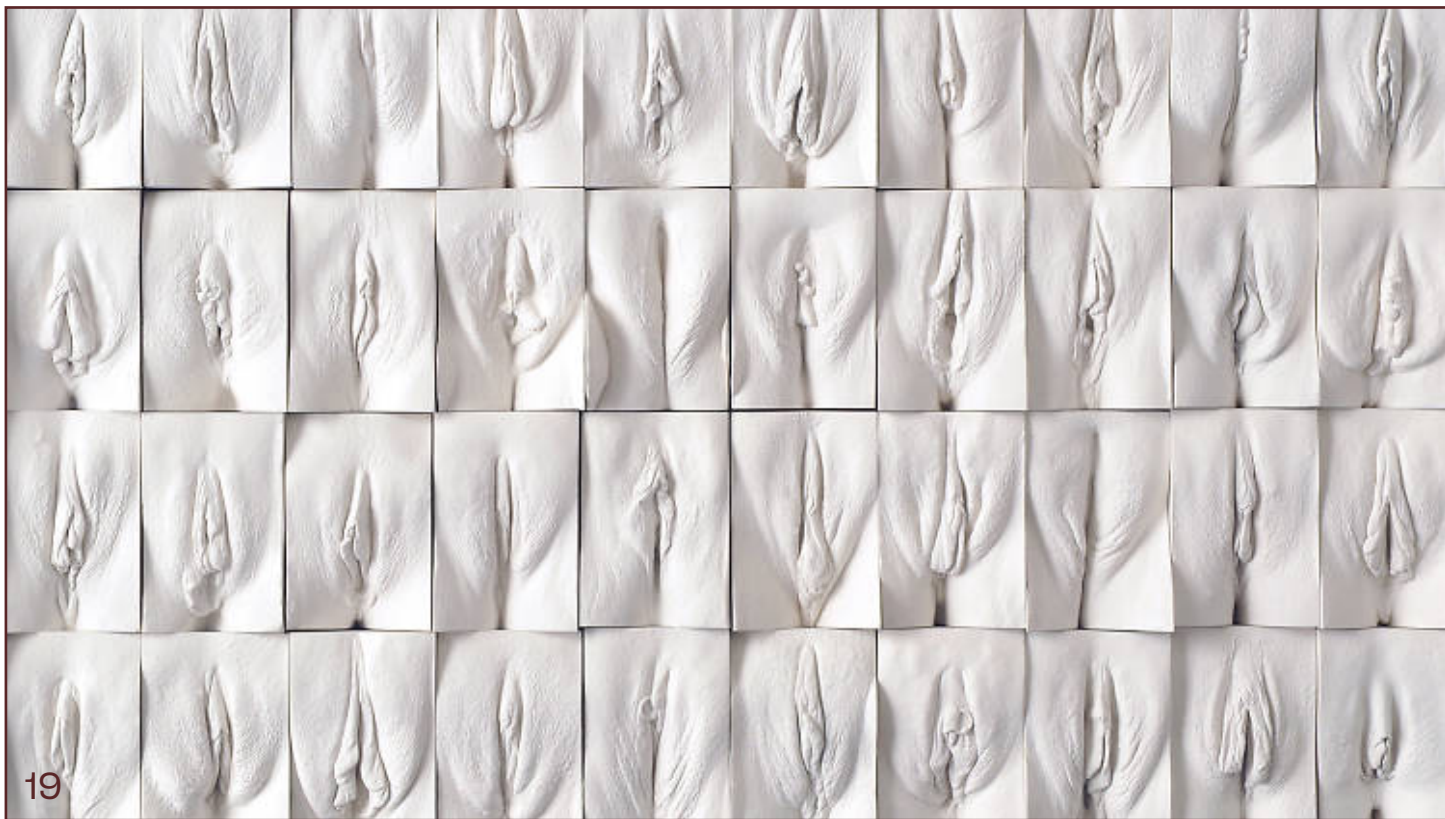
A more in-depth overview of the femcare market can be found in the appendices.



Photograph from the publication „Vaginas Untold“ from female founders and creative directors Jessica Kersten and Sandrine Le Goff from creative studio Cloudfactory that visually address societal taboos.



Judy Chicago
Red Flag
1971
photolithograph

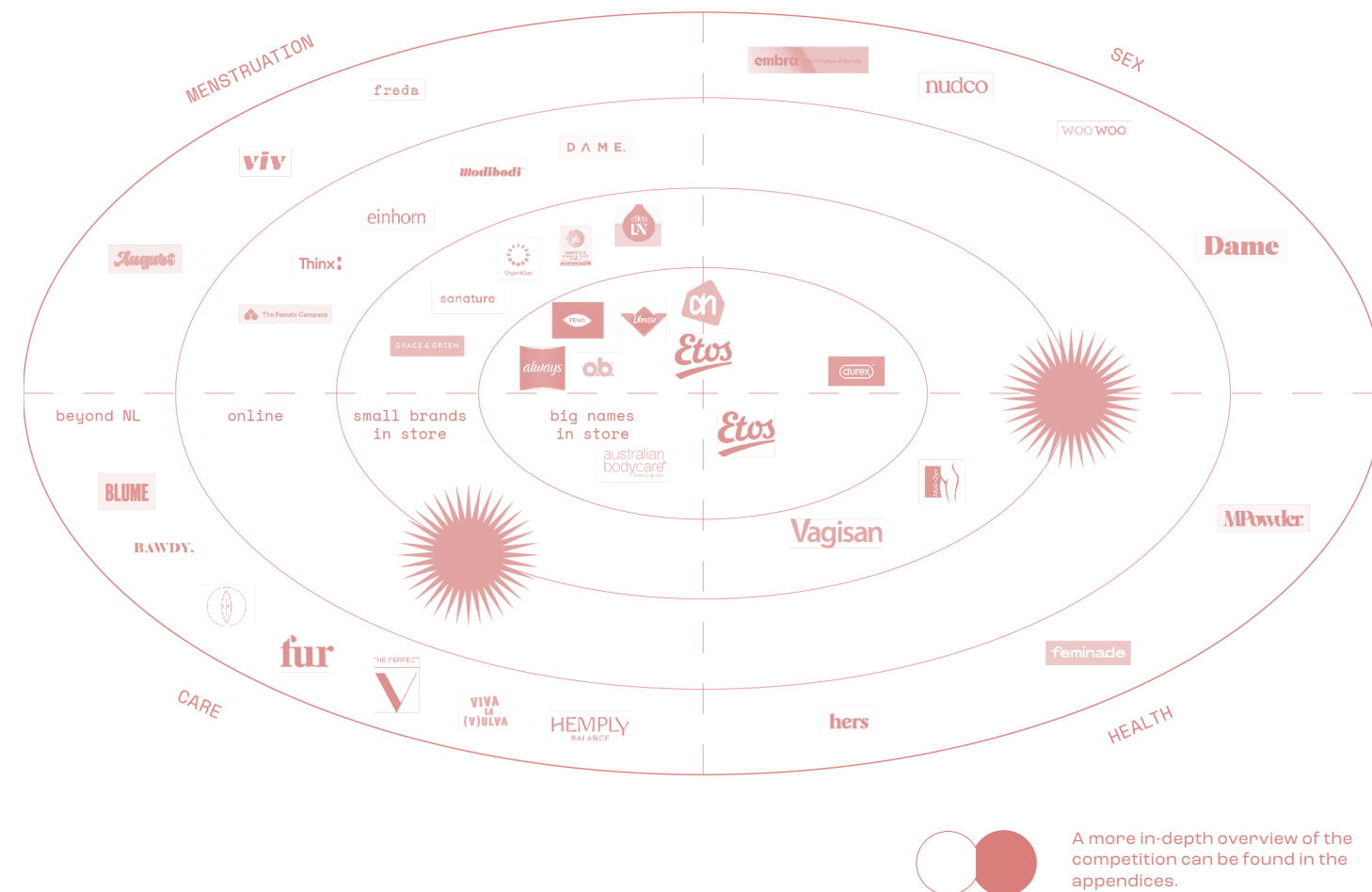


19



20

Excerpt from Jamie McCartney's sculptural artwork „Great wall of vagina“ . This sculpture consists of plasters of over 400 vulvas and beautifully shows the often unknown or unseen vulvar diversity.



A more in-depth overview of the competition can be found in the appendices.

B28

Competitive landscape

As Yoni is looking for a new area to help them go ahead more systematically and cohesively in the future, the context and competition research have been kept reasonably broad, centering on products linked to people's vulvas, not only menstruation. To organise the tremendous diversity in such a thriving industry, the rivalry is separated into four sections, which admittedly overlap for some brands at times. Menstruation, sex, care, and health are the areas covered. Individual categories are further subdivided into four levels: direct competitors in supermarkets and drugstores from market leaders and distributors' domestic brands, competition from smaller independent brands accessible in stores, competition online, and lastly indirect competition (mostly from abroad). The market is characterised by a few large companies, the drugstores and

supermarkets themselves, and a plethora of smaller brands. for Brands from Scandinavia and North America that are attempting to conquer new niches and disrupt the market through product as well as content innovation. These innovative moves are of special interest for Yoni, as they might provide inspiration for Yoni's potential future. Nonetheless, the inventive force from overseas is pressuring Yoni to move swiftly, as the Dutch market, in particular, has not yet seen a significant influence, and that's only a matter of time. And it tends to pay off to be one of the pioneers. For the future, the care and sex sectors are particularly intriguing, as they are not an unreasonable deviation from Yoni's existing brand positioning in femcare leadership. Furthermore, these areas are accessible without the need of a stark medical focus within a company.

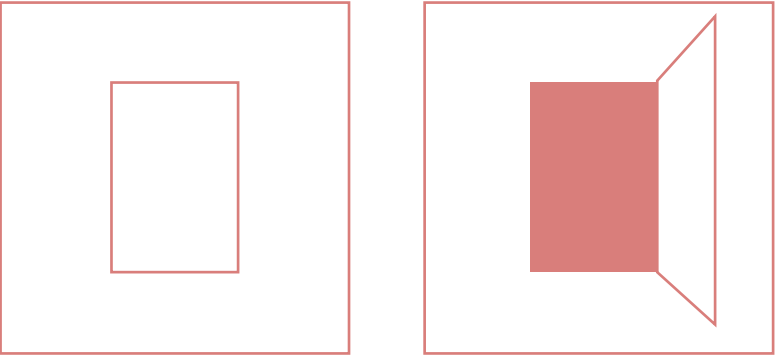
Analysis conclusion

INTERNAL ANALYSIS

- 1
Yoni is a strong and distinct communicator. While other brands such as o.b. are using indirect language and euphemisms, Yoni is more straightforward.
- 2
Yoni is visually elevated, especially in comparison with their competitors. While other brands such as o.b. are using floral ornaments and an abundance of style elements to fill their packaging, Yoni has a more modern and minimal
- 3
Yoni is distinctly different from other brands, and has taken on the role of the “underdog”. Within the market, Yoni has been the one that pushes the conversation further, breaking with the status quo to facilitate positive change. When every brand was offering synthetic tampons, Yoni took a stance and offered an alternative. This rebel image still holds value with customers and staff.
- 4
Yoni is positioned in and has relations with drugstores and supermarkets unlike many upcoming brands.
- 5
Yoni lacks incremental product innovation, generally a product innovation department. Ever since Yoni started selling their products they have virtually not changed, even after criticism from users and other brands being able to solve the prevailing issues.
- 6
Yoni lacks added value to justify the pricing of their products. Yoni's products are more expensive than similarly identical products from competitors such as Sanature. According to the market study commissioned by Yoni in 2019 this is a real boundary for users to buy their products, especially as the added value is often not understood by them.
- 7
Yoni's internal coherence and communication structure are not optimal. This is an insight gained through company internal conversations.
- 8
Yoni has a relatively low brand equity. According to the market study commissioned by Yoni in 2019, only 30% of the people questioned had heard about Yoni.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

- 1
Innovative brands are popping up online, especially from Scandinavia and the US, but also from Germany and the UK. This can be seen in the section „competitive landscape“, a more thorough overview over the competitors can be found in the appendix.
- 2
Big brands are slowly adopting Yoni's USP and other small brands are pushing the 100% organic claim in a more noticeable way. Recently both o.b. and cotex have launched products that advertise being 100% cotton. With bigger brands this often refers to a certain layer of the product and not its entirety. But as mentioned above, brands such as sanature are offering actual 100% organic cotton products at a lower price point.
- 3
There is growing attention on the sexual wellness market and taboo femcare issues. A more comprehensive insight into the bigger context of the industry can be found in the „Yonisphere“ and the „Yonisphere glossary“ in the appendix.
- 4
The femcare industry is increasingly moving towards traditionally medical areas (hormone treatment, home testing etc.). A more comprehensive insight into the bigger context of the industry can be found in the „Yonisphere“ and the „Yonisphere glossary“ in the appendix.
- 5
Users have increasingly high expectations towards brands. A more comprehensive insight into the bigger context of the industry can be found in the „Yonisphere“ and the „Yonisphere glossary“ in the appendix.



Analysis recommendations

Based on an article published in the Harvard Business Review (Minsky & Aron, 2021) giving the following outline „Given the condition of [external factor], Yoni’s (ability to) [internal factor] leads to the recommendation that Yoni [recommendation].“ following recommendations were developed:

1

Given the condition of organic products being the new market standard, Yoni’s ability to change the status quo of the market leads to the recommendation that Yoni should seek a new changeworthy issue within the market.

2

Given the condition of the abundance of innovative brands from overseas and Yoni’s lack of incremental innovation capabilities leads to the recommendation that Yoni should seek collaboration with one of these startups.

3

Given the condition of a growing attention on sexual wellness and the femcare market, Yoni’s current standing within the market and with resellers leads to the recommendation that Yoni should invest into a new product category.

4

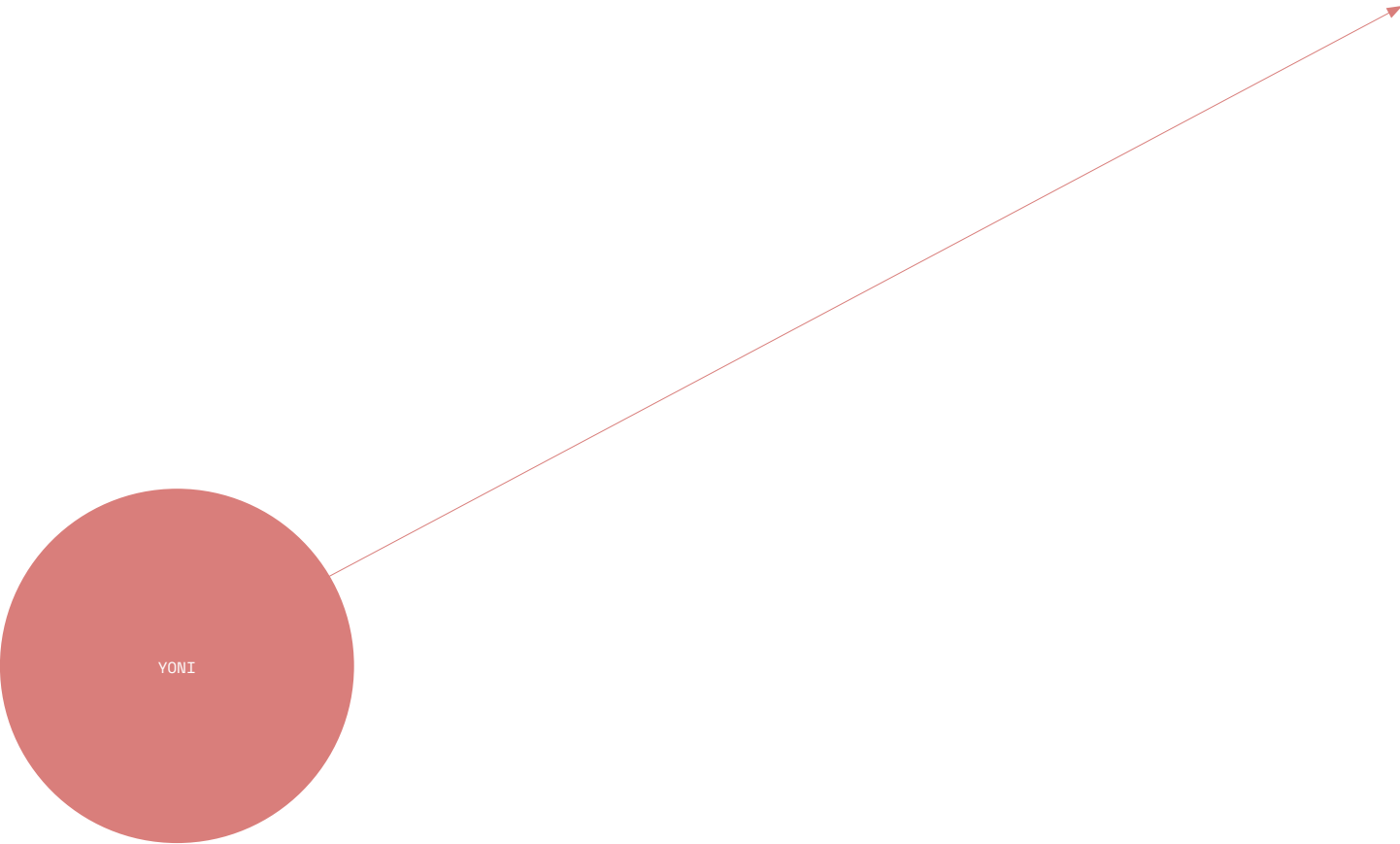
Given the condition of an increased competition within the femcare market and Yoni’s low brand equity leads to the recommendation that Yoni should invest in further marketing support and brand building.

5

Given the condition of an increased medical focus within the femcare industry and user’s increased expectations of brands and Yoni’s relatively low brand equity leads to the recommendation that Yoni partners up with medical professionals to build on the trust in the brand and product.

6

Furthermore, to improve Yoni’s brand equity, to be perceived by their users without confusion, internal coherence and alignment is necessary which further underlines the need for a shared future vision within.



Conclusion

Based on the previously conducted market research several observations can be made. Because the menstruation product industry is more or less saturated and now relies on incremental product innovation, it’s essentially a process of who can deliver the largest possible incremental improvement or develop a new product category. This represents an opportunity for Yoni to go deep into improving their products to ensure competitiveness in this area in the future, which will otherwise remain difficult to sustain. The market for vulva-focused care products is steadily rising, especially as the advantages of lubricants become more widely recognized. However, there are currently insufficient products available for persons who endure discomfort, particularly during intercourse or vaginal imbalance following sex. While companies from Scandinavia and the

United States are pursuing the vulva care market, the products lack gynaecological support and ingredient transparency. This presents an opportunity for Yoni to offer, with professional and ideally medically trained help, care products that are specifically designed for vulvas and explicitly address different problems that people experience. There are several options available through drugstores in the domain of more medicinal solutions that alleviate symptoms for yeast infections for example. They lack appealing aesthetics, however, and customers lack a grasp of when to utilise which products, since self-diagnosis abilities are restricted. This could represent an opportunity for a collaboration with Yoni to offer a holistic care line. Lastly, an option for Yoni to develop is to entirely step outside of the established product categories.



B3

CONTEXT

Research questions: **(1)** What is happening in the world surrounding vulvas? **(2)** How can the findings be best presented to facilitate a conversation?

B31

Research approach

SCOPE

Since Yoni’s future, as discussed with the company contact, will not necessarily be about menstruation and a more far-reaching exploration was desired, the research was titled „Everything vulva“. In other words, it was about any factor that had to do directly or indirectly with vulvas. The word „factor“ is borrowed from the design process model „Vision in Product Design“ (Boeijen et al., 2014) and described as „observations, thoughts, theories, laws, considerations, beliefs, or opinions.“ [...] Factors are value-free descriptions of world phenomena as they appear [...]“ (Hekkert & van Dijk, 2016).

PROCESS

The contextual research subsequently began with a mind map containing as many aspects as feasible, which served to capture as broad a picture as possible over the research period and to avoid overlooking aspects. The mind map can be viewed in the appendix.

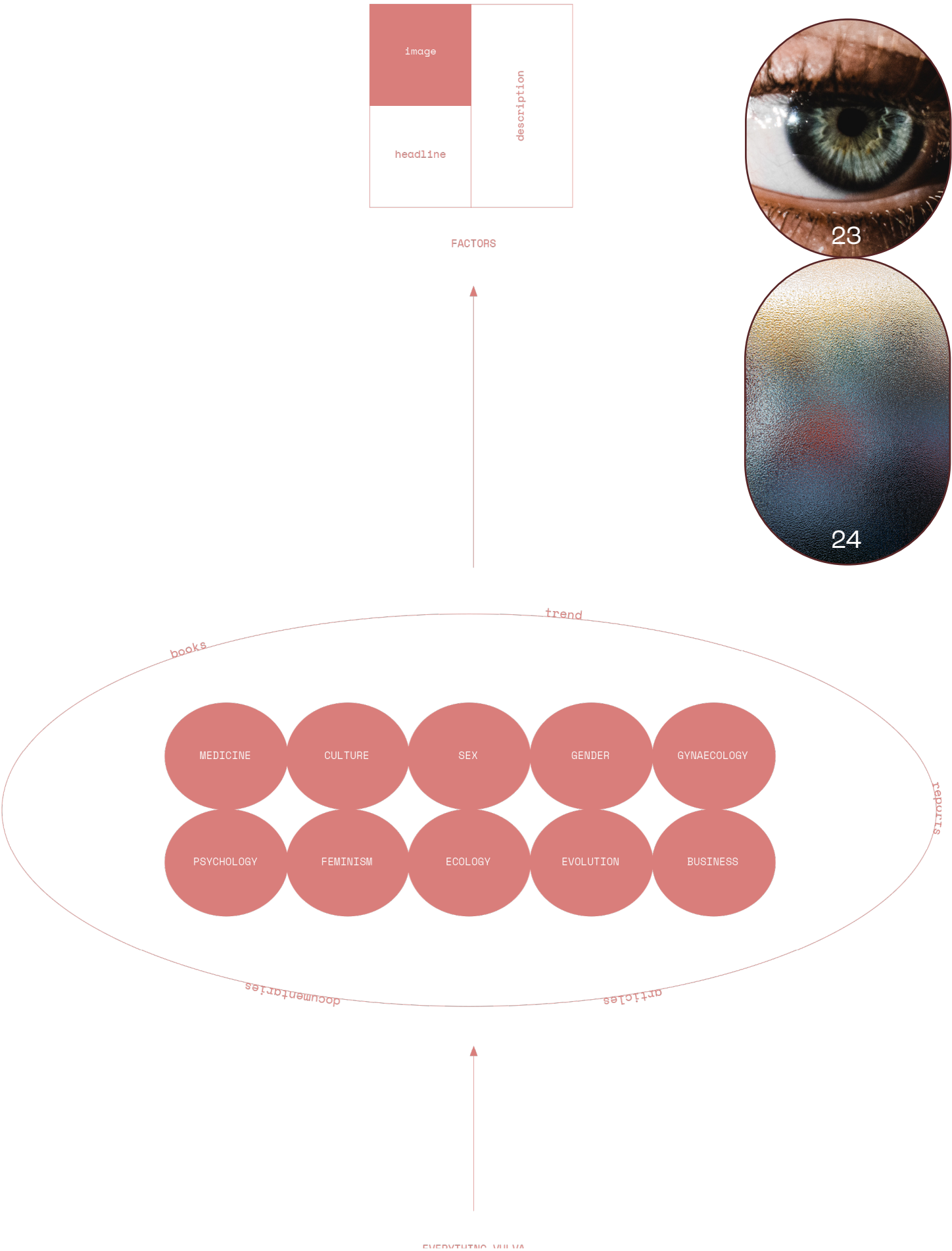
METHODOLOGY

A multi-pronged research strategy was then pursued, paying particular attention to the inclusion of a wide range of media and topics. On the one hand, about thirty scientifically published articles were included, which in turn came from research areas of medicine, culture, sexuality, gender studies, psychology, feminism, ecology, evolutionary theory, gynaecology, and economics. In addition, the books „The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstruation Studies“ (Bobel et al., 2020), „Perimenopause Power“ (Hill, 2021), „Period Power“ (Hill, 2019), and „The Vagina Monologues“ (Ensler & Woodson, 2018) were particularly informative. Also explored was the multifaceted engagement with the themes of menstruation, vulva and female sexuality in the visual arts. A myriad of online articles, especially in the field of new technologies, were also consulted. Beyond that several documentaries were incorporated. Last but not least, about fifteen trend reports and

portals were searched for relevant trends for the years 2020, 2021, and 2022. The trend reports came from trend and design agencies as well as magazines such as the Harvard Business Review. Included were reports from Trendwatch (TrendWatching BV, n.d.), Harvard Business Review (Kropp, 2021), Wunderman Thompson (Wunderman Thompson Intelligence, 2021), Trend Hunter (Gutsche, 2021), frog design (frog design, 2021), the ultra violet agency (the ultraviolet agency, n.d.) and others.

TRANSLATION

For each article, book, documentary, or report, the relevant nuggets of information were then noted down and given a heading and source reference. This led to an overwhelming amount of information that had to be filtered. To structure the information, a matrix was set up that divided the factors into various categories (product/service, vision, marketing, and business model), which were later discarded, and pinned to a timeline (more specifically: to now, next, and beyond). As this model did not yet sufficiently visualise which factors were being used, the categories „other influences“, „overseen areas“ and „interesting facts and observations“ were added. After this categorisation, it became clear that the complexity of the factors was only partially comprehensible to other interviewees, so each factor was reduced to a catchy heading and its depth was recorded in an additional document. Based on this structure, the factors were clustered in a thematic way with the aim of reflecting a diversity of factor categories in the thematic clusters. This resulted in sixteen different thematic clusters with one to seven factors after duplicating factors were eliminated. In addition, factors that were too strongly related to the present were also eliminated in order not to lose a general future orientation in the research. After that, each factor was given a heading and a text explaining the phenomenon, which included all relevant sources. These factors and clusters would be the content of the Yonisphere, the research artefact of this thesis.





B32

Yonisphere

ORIGIN

From 2004 through 2009, Sally O'Reilly and Cathy Haynes collaborated on „Implicasphere: an itinerary of meandering thought“. This was a periodic miniature-publication that attempted to map the meaning and application of a common daily object throughout culture and history onto a single broadsheet. The published Implicaspheres addressed topics such as onions, smoke or stripes. Between 2006 and 2008, five issues were published within Cabinet, a New York-based art and culture journal. The signature look of the Implicasphere combines snippets of text and images (Haynes, 2016). This publication was the template for the Yonisphere formulated for Yoni, which also guides through the world surrounding Yoni through text fragments, images and illustrations.

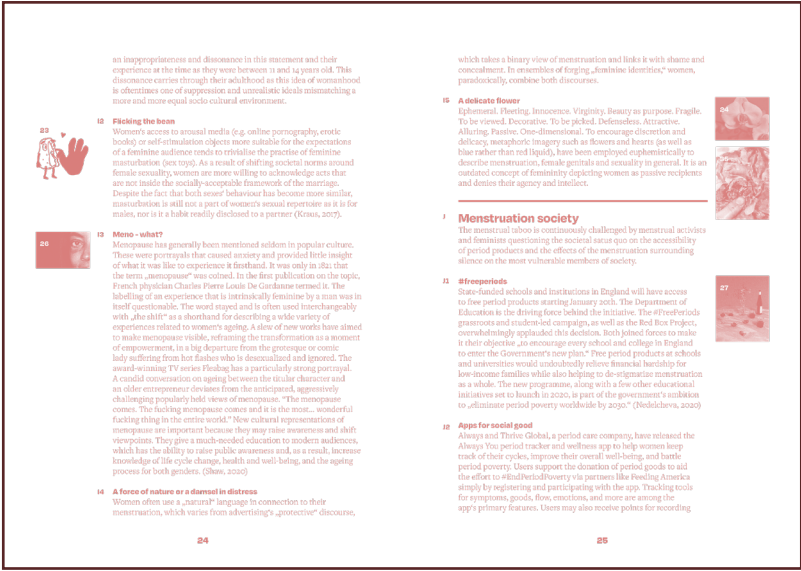
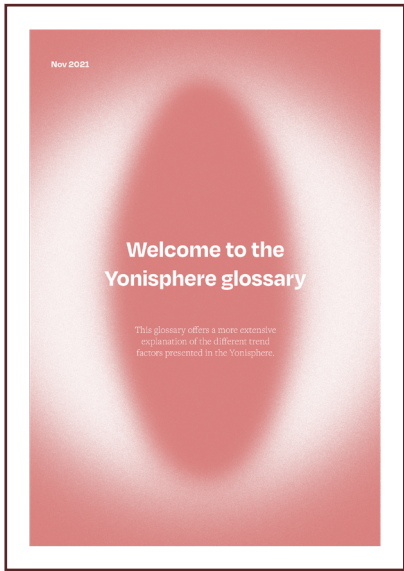
POTENTIA

The Yonisphere is a materialised representation and prototype of the frequently substantial research findings in strategic projects. The combination of image and text makes surfing and exploring the topic more accessible, as well as making it more appealing to return to this document again and again to recall contextual variables, regain an overview, or find new inspiration. It also acts as a communication bridge between users or between the employees of (in this example) Yoni and the strategy team. It may also be used within an organisation to facilitate conversations.

This type of document might potentially be utilised in future projects and with other clients within The Young. In line with this idea, the document may be viewed as part of The Young's methodology and archive structure, which expands in richness as more different themes are examined and documented by in-house strategists. In this manner, knowledge about a project's world of information and insight may be easily captured and made available for others, and an internal library of knowledge can be established.



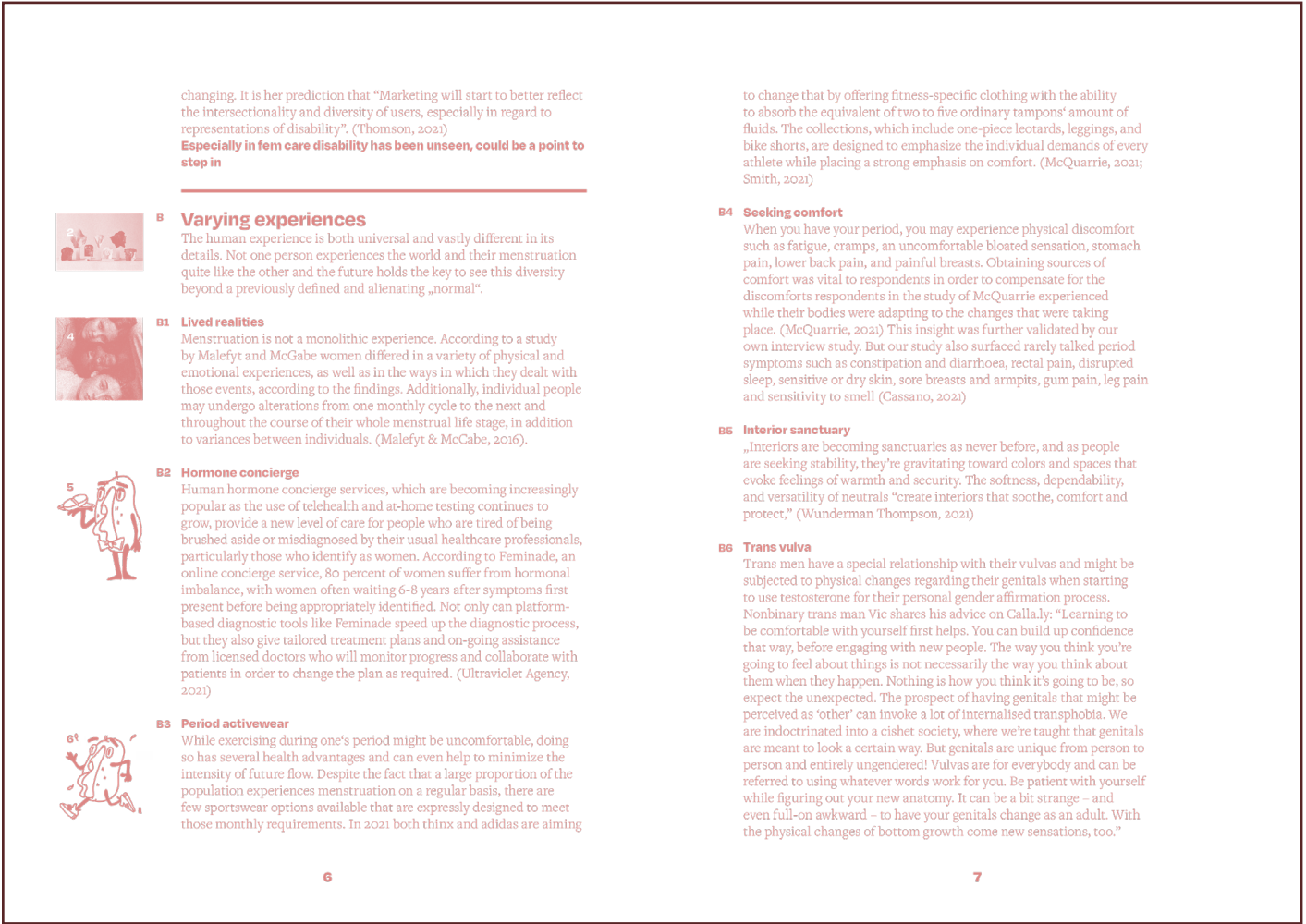
The Yonisphere
can be found in the
appendices



STRUCTURE

The Yonisphere is an A2 double-sided document folded to about A5 size. It is divided into factors and overarching themes, each with a number and a letter, but they do not necessarily have to be viewed in order. The document is intentionally directionless. Each factor is represented by a quotation, expressive words or a small paragraph explaining the factor. In order to provide different levels of information, attention has been paid to ensuring that a balance of images and text make up the document. This way, the document is not only informative, but also visually appealing and intriguing. It is

designed to draw the viewer in and incite them to keep exploring the bits of information depending on where their interest drives them. In order to present the immense variety of factors without losing the depth of information, the Glossary was added. This A5 booklet contains a paragraph explaining each factor and, if applicable, the corresponding picture. Here, all sources of the information are given as well. In the back of the glossary there are additional transcripts of the interviews, in which particularly significant quotations are visually highlighted.



FEEDBACK

Within this thesis, the Yonisphere was shared with the TU Delft supervisory team and The Young to communicate the contextual research. Furthermore, it served as a communication tool in feedback sessions with the company mentor and thus as a support to discuss potentially interesting areas for the company and to gain clarity regarding

the interest and value structure. Furthermore, the Yonisphere served as a preparation for a co-creative workshop with the marketing team of Yoni and was adapted there as a source of inspiration. The document has truly helped to in- and externalise the research and I would therefore deem it successful.



The full glossay can be found in the appendices



The results of the research are the sixteen most significant categories that serve to draw a picture of the world relevant to vulvas. Radical inclusivity, varying experiences, health self-efficacy, community, cycle centric, beyond neutral, post taboo, what binary, the dichotomy of womanhood, menstruation society, beauty 2.0, where the wild things are, menstruation innovation, green as the grinch, knowledge is power and professional vulva.

The factors are: lived realities, hormone concierge, period activewear seeking comfort, interior sanctuary, trans vulva Health self-efficacy The future holds more agency for the individual and empowers us to take our health into our own hands, tracking symptoms, facilitating tests, finding underlying patterns and alleviating symptoms. The factors are: Home testing, AI, cycle self-care, quantified me, health empowerment, proactive health enforcement

RADICAL INCLUSIVITY

We're already seeing it happen—the scope and demand for inclusivity are widening, and consumers expect a more authentic kind of marketing. In the future, we will see society and companies challenge previously untouchable domains, such as ageism, sexual diversity, gender diversity, the visibility of people with disabilities, and the corresponding intersectionality. The factors are: caring for trans cycles, inclusive language, ageing reinvented, more than race and gender.

COMMUNITY

Menstruation creates community, and as our social networks are expanding into the digital realm, a new culture of intimacy emerges. The factors are: connected, branding together, generational bond, new intimacy

CYCLE CENTRIC

We're slowly but surely moving beyond the binary point of view of „period on“ or „period off“ and realizing that the hormonal cycles female sex people go through are not an on/off state, but a continuous cycle effecting life and offering unique opportunities when we embrace it as a guiding force. The factors are: not a 28-day cycle, product cycle, exercise. period, super cycling, the female immune system is cyclical, the more the merrier, remarkable repair

VARYING EXPERIENCES

The human experience is both universal and vastly different in its details. Not one person experiences the world and their menstruation quite like the other, and the future holds the key to seeing this diversity beyond a previously defined and alienating „normal“.

B33

The basics

What is fundamentally worth clarifying are the physical basics found through the thematic lens of the vulva, since both I myself and most of the people I spoke to, and therefore probably you, as the reader, were insufficiently informed about them. What is at hand here is to clarify the anatomical terminology surrounding the vulva, menstruation, and finally the vulva in a societal context.

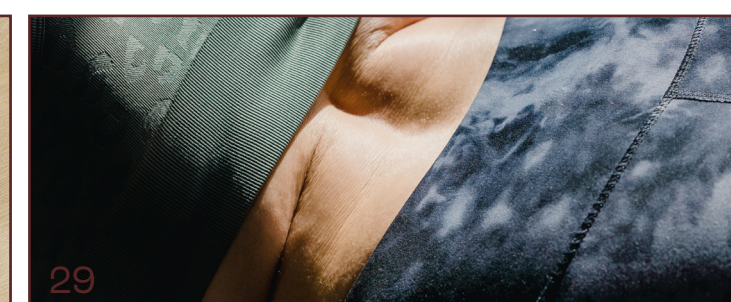
VULVA

The term „vulva“ describes the external female sexual organs or structures. The generic term „vulva“ includes the mons pubis, outer and inner labia, clitoral hood, glans clitoris, the vulvar vestibulum (the part of the vulva between the labia minora), the urethral opening, the fourchette (the part of the vulva where the labia minora meet), the vaginal

opening, the perineum, and the anus. As one of the factors describes, the socially accepted term „vagina“ is actually incorrect and describes only the vaginal canal and not the external sexual organs.

MENSTRUATION

Menstruation is the regular menstrual discharge caused by the shedding of the uterine lining as part of the female hormonal cycle. Menstrual bleeding is induced by a drop in progesterone in the body when there is no pregnancy. Menstrual „blood“ is actually a combination of uterine lining, mucus, and blood. What is important to note is that the vulva and menstruation are not stuck in a cultural vacuum. Due to Western social categorisation into men and women, the woman's body and the processes associated with it are strongly connoted with meaning.



BEYOND NEUTRAL

With increased media literacy, the consumer of the future no longer tolerates companies doing the bare minimum and recognizes greenwashing. Consumers want to see companies as proactive drivers of positive change.

The factors are: quality over quantity, earth positive, ethics made easy, genz game changers, politics politics politics

POST TABOO

Taboos are challenged; a status quo of internalised shame and silence is no longer tolerated as people free themselves and address persisting taboos to dissolve them through open communication.

The factors are: bridging the orgasm gap, post taboo wellness, something to be hidden, wet ass pussies stigma, menstruation porn, language of obscurity

WHAT BINARY?

Binaries will be a thing of the past. We're embracing the grey areas and the beauty in all their nuances.

The factors are:

sexist healthcare, woman ≠ menstruation, gender neutrality in design

THE DICHOTOMY OF WOMANHOOD

A saint, a whore? A natural being, a constant site of work. Women are constantly confronted with often conflicting societal expectations. This dichotomy forces both people and companies to take a stand and position themselves.

The factors are: menstruation and femaleness, flicking the bean, meno-what, a force of nature or a damsel in distress, a delicate flower

MENSTRUATION SOCIETY

The menstrual taboo is continuously challenged by menstrual activists and feminists, questioning the societal status quo on the accessibility of period products and the effects of menstruation-related silence on the most vulnerable members of society. The factors are: #freeperiods, apps for social good

BEAUTY 2.0

The beauty industry is growing and continuously reinventing itself. The newest iteration addresses the single-use culture and is simultaneously reimagining the true meaning of beauty.

The factors are: reusable care, beauty bleed, labiaplasty



The full representation of these factors can be found in the Yonisphere in the appendices. A full description of each factor can be found in the Yonisphere glossary in the appendices

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

As the world is making steps towards a digitalized existence, people are seeking connection to themselves and to themselves as natural beings.

The factors are: rewilding, in touch with oneself

MENSTRUATION INNOVATION

Menstrual innovation is a piece of work. For decades, menstruating people were met with barely anything groundbreaking. While we use the same pads as our grandmothers, humanity is simultaneously entering space age 2.0. But not all is grim. A new era of female entrepreneurs is changing the game in menstruation innovation.

The factors are: cannabis for your vag

GREEN AS THE GRINCH

Climate anxiety is an integral part of GenZ culture, and it is more and more accepted that all of us have to take the initiative and make more sustainable choices. Consumers happily opt for more ecological alternatives to ease their consciousness as the call to

save the planet is becoming increasingly urgent. The factors are: sustainable testing, eco labelling, packaging substitutes

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Knowledge is empowerment. Even in the year 2021, the lack of data on female sex health is astounding, but the issue is gaining awareness and new platforms offer new opportunities to educate and learn.

The factors are: teacher tiktok, education, vulva diversity, genital literacy, everyone knows how to draw a dick, but we don't know how to draw a vulva, every orgasm comes from the stimulation of the clitoris, menstrual blood is mostly not blood big clit energy, everyone gets hard, vulvas change throughout life, got an itch?, a picture a lie

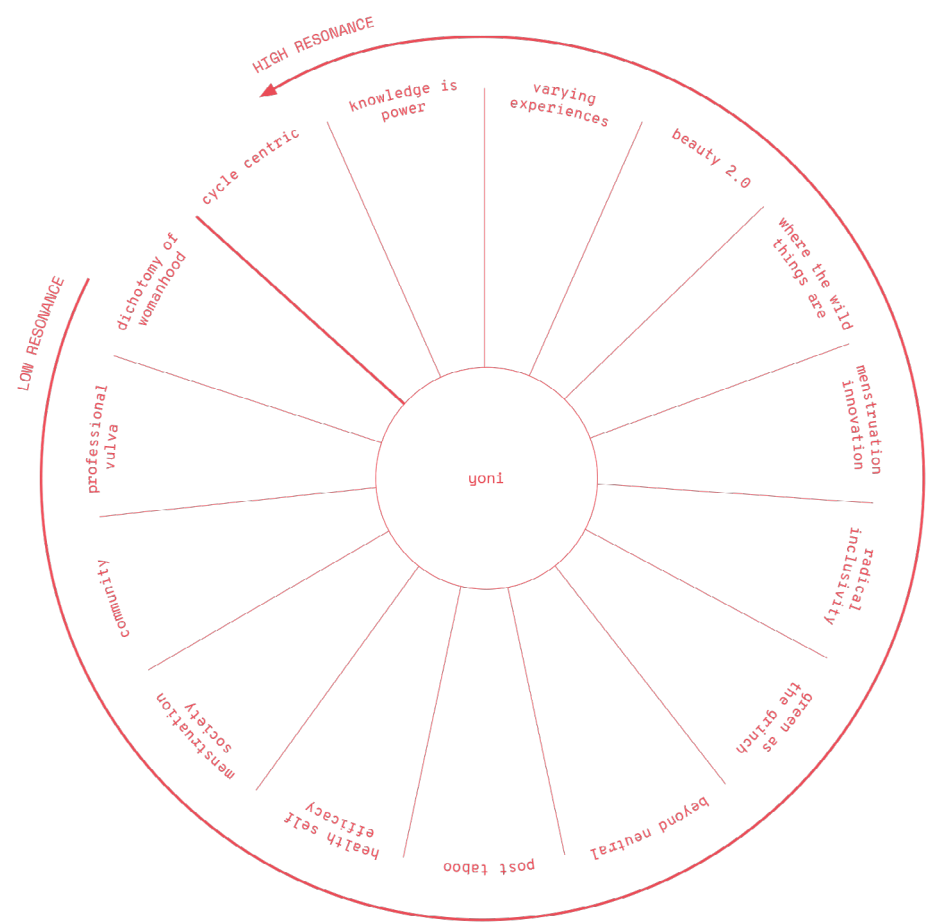
PROFESSIONAL VULVA

As women permeate previously male-dominated and focused areas, systemic changes and adjustments are needed to match differentiating needs without discrimination.

The factors are: WFH, workforce

Feedback

In a collaborative session with company contact Mariah, the Yonisphere served as a tool for not only onboarding and conversation, but also for sorting out the company's internal interests and values, as well as the company's self-image. The following is a representation of the hierarchy of the various thematic groups that was agreed upon.



Photograph from the publication „Vaginas Untold“ by Jessica Kersten and Sandrine Le Goff from creative studio Cloudfactory in which women share their Bodies, and their experiences



Conclusion

For a long time, the topic of menstruation and vulvas was either disregarded by the public and the scientific community or shrouded in a veil of ignorance due to persistent stigma, superstition and prejudice. But especially in the recent past, the topic has truly gained momentum. New knowledge is emerging at all levels, new connections, and demands for change born out of frustration. On the entrepreneurial side, new businesses and product innovations are emerging, and the demands placed on modern companies by users are different than they were 10 years ago due to the growing pressure of climate change and social change. On the one hand, this poses new challenges, but challenges are always an opportunity for development and transformation. But also on the scientific side, researchers have decided to finally work on closing the gender data

gap. These new For a company like Yoni, which in the past was motivated to change the status quo of the market and to go to the frontier with more transparency and higher standards, the current rapid development of this field is a real treasure trove of possibilities and inspiration. Today, communication is very different and many more people can be reached effectively through channels such as social media. In a way, the main thing for Yoni is to take a direction, a theme, make a conscious and coherent choice and carry it forward, into the public sphere and into the future. Each of the factors presented has relevance for Yoni and represents a spark of development potential for Yoni, especially in the combination of several factors.

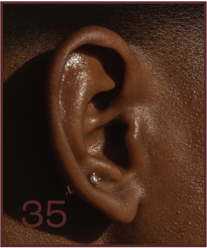


The target group formulated by Yoni consists of people with vulvas between the ages of 25 and 35. In conversations with the founder she specifically mentioned not wanting to target younger individuals. However, as the brand needs to expand its reach in order to be financially sustainable in the future, the sampling group was broadened. On the one hand, a school with students between 14 and 17 years of age was approached, but as the process of approval was unfortunately too time-consuming and complicated by the restrictions of Covid-19, a series of interviews with people with vulvas under 20 was unfortunately not possible in the given time frame.

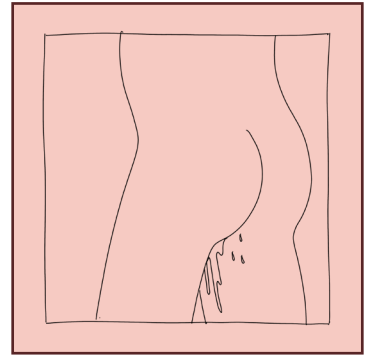
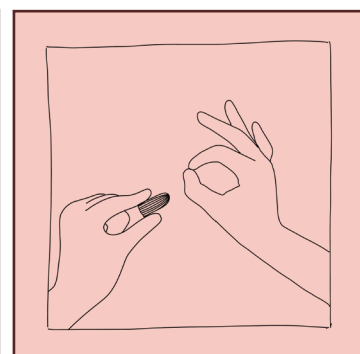
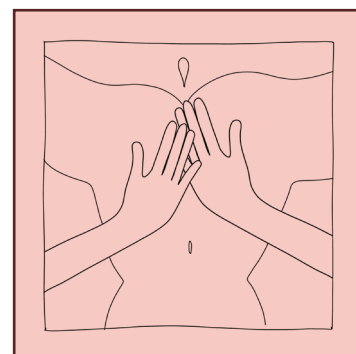
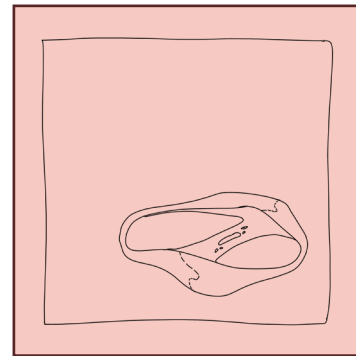
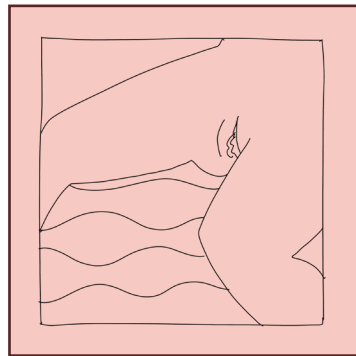
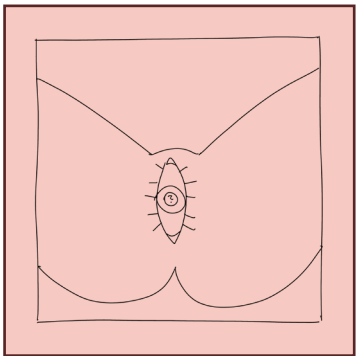
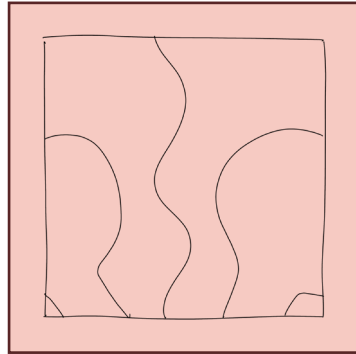
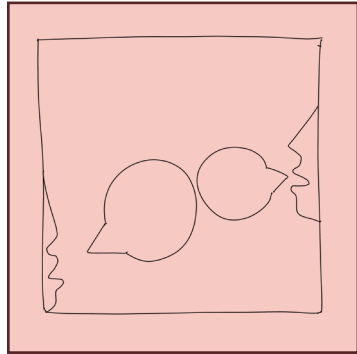
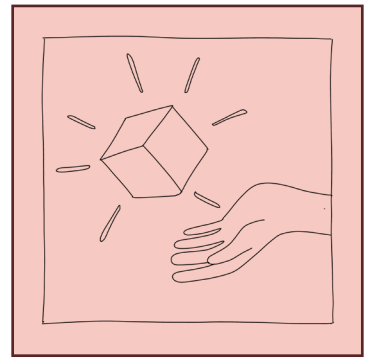
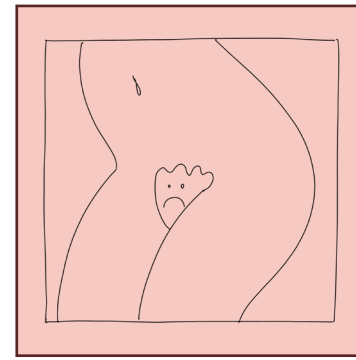
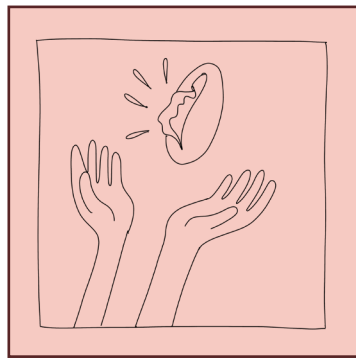
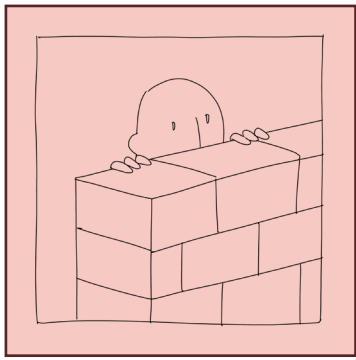
The other track consisted of asking friends, family, acquaintances and as yet unknown people with vulvas through direct inquiry and an open social media call in order to achieve the widest possible variation of characteristics in terms of age, relationship status, education level, origin, contraceptive method and sexuality. A total of nine interviews were conducted, each lasting between 1.5 and 2.5 hours, and the participants of the interview study varied in age from 22 to 50. The interviews were semi-structured, an interview guide was formulated in advance, which was expanded or adapted depending on the development of the conversation and often supplemented by follow-up questions. Three Dutch, four German, one Belgian and one Turkman person were interviewed, three of whom have a family background of migration. Education levels varied from being educated to being a doctoral candidate; some respondents were studying, others were working. The repondents were hetero or bisexual and in longterm relationships, married, single and actively dating or not dating. The respondents were users of tampons, pads and period cups and were not using any contraceptives (except condoms), using the pill, the copper IUD, the hormonal IUD or the hormonal implant. One of the individuals was a mother of multiple children. Furthermore, people varied in the severity of their menstrual flow, from one person having generally no periods, to very light, average and very heavy bleeding. One participant suffered from the conditions of vulvodynia and vaginismus.

Due to the framework of the Master's thesis and the fact that this source of information is secondary, the decision was made not to expand the conversations further at this point, although potentially interesting realities of life were not yet depicted, such as the phase of actively trying to become pregnant or the pregnancy itself, as well as current opinions and reports of teenagers. Therefore, it must be mentioned that this is not a truly representative selection and the insights are valuable but cannot stand for a wider society.

With the consent of the participants, the interviews were video recorded if the conversation took place digitally, or audio recorded if the conversation took place in person. The interviews, which were between 1.5 and 2.5 hours long, were then intelligently transcribed verbatim and partially summarised over less relevant phases. The interviews were then roughly coded and clustered, but also supplemented with higher-level observations. The insights gained informed all further steps. Beyond the concrete answers to the questions posed, several interesting insights emerged.



Interview guide
In general, the interview was thematically structured in such a way that the conversation progressed from very specific usage behaviour to more ex- and implicit feelings and opinions. Furthermore, the interview was divided into two or, in one case, three thematic blocks. To begin, we discussed the menstrual experience. This included purchasing behaviour, product preferences, and usage habits, as well as general information about the menstrual experience, symptoms, the menarche experience (first period), and influencing factors such as contraceptives. The second set of topics addressed the vulva, people's care routine, health measures, social context, and the respondent's personal experience and relationship with their own body. The conversation was further extended by the topic on menopause for one participant who was experiencing perimenopause. The depth of the different topics was strongly dependent on the richness of personal experiences and I followed the openness and willingness of the participants to talk about the topics that moved them most and were new to me.



B42 Insights

1

First of all, the interviewees' inhibition to speak about their menstrual experience and feelings and habits regarding their vulva created an almost tangible resistance in both of us. This was an odd feeling as I entered this topic with personal openness and readiness to speak about everything. I tended to break this resistance by sharing my own experiences to normalise talking about this often-shushed topic and offering my own vulnerability for them to feel safe to offer and share their own. I noticed that this mutual sharing made the participants much more comfortable to talk.

2

The interviewees had an astounding lack of or inaccurate vocabulary to describe their own bodies. Oftentimes I had to step in and clarify which body parts were called what so we could start having a conversation. This further highlighted the sheer lack of conversations people have about their bodies.

3

About half the people deeply felt a societally rooted shame about how their vulva looked, they criticised the colour, the symmetry, the size.

4

People had started trying to reframe their menstruation beyond something bothersome, but as something positive. Tapping into this as a chance to reframe the menstrual experience as a cleansing process, a sign of health and something powerful and beautiful.

5

Another insight was the lack of knowledge people had about experiences outside their own, this became particularly obvious when talking about menstrual products they hadn't used themselves as they couldn't understand what they would be useful for. This shows yet again how little people know on average about other people's menstrual and vulvar experience and the lack of conversation about this, even between friends.

6

This observation leads to the next which is about the gratefulness people expressed about having a conversation with me. Not only were they particularly excited to have a conversation with me, but they specifically pointed out enjoying the intimacy and depth the interview made possible afterwards.

7

Another insight was that especially during people's early twenties they seem to experience a second wave of issues regarding their vulvovaginal health, especially as contraceptives are changed after having negative experiences with the pill. This also opens up the space for finding new menstrual routines as menstrual flows might change.

8

Menstrual shame is alive and well; some of the participants saw their menstruation as dirty, others expressed noticing people around them thinking menstruation was something dirty or disgusting.

9

Many people feel uncomfortable with the notion of menarche being a threshold towards womanhood, either because of their age at the time, others with the general gender role associated with this.

10

Another observation was that not everyone feels comfortable inserting menstrual products into their vagina.

11

People took on different roles within their social circle in regards to menstrual products, some proactively looked for new products and even tried to influence and share new insights with their friends, others got influenced.

12

People shared their general tendency to leave shame about their menstruation more and more behind as they had grown older. Many had their personal story and micro activist stories to share about this. This lack of shame did not translate into their relationship with their vulva.

Outcomes

On the next page, you'll see a graph illustrating the many user research topics obtained from consumer research. This graph illustrates the numerous most intriguing topics that emerged from the chats. The most prominent bubbles are the blue ones.

TOPICS DISCUSSED

The talks generally centred on people's menstrual routines, product preferences, attitudes and sentiments regarding menstruation, menarche (first period) experiences, menstruation symptoms, vulva care routines, attitudes and feelings toward their vulva, and the terminology they use for those.

MENSTRUATION CONTEXTUALISED

One noticeable element is how people feel about (their) menstruation. Thus, it made them feel like a woman, linked to their and society's idea of womanhood. Some of the participants regarded this notion as positive, while others saw it as unpleasant or disturbing. And for others, this concept resulted in a feeling of gender dysphoria, which means they struggled to relate to this aspect of themselves that they experienced as being projected onto them. They associated menstruation with pain, discomfort and extended periods of premenstrual syndrome. But it also carried the meaning of allowing oneself some slack, taking care of themselves in a more extensive manner than on a day to day basis. According to some, it was a purifying experience and seen as beneficial, a sign of a healthy body and mind. Multiple participants even pointed out the beauty of blood. Additionally, many connected their menstrual experience with daily misogyny. Particularly with the men in their life, and how they were working to combat this by making a point out of menstruation's visibility and initiating a discourse about how they wish to articulate their experience.

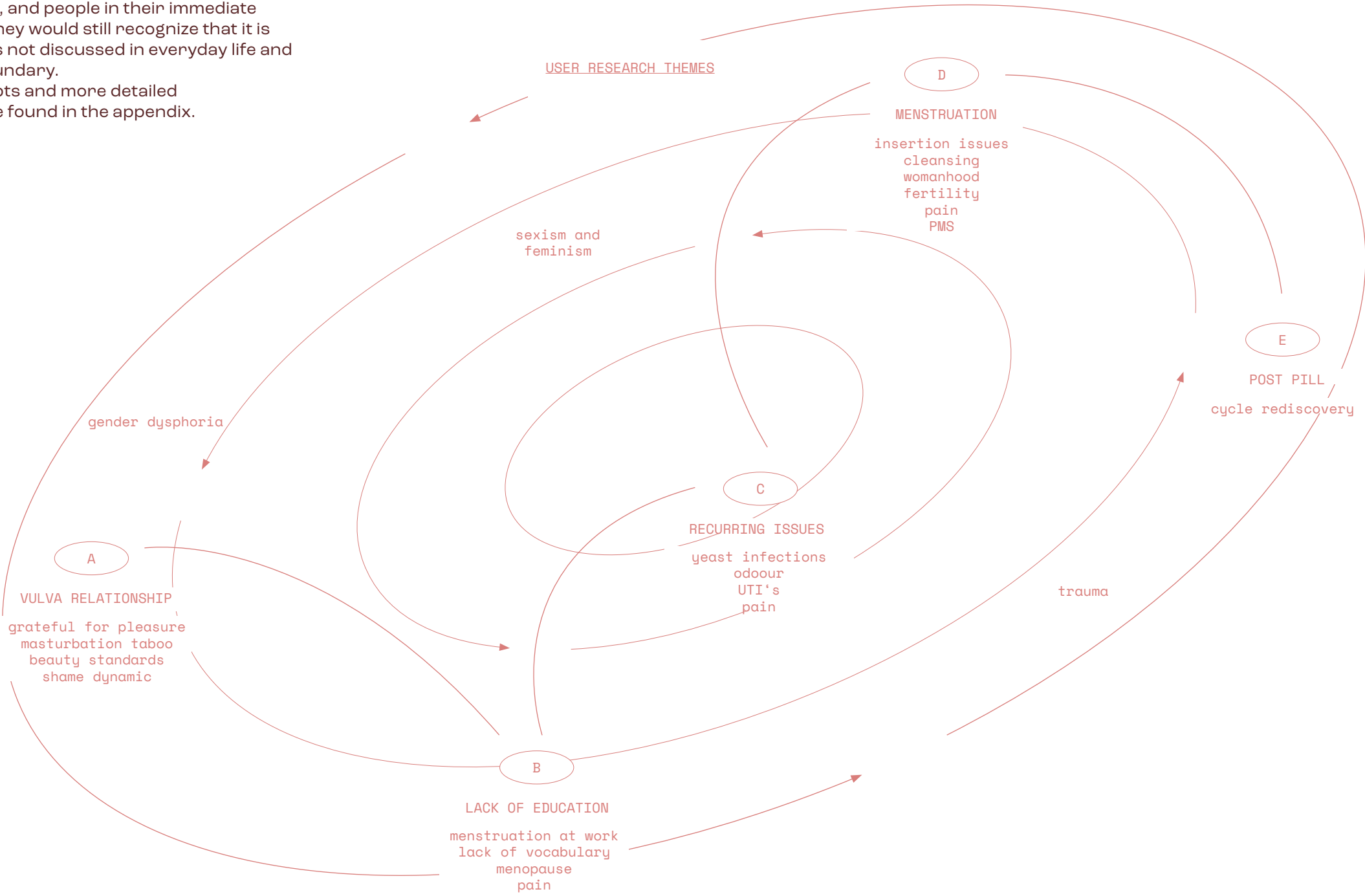
CONTRACEPTION AND THE CYCLE

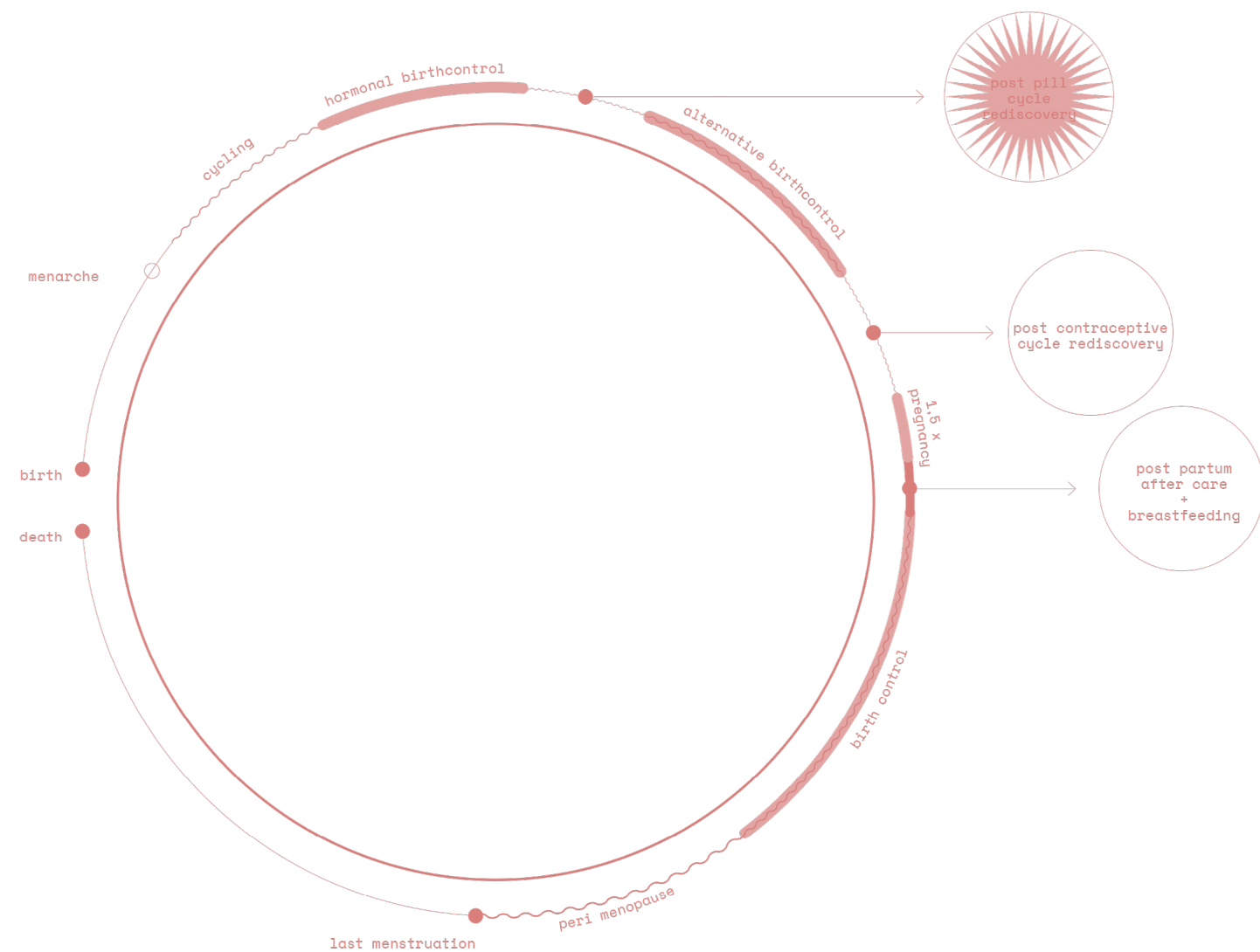
Another intriguing topic discovered was „post-pill,“ which stands for a shared experience many of the people interviewed had previously gone through. They had previously used the contraceptive pill but then decided they no longer felt comfortable using it because of its at times severe side effects which included depressive episodes, lack of libido, and because of the negative rep the pill has gotten in public discussions (Silman, 2019). They were rather incensed about the pill being the default option recommended to them by their healthcare professional as a teenager either for contraceptive purposes, but also to improve the skin or achieve more regular or mild menstrual cycles. Due to severe side effects such as depressive episodes and a lack of libido. This post-pill era ushered in a new phase

of individuals rediscovering their natural cycle and developing new product preferences.

WHY DON'T WE TALK ABOUT THIS

However, one of the most surprising elements was the overall absence of discussion regarding menstruation and vulvae in people's life. We do not discuss menstruation at work, despite the fact that for some people, menstruation had a substantial influence on their performance and welfare, necessitating proactive planning of their work schedules. Additionally, we avoid discussing issues such as menopause due to a bevy of bad implications. This lack of dialogue is built in a dynamic of shame that neither I nor my participants were able to fully unlock, despite the fact that they were open with me, their friends, and people in their immediate surroundings. They would still recognize that it is something that is not discussed in everyday life and saw that as a boundary. The full transcripts and more detailed clustering can be found in the appendix.





B44

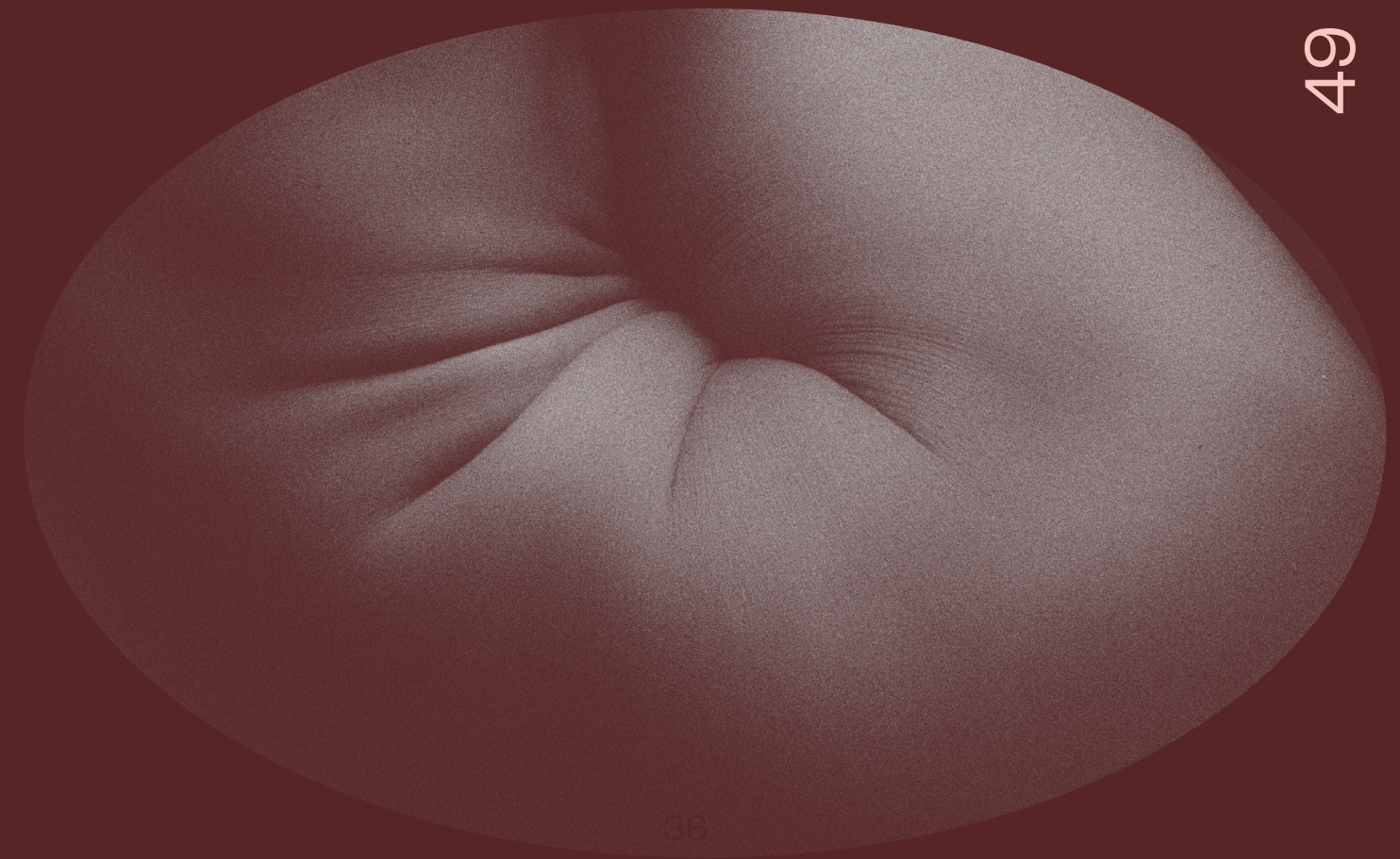
Cycle of life

The following model was developed based on a series of interviews as well as a research of the literature in order to visualise the experience of a biological female person over the course of a lifetime. This model incorporates the various methods of contraception the interviewed people expressed

using over time and the average birth rate per woman. The straight lines denote a suppressed cycle (through the use of hormonal contraceptives) or the absence of menstruation as a result of pregnancy and breastfeeding.



A more detailed view of what happens within one cycle can be found in the appendices.



B45

Conclusion

For a brand like Yoni, particularly among its target demographic and expressed age bracket (early twenties to mid-thirties), the periods of moving from one contraceptive method to another or living without are fascinating, since new habits are formed here, according to interviewees.

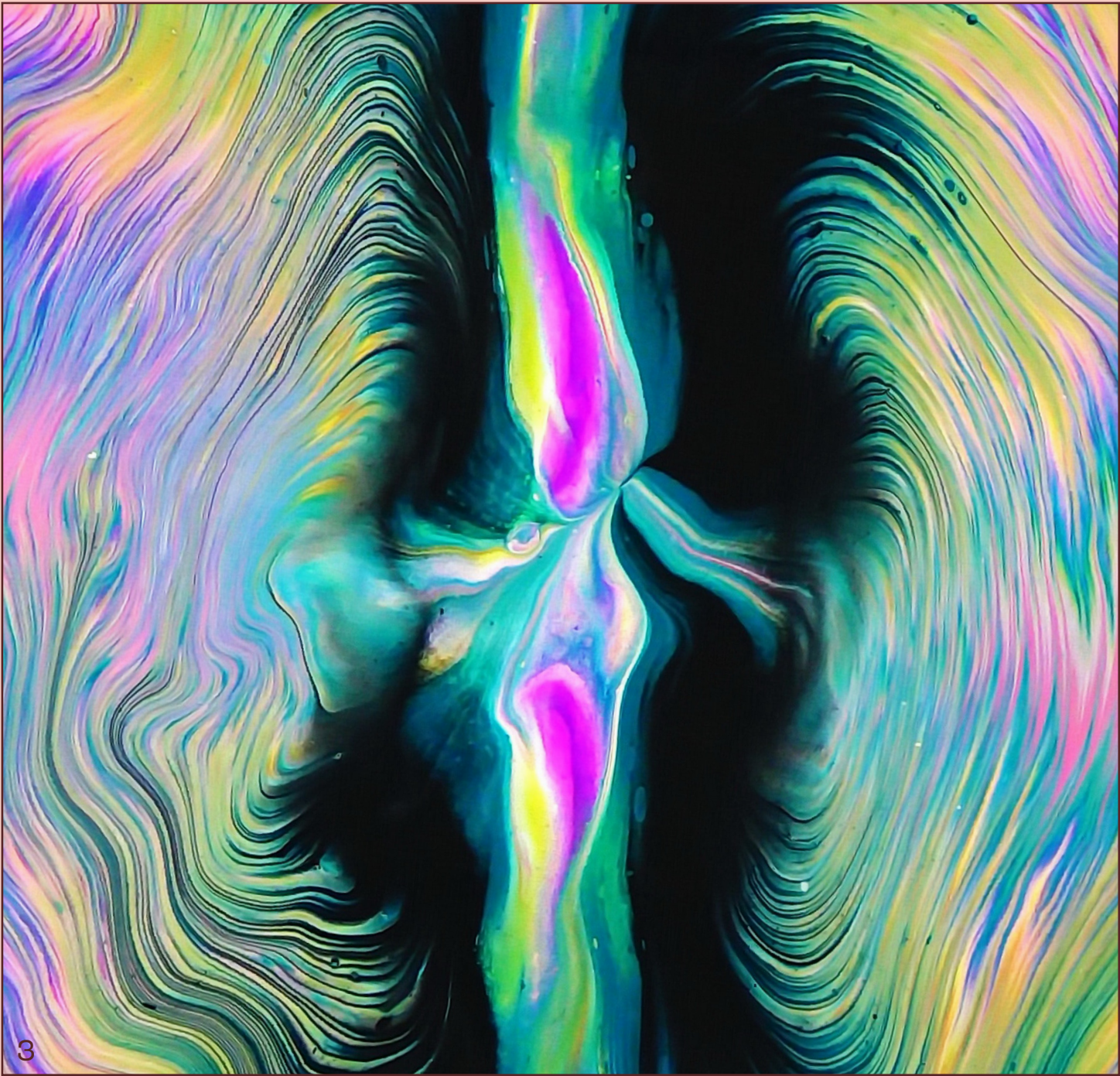
Apart from contraceptive alterations, women have natural hormonal fluctuations and changes throughout their lives, beyond the most commonly known phases of adolescence and perimenopause (Quinn, 2021). This impact is obvious in the realm of period products, but switching from one form of contraception to another is a substantial transformation. This hormonal shift has an effect on the skin, vaginal flora, and the volume and consistency of discharge, among other things. And people impacted are frequently on the lookout for products that might help with the change of needs. In summary, some negative experiences in relation to the menstrual cycle are far from being resolved or there are initial approaches that are not known to those affected. The first products to intervene in hormonal skin changes or to treat the menstrual symptom of cramping (various heat pads, CBD tampons and oils should be mentioned here) are coming onto the market. Products for very heavy menstrual bleeding represent a very specific gap in the market; one respondent described how she had to insert not only a maxi pad but also two extra-absorbent tampons

at night because of the heaviness of her menstrual bleeding and still had to struggle with blood stains on her bed linen from time to time. On the other side of the spectrum, women reported that they could not use any of the traditional period products because they were too absorbent and dried out their vagina and vulva, leading to an irritated vaginal flora and pain.

In particular, a holistic view of the cycle, including nutrition, hormones, exercise and other factors that influence symptoms such as poor sleep, tender breasts, bloating, cramps, irritability and more is virtually unknown; both rather thinly researched on a medical level, but even more of a mystery at a private level.

Yet again, this lack of knowledge about one's own body and the shame associated with it presents an issue. Especially vagino-vulvar irritation and both normal and irregular discharge are only partially understood by those affected by it and are associated with a lot of shame.

The role that Yoni could have for users is that of initiator of open and educational conversations that combat the lingering shame about our bodies and dissolve loneliness with one's own experience; Yoni could also promote active sharing of experiences and approaches to improving symptoms and thus help as a partner in understanding and resolving symptoms.



What will be answered in this chapter: This chapter describes the shaping of a path towards Yoni's future, a bridge between research, present and future. After the presentation of the Yonisphere, four distinct clusters were formed from the thematic areas, which formed coherent thematic worlds.

Four future directions based on a future personality were then developed, which were reduced to two after a joint discussion with Yoni. Finally, ideas were developed for both directions, which ultimately served to select and formulate one of the two directions.

c

Defining

C1

Identifying clusters

The primary objective was to point out action-oriented directions after the open and far-reaching exploration into the world of the context. The insights had to be distilled further to make this possible. The most relevant and promising clusters were chosen for this purpose, and they were supplemented by additional clusters to create coherent thematic worlds. The freshness of the information, whether I found an application opportunity or similarly addressed topics in the interviews, and the extent to which I saw the market as saturated after the market research were all deciding factors in this decision. Four clusters were chosen as leitmotifs on this basis.

CLUSTER ONE

The first category is „community,“ which corresponds to an observation made during the interviews. A recurring issue as described by the participants is that individuals who are struggling with vulvovaginal issues are frequently forced to embark on a lengthy journey alone until they find solutions. People begin this search on their own, despite the fact that many people with vulvas struggle with similar complaints, who also seek solutions on their own. How many people could benefit from the collective wisdom if there was a strong and open community? The supplementary clusters are „radical inclusivity,“ „diverse experiences,“ and „knowledge is power.“ A community can only be forward-thinking if it welcomes diverse people and experiences, which in turn fosters awareness and connection. Additionally, this cluster is about sharing and generating knowledge in this scenario.

CLUSTER TWO

The second cluster is organised around the thematic group „cycle centric.“ This topic appeared particularly pertinent in today’s age, as an increasing number of people express dissatisfaction with the contraceptive pill and thus opt for non-hormonal methods of contraception. This observation was echoed in the interviews, in which several respondents discussed their critical reflections and/or personal pathways towards the absence of hormonal contraception and the consequent impact on their cycle. Thus, re-discovering and decoding the cycle would be an exciting direction to pursue. Other related thematic blocks include „health self-efficacy,“ which refers to consumers’ more self-determined attitude toward the medical system. And „where the wild things are,“ which embraces the reintroduction of natural bodily processes as a transformative process in its own right.

CLUSTER THREE

The third cluster is organised around the theme group „post taboo,“ which is concerned with the social disintegration of long-held taboos. Brands that venture into these areas have generated a great

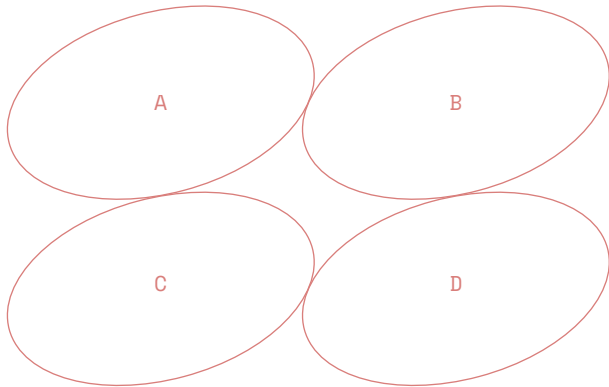
deal of positive buzz in recent years, and this may be the path forward for Yoni too. Additionally, „beyond neutral,“ „what binary,“ „menstruation society,“ and „professional vulva“ are included in this label. This group is dedicated to taking a strong and expressive stance as a business and to bringing attention to social injustices.

CLUSTER FOUR

The final cluster is „beauty 2.0,“ which emphasises the importance of developing a new definition of beauty that embraces and respects all natural forms and colours inherent in bodies. The other clusters under this heading are „menstruation innovation,“ „green as the grinch,“ and „womanhood dichotomy.“ The first two are highly product-focused, appealing to Yoni’s strengths and realm of experience. The third category is concerned with the complex needs and social projections onto women and people with vulvas in general, as well as the resulting responsibility to address this issue consciously in the field of beauty. What became clear following the factor classification, however, was the importance of including the topic group „knowledge is power“ in each of the four clusters. Knowing that you and your body are normal, that you’re not alone in your experience is enormously validating and empowering. And, given the persistent lack of knowledge about female health and anatomy, a brand like Yoni also has an educational responsibility and opportunity.



„Vulva (The window)“ byNadia Nardelli



Identifying directions

Based on the four clusters, four corresponding directions for Yoni were developed.

To develop the four distinct directions, a methodology of the twelve brand archetypes as applied by The Young was used. This aided in clarifying Yoni’s role in its user’s life within the aforementioned themes and thus making it more evaluable.

Factor clusters

COMMUNITY	CYCLE CENTRIC
Radical inclusivity Varying experiences Knowledge is power	Health self efficacy Where the wild things are

POST TABOO	BEAUTY 2.0
Beyond neutral What binary Menstruation society Professional vulva	Menstruation innovation Green as the grinch The dichotomy of womanhood

Directions

CONNECTOR

The first direction, born from the cluster “community”, is dubbed „connector,“ and it acts as a sage in accordance with the brand personality archetypes. This means that if Yoni adopted this brand persona, they would focus on imparting wisdom, in-depth understanding, the pursuit of truth, and overall clarity. (Douglass, 2019) Yoni would enlighten through rapport-building, connection, and normalisation of conversation. A community platform, workshops, or learning tools are all possible product areas. This would also allow for collaboration with other educational brands, ultimately assisting people in exploring and better understanding themselves.

UNLOCKING THE CYCLE

The second direction, which emerged from the „cycle centric“ cluster, is dubbed „unlocking your cycle.“ Yoni takes on the archetypal hero’s personality in this direction. It takes mastery and courage to decode one’s own cycle and utilise it for one’s own benefit. Cycle planning tools, a cycling app, and self-care for cyclists are all available. By providing and accompanying its users with these tools, Yoni would assist them in realigning their lives holistically in an unprecedented way.

MENSTRUATION ACTIVIST

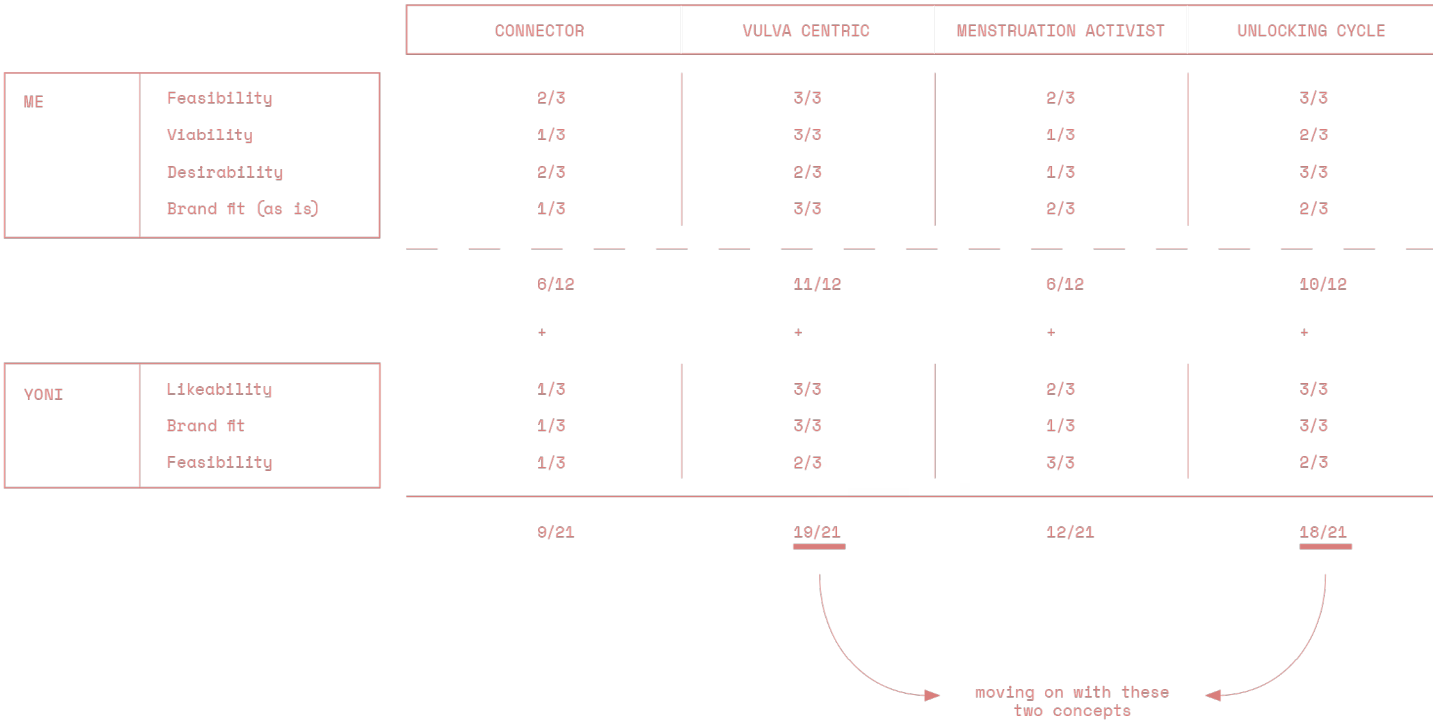
The third direction emanates from the cluster „post taboo.“ It is referred to as „the menstruation activist“ and is based on the rebellious brand personality archetype. The rebel is about liberation, about taking a progressive and courageous leadership role in order to bring about change. In the case of Yoni’s, it’s about furthering the societal conversation about menstruation, about eradicating stigma and advocating for social change. This can be accomplished, in part, through the visual impact of marketing tools and collaboration with significant partners (for example, to enforce the availability of period products in the workplace).

VULVA CENTRIC

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, a fourth direction emerged from the cluster „beauty 2.0“ and is dubbed „vulva centric.“ From the brand personality profiles’ perspective, this is a combination of the explorer and the creator. The explorer is concerned with liberty and self-sufficiency. The creator is all about originality and creativity. Thus, in this instance, it is about reclaiming a sense of agency in dealing with our vulvas. It’s about developing a healthier relationship with our bodies and doing so through the pursuit of superior products, vulva care, and vulva pleasure.

Choices

Each of the proposed directions embodies a distinct vision for Yoni’s future and thus addresses a variety of distinct issues. This was a deliberate choice, as it became clear, particularly following the lengthy research phase, that while there are numerous opportunities, there are also numerous socially entangled problems that a brand like Yoni cannot solve. They are frequently wicked problems that would require a more comprehensive, systematic, or structural intervention. If Yoni attempted to address everything, all focus would be lost, and the brand would become not only vague but also difficult for its users to understand.



Evaluating scenarios

To assess the four proposed development directions for Yoni, a model based on IDEO’s new business innovation model (IDEO, 2017) was used, which assesses aspects of desirability, feasibility, and viability. In addition, the brand’s congruence, or how significant a change in the brand would have to be in the future, was considered and evaluated. On the one hand, this was done based on previous research and, on the other hand, in consultation with Mariah, the company mentor. The direction suggestions

were checked for likeability, brand fit, and feasibility during this conversation. Following the concept evaluation, two of the four directions stood out with a significantly higher score - “vulva centric” and “unlocking your cycle”; both following the research evaluation and considering the discussion with the company side. Given that both concepts scored nearly identically, they were further developed from this point on.

Future ideas

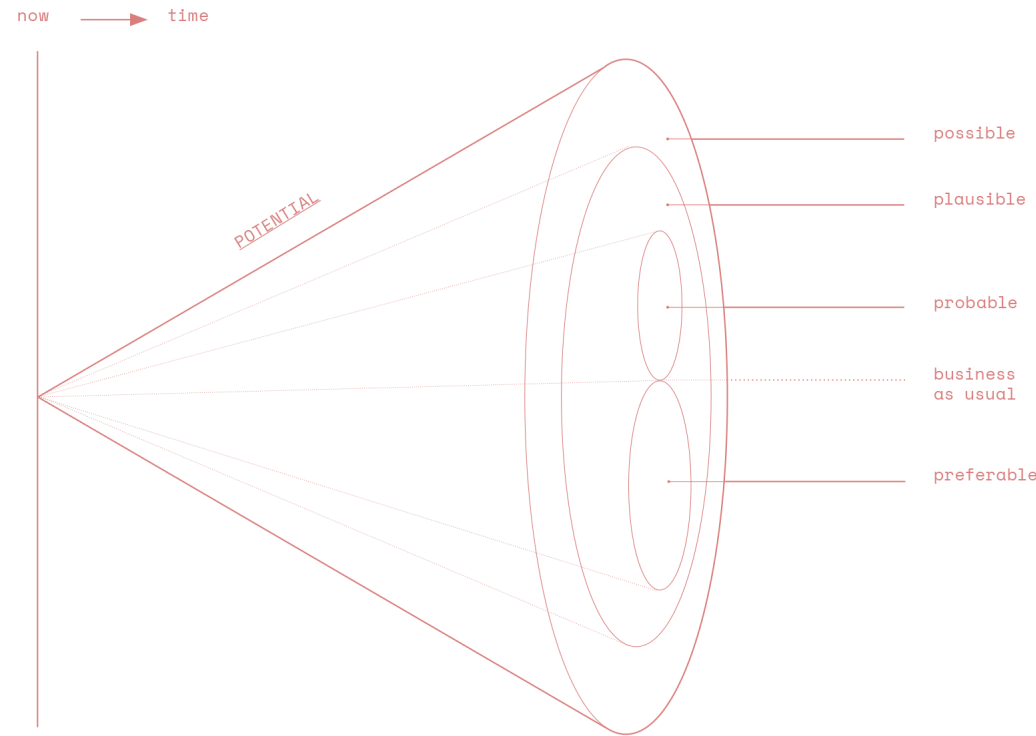
DOWN TO TWO

After narrowing the four directions down to two that were most promising and aligned with Yoni, vulva centric and unlocking your cycle, were pursued. To compare and evaluate the concepts within their respective realms, brand narratives were developed, mood boards were created, potential product portfolio additions or restructurings were demonstrated, and once again, it was determined which are the most pressing issues for users in this space and how Yoni can solve or address them. (Can be found in the appendices)

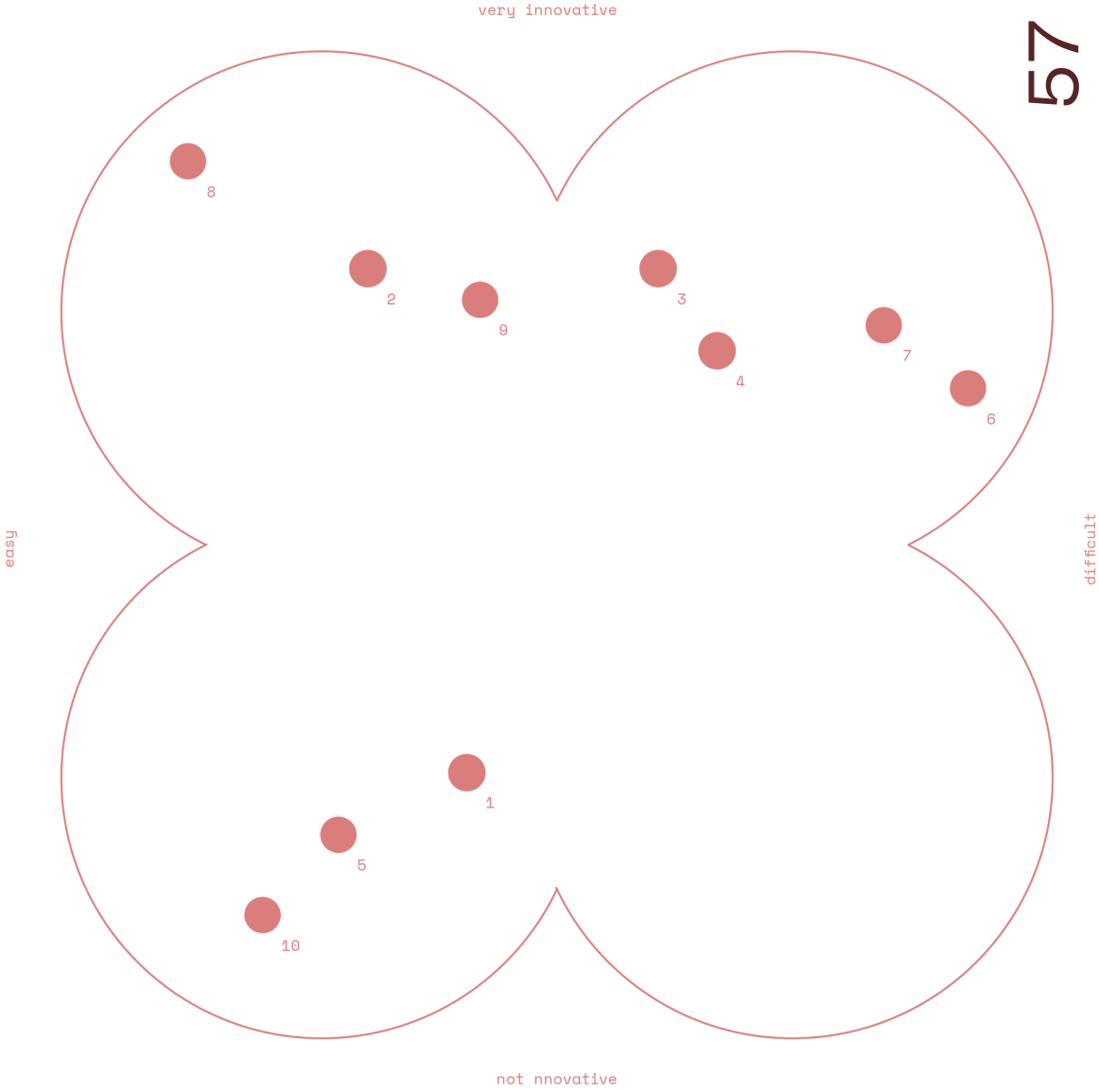
FUTURE FORWARD

Due to the fact that these explorations stretched not far enough into the future, a new approach was taken to investigate concepts further into the years

ahead. Following Voros’ model (Voros, 2003), attention was diverted from a probable to a preferable future vision. Three peer brainstorming sessions with four strategic design students, one architect, and one social designer were held for this purpose. These sessions lasted each approximately one hour and addressed the following questions: „How can a future (2030) look like where we truly care for our vulvas? And what could be an inspirational concept piece? „ and „How can a cycle centric future (2030) look like? And what could be an inspirational concept piece? The first session took place in person, the other two via a video call. After these meetings, ten promising ideas emerged. These ideas were at different levels of forward-looking and close to Yoni’s capabilities. To make the ideas tangible, each idea was presented with a title, a short excursion similar to existing concepts, and an explanation of what the idea is about, who it is aimed at, and why it is a good fit for Yoni.



Voros, 2003



Cycle unlocking	1	Reposition short film
	2	A cycle reset
	3	Cycle self development
	4	Next level cycle sync

Vulva care	5	It's me, your vulva
	6	Open source community
	7	AI vulva chat bot
	8	Intelligent vulva care
	9	Communication objects
	10	Physical space

Evaluation of ideas

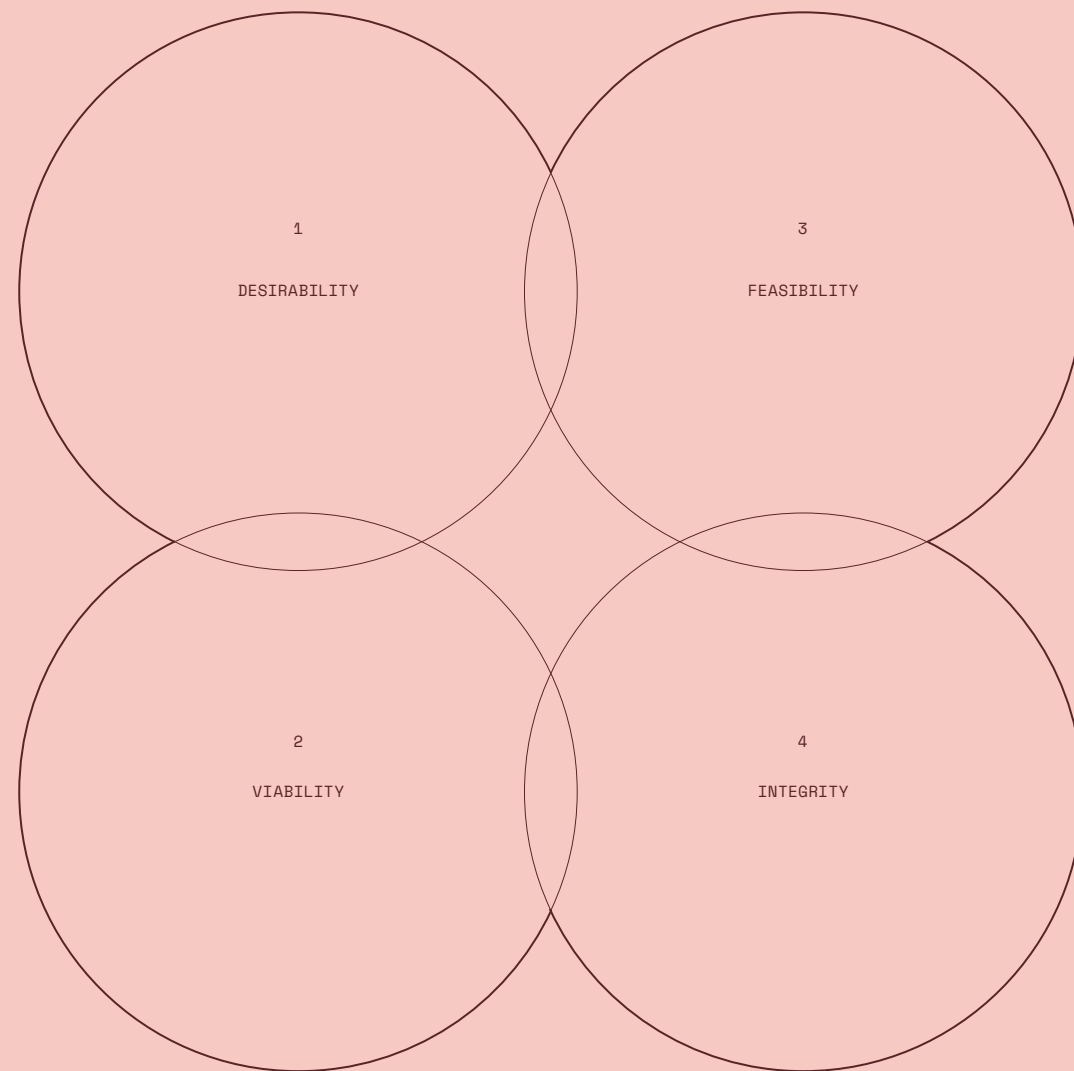
The two directions worked out were presented to the company contact together with the corresponding ideas, who then sorted them into a matrix with the axes of feasibility and impact. From this discussion, one very future-oriented idea in particular stood

out, „Intelligent vulva care“, which found the most resonance with both me and Mariah. It was at this point that the final decision was made to pursue the guiding idea of intelligent vulva care and thus the direction of vulva care.

FINAL EVALUATION

Following this determination, the direction for repositioning Yoni's was critically evaluated on the three dimensions of feasibility, desirability, and viability, as defined by IDEO's model (IDEO, 2017). Additionally, the model was expanded to include the integrity factor in accordance with the model of

the board of innovation (Shahbazi, 2020). Integrity takes into account the impact on society and the environment and strives to create products and businesses that have a positive impact on the future. This aim goes along with Yoni's brand core of wanting to change the femcare industry for the better.



C61

Desirability

At the desirability level, two fundamental questions should be addressed: „how will potential users learn about the new product or service?“ and secondly, „what motivates users to return?“

ATTENTION

On the one hand, people will become aware of the product via social media marketing channels, where Thinx's efforts might be regarded as excellent practice (Kenny & Koning, 2021). On the other hand, current products can be viewed as a platform for advertising via information inlay, and test wabs could potentially be featured in the shop among other Yoni products. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the website serves as an educational and promotional tool. Consumers are drawn in by their curiosity about their own bodies and a want to better comprehend, decipher, and support them.

RETURN

So what entices them to return? People's microbiomes naturally vary as they age, change contraceptives, or have increased needs while trying to conceive, which may prompt them to check their biome again. They may also repurchase products if they're satisfied with it, or seek another test to track their progress.

MET NEEDS

In general, the concept addresses a variety of functional and emotional needs: stability (in their physical well-being), protection (against imbalances, infections, and other health risks), comfort (not having to worry about an unhappy vulva), recognition (understanding what's going on), control (over one's own vulvovaginal health), autonomy (being able to figure out some things on one's own before consulting a physician), and novelty (being able to figure out some things on one's own (finding out something new, trying something new).

Numerous factors support the deployment of intelligent vulva care at the business model level.

USERS

On the one hand, the target group is broader than Yoni's thus far, at least in terms of the inclusion of people with vulvas who are past perimenopause and those who do not have a period. Additionally, it is to be expected that with each hormonal shift in the user's life, the vuvlvovaginal status quo will be re-tested, necessitating a new product composition. Additionally, care items are consumables that must be used and restocked after a certain time of usage. As hormone fluctuations and care requirements are biological anatomical processes, they remain consistent over time. On the negative side, in order for the usage of a care series to be regarded, a new habit in the user's life must be created. To effect this transformation, there must be a prior shift in understanding of the need for improved vulva care, which must be communicated upfront via Yoni.

EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Basically, a general structure is already in place on which to build for the future. Yoni has a place in supermarkets and drugstores in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany and the UK, which could be expanded with another product. In addition, Yoni has had a webshop since September 2021, which offers products beyond the range in drugstores and supermarkets, and last but not least, Yoni has active and consistently maintained social media channels that can be further expanded as a means of communication.

ORGANISATION

On an operational level, Yoni must undergo an internal transformation; in the coming years, Yoni should first invest in its innovation capacity. This includes not only additional budget, but also new, albeit advisory, staff with expertise in product innovation, programming, gynaecology, and skin care. These new capacities are needed to shift the public perception of Yoni towards a technologically advanced care brand that truly represents leadership in the market. Additionally, internal processes need to

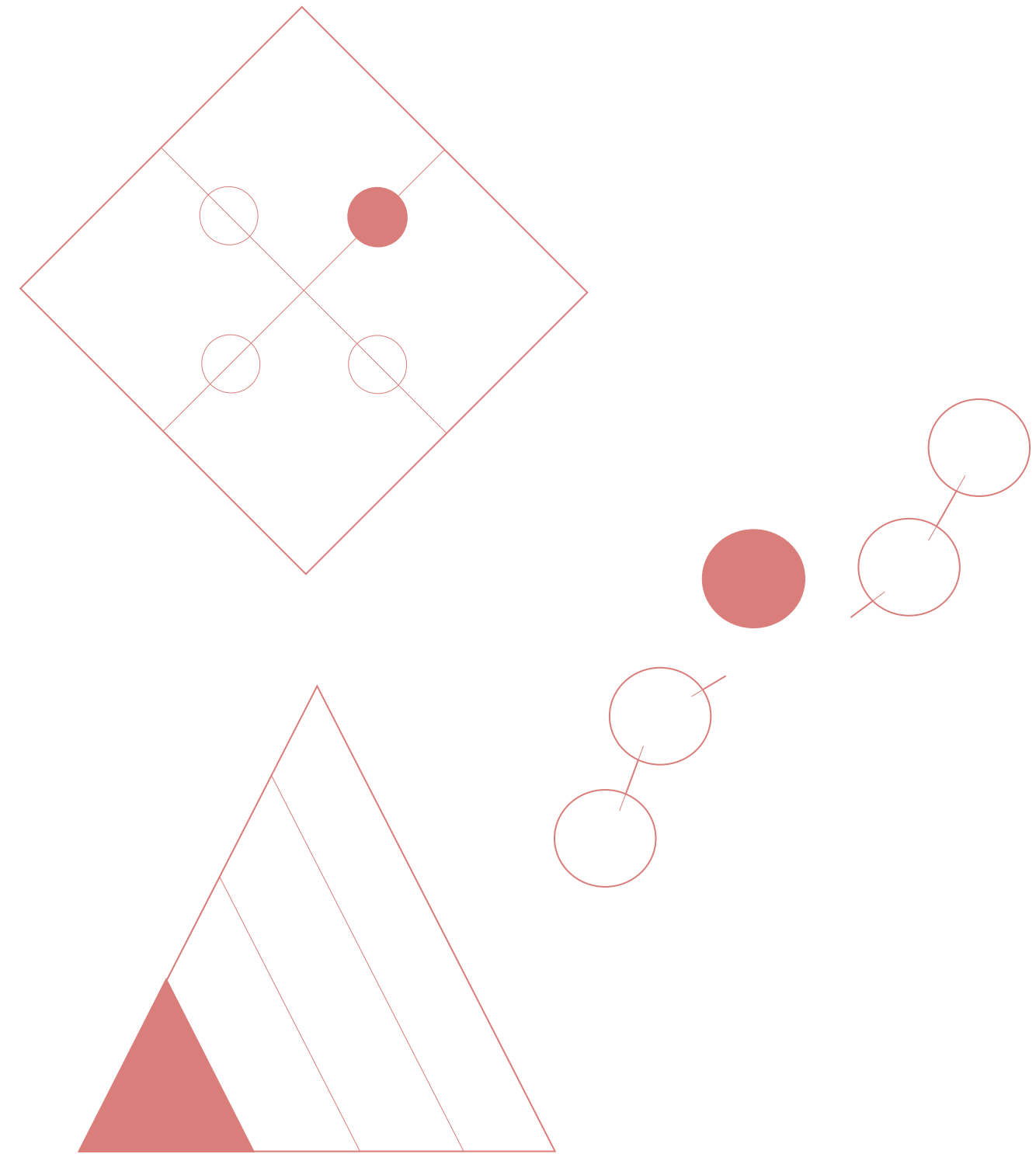
PRICING

Another crucial factor is the current price of vaginal microbiome testing, which vary from \$129 to \$149 and include comprehensive microbiome decoding and suggestions based on the results (Evvy, n.d.; Juno Bio, n.d.). It is likely that less extensive testing is sufficient since less specific reports or metrics are required for the concept, which might result in a cheaper price point. Additionally, because decoding the vaginal microbiota is a relatively new technology or service, this pricing is likely to continue to decline over the next three to five years. However, because the future concept remains more than a skincare line, but an insight into the customer's physiological processes, the product is more expensive than generic cream formulas currently in the market. As a result, it must be predicted that, as long as microbiome testing does not significantly decrease in price, it will remain a product accessible to people with moderate-to-high incomes.

ligned to a shared vision and therefore be streamlined to allow for a quicker response time to consumer feedback, ensuring consistently superior quality and service. Furthermore, collaborating with a partner who specialises in testing and related processing is a viable and probably necessary option for expediting the implementation process.

TECHNICAL

On a technical level, the concept of intelligent vulva care generally hardly presents difficulty, as similar services (microbiome testing and personalised skin care) already exist and could serve as inspiration or a partner. Only a more detailed scientific decoding of the vulvovaginal microbiome, including its effects on overall health status, remains an ongoing process that Yoni must monitor, but may also offer additional opportunities for intervention.



LESS WASTE

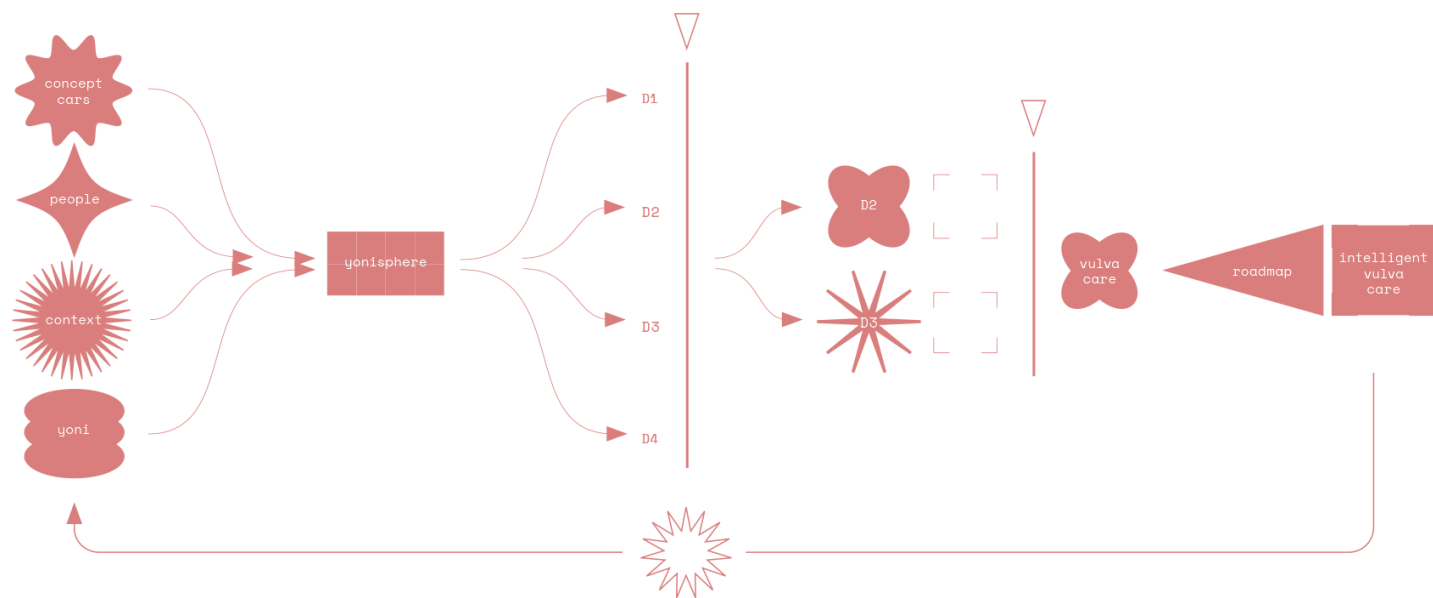
On a societal level, the intelligent vulva care product concept would eliminate a gap in the supply chain of people with vulvas and thus, by eliminating the trial-and-error approach to finding effective and suitable vulva care products, would not only result in less frustration in our relationship with our vulvas, but would also result in less wasteful, more effective consumption.

SOCIETY

Positive experiences and knowledge learned about one's own body can also contribute to the de-stigmatization of vulvovaginal health dialogues. This, in turn, may encourage people to seek medical attention sooner and to speak up and address medical issues with friends and family members.

ORGANISATION

Finally, but certainly not least, developing a vision for Yoni's employees can infuse their daily work with new meaning, providing a common purpose that binds the organisation together.



C65

Back to research

CONTEXT

The context research showed huge potential in tapping into the direction of vulva care, it could be a vessel to talk about all the factors raised in these categories.

It's about sharing varying experiences and finding our people, about providing users with the tools to have real agency in their vulvovaginal health, to break down shame and move past taboo topics, to offer inclusive care beyond the gender binary, to use the beauty industry as inspiration and vehicle, to reconnect with our natural self, our inner strength and to finally gather and share all the empowering knowledge found.

PEOPLE

Within the conducted interviews further arguments for choosing the direction of vulva care were found. First, people were open to and excited to finally talk about vulva related topics as they felt like it was something relevant to them and valuable to talk about and stressed how nice and rare it was to have the space to address this.

People were eager to know more about their bodies and I kept being in the position to share knowledge I had acquired in my research.

Around half the people I talked to felt shameful about their vulva, how it looked, how well it could perform in heterosexual encounters, they tended to feel not normal about what they were experiencing but also that it's something on themselves - which was not at

all true when looking at the available studies.

The experience of pain and discomfort as part of female life was considered so normal, pain during sex, recurring pain due to UTI's, yeast infections, pain on a daily basis due to vulvodynia and vaginismus - something definitely worth addressing.

They also told me about their experiences of trying to find help and how difficult it could be when dealing with vulvovaginal issues, it can take a really long time to figure out what is going on and what helps and some felt pretty alone in this journey

CONCEPT CARS

To return to the underlying question „What can Yoni's concept car of the future look like?“, it is worth revisiting the criteria outlined in the chapter on concept cars.

Basically, a real transformation of the concept idea and the related roadmap still requires a transformation of the concept into a prototype. This includes a website and digital product prototype as well as a film that illustrates the product, the values associated with it and the way to get there. Once the prototypes are in place, it is really a design-led approach of researching the future, where visual synthesis, prototyping, and storytelling play an important role, used to explore technologies and styling while also communicating a probable and preferable future. Furthermore, it does embody balance between innovation and branding and therefore aids an enhancement of the brand's image within the company.



37

C7

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has described the process of moving from the research phase to a final forward-looking direction and concept idea for Yoni. This was done particularly in collaboration with Mariah Mansvelt Beck, the founder of the company, who embodies the role of inspiration and strategy within Yoni.

It must be mentioned at this point that the final direction of vulva care is born out of the context of this project and the current state of science. On the one hand, it is conceivable that in a more co-creative approach, which was difficult due to time constraints, availability of staff and my external role, a different directional preference might have been

established with a wider range of staff in the company at an earlier stage.

Furthermore, especially in the research on the alternative direction towards cycle orientation, it became clear that there was a lack of data in this area that would allow Yoni to have an informed impact in the lives of its users. And since Yoni does not have the capacity to conduct its own scientific studies, deciphering the cycle is still a topic of the distant future. The timing was a little different for the topic of vulva care, where new scientific papers and findings have become available, especially in recent years, making this direction all the more exciting because it is at the cutting edge of the times.



Within this chapter Yoni's new trajectory and a guiding future concept will be finalised. It will be discussed how Yoni will need to undergo a process of rejuvenation and how this will influence their positioning within the femcare market. Furthermore, the future concept will be discussed in

detail. Using the future concept as a beacon, the adjustment of Yoni's brand DNA will follow and be concluded by a three horizon plan on how Yoni might arrive there

D

Developing

D1

A NEW DOMAIN

NEED FOR BRAND REVITALISATION

Yoni is undergoing a brand revitalization as a result of the decision to move toward Vulva Care and the associated future concept of intelligent vulva care. As previously stated, the need for this is already rooted in the conception of this project, with Yoni's belief that the field of menstrual products is not necessarily its future. This has been confirmed in its validity, among other things, by market research, which clearly demonstrated that this market is characterised by incremental but extremely fast innovation cycles, dominated by well-known brands such as o.b. which invest heavily in product innovation. This market is occasionally disrupted by new startups and their own innovations. Yoni is unable to keep up with this pace and is no longer competitive in the short or long term as a result of the gradual but inevitable loss of its differentiator, a 100% organic cotton product. Yoni will now be distinguished primarily by its communication skills, product design, and the brand reputation it has established thus far. But as a market study conducted via Yoni, only around 30% of the people knew about Yoni within the dutch market. And other brands such as Einhorn are coming into the market with a much louder communication approach and noticeability. As a result, brand rejuvenation and a new communication trajectory are imperative. Over the course of the development, the manner in which this would be accomplished was determined through close collaboration with input from the corporate contact.

A BEACON FOR YONI

The goal of these projects was to find a direction that would resonate within Yoni and serve as a beacon, as well as a direction that would achieve positive change in the lives of users and thus have resonance and relevance with respect to the conducted contextual research. This intersection is precisely defined and explored by redefining and exploring what vulva care can mean in the future and how it can be taught. And now, while the European market for vulva care products is not yet saturated, product innovations are gradually creeping in from other markets, and while even in a society as open as the Netherlands, there is still a need for knowledge transfer, is the ideal and pressing time for Yoni to rejuvenate. Aside from external factors, Yoni has changed internally as a company. The company has matured, striving to be a leader in femcare and looking for the lens to fill this role.

BRAND CONSISTENCY

Of course, brand consistency in execution is a goal

in brand theory literature (Keller & Swaminathan, 2019; Pittard et al., 2007; Polonsky & Jevons, 2009), and the effect of brand consistency on credibility as perceived by users, but it is also seen as necessary to change tactical trajectory over time in order to manage brand equity (Keller & Swaminathan, 2019), especially when environmental changes force the brand to adjust as described (2018).

THE NEW POSITIONING

Yoni's new positioning shifts from „We unbox all things femininity - vulvas, periods, pee leaks, sexuality, gender, hormones, pregnancy, childbirth“ to „a growing collection of sustainable femcare that supports every stage of reproductive life“ by offering „a growing collection of sustainable femcare that supports every stage of reproductive life.“ „For people with vulva, Yoni offers topical vulva care products in a sophisticated design that support a healthy vaginal microbiome while alleviating shame and discomfort and giving people the control and insight to feel confident and empowered in themselves and their bodies.“

A NEW FOCUS

First and foremost, the new positioning is much more focused, while also allowing for a wide range of topics to be addressed. Yoni is also inclusive for people with vulvas who do not identify as female, trans women with neo vulvas, and people who are not interested in their reproductive health or are not fertile, as the language is gender-neutral, in keeping with the zeitgeist discussed in the contextual research. Furthermore, the new positioning statement focuses on addressing and narrowing down a variety of issues that people with vulvas are concerned about.

D1.1

Positioning statement

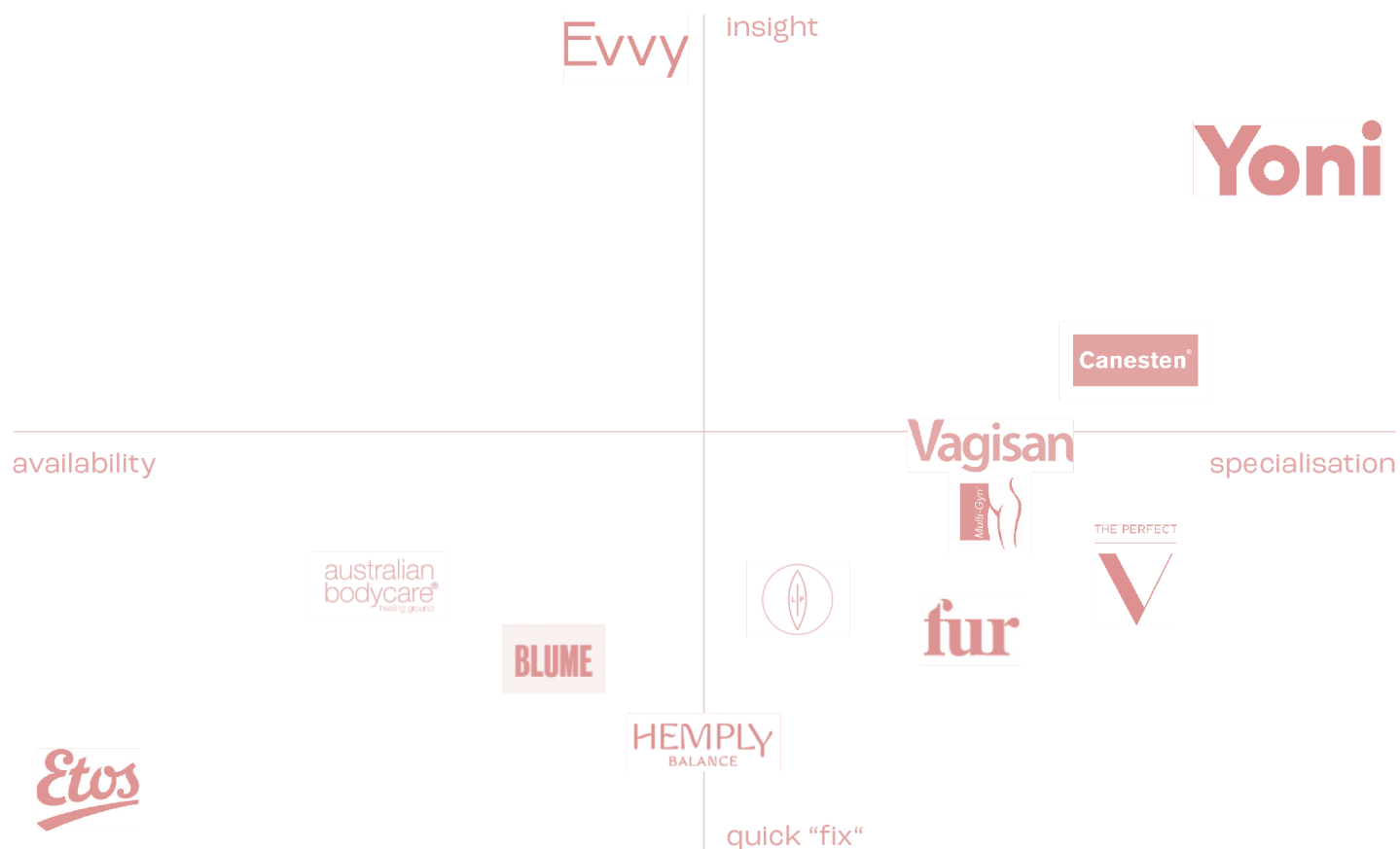
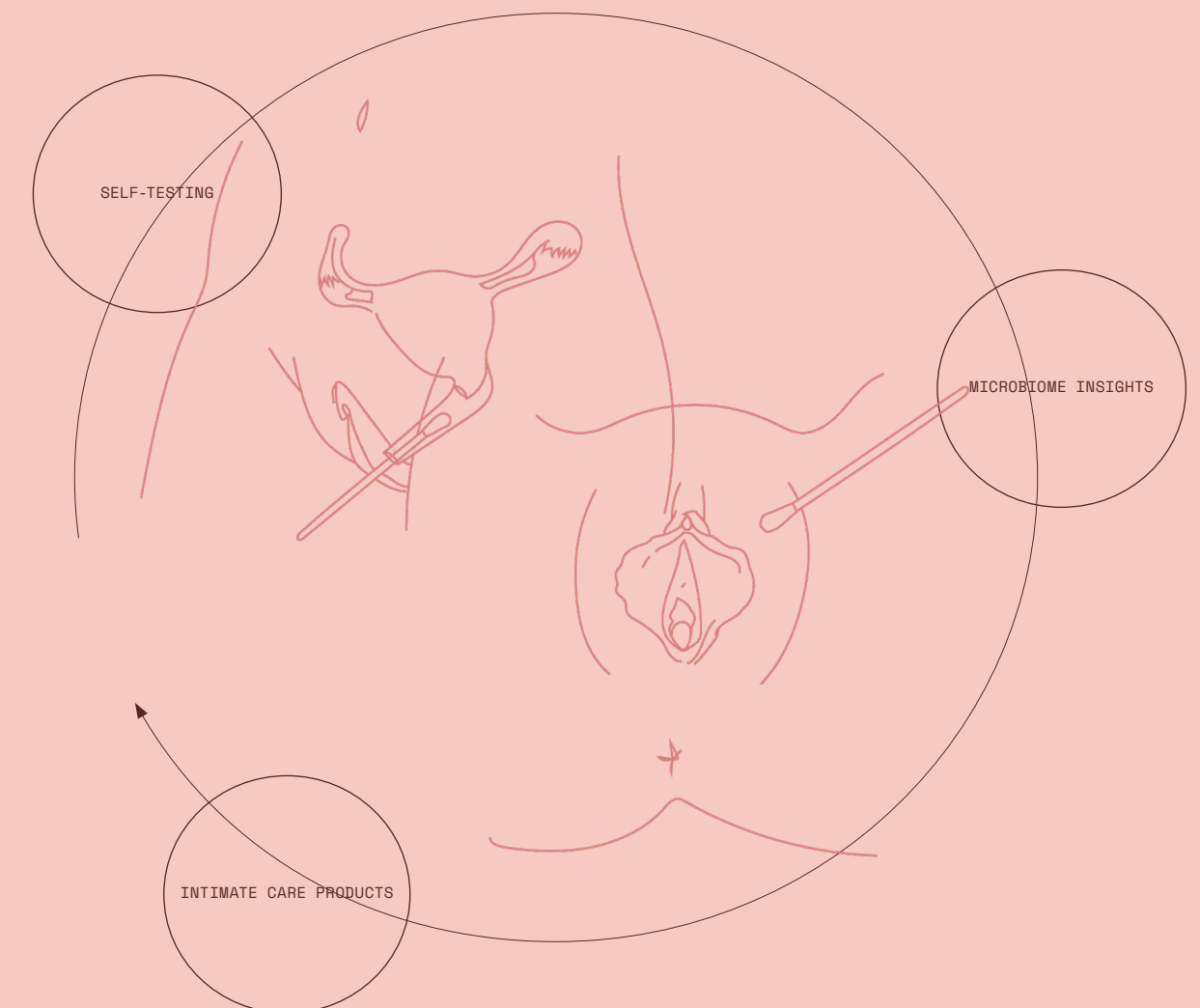
CONCEPT PRODUCT

„Yoni care“ is the combination of a vulvovaginal self-test and online questionnaire with the intelligent translation of the results into a care product formulation consisting of content modules. Using the self-test, a sample of the vulvar and vaginal microbiome is taken, which is then decoded in the laboratory and thus provides insight into the PH value, whether lactobacillus are in the majority in the vaginal flora or lactobacillus and actinobacteria in the vulvar flora and how high the remaining microorganism diversity is in the vaginal environment.

Based on these insights, users can be given a recommendation as to whether they should seek medical help, whether their body needs support from a care product (and thus the incorporation of an active ingredient) or whether the primary concern is to protect and maintain a healthy balance.

In addition, the questionnaire can be used to express preferences for the consistency of the products, the richness of these and possible intolerances or overarching skin conditions like eczema, which in turn have an influence on the end product.

The main active ingredients can be prebiotics (or oestrogen if the user is open to local hormonal treatment, but this ingredient needs further research). The positive effect of both prebiotics and oestrogen on the microbiome have been claimed within the medical community (Chee et al., 2020). But further potential ingredients need to be researched and discussed with health care professionals. It's a product for users who recently went through a hormonal change, for users that keep having imbalances with their vulvovaginal flora and people who are sick of having to go through a process of trial and error with their intimate care products.



D12

Competition axis

Admittedly, the competition axis is correspondingly speculative due to the positioning of the concept about five years in the future. Within five years, the market is expected to change. However, as these are not foreseeable, the current brands and corresponding offers are used for contextualisation. In the area of vulva care, two axes can be noted:

on the one hand, the specialisation of care for very specific complaints or generalised care. The other axis is about how much insight the brands offer users into the functioning of their bodies. As shown in the diagram, Yoni positions itself with the future concept at a high level on the axis of insight and at a high level with the specialisation of care for the user.

The microbiome

At this point it is worthwhile to gain an insight into the world of the microbiome. What most people are probably more familiar with from public discussion is the gut microbiome.

WHAT IS A MICROBIOME?

This describes a community of microorganisms that live in the human digestive tract and have attracted public attention, especially in recent years. The microorganisms create communities that act as a protective barrier, a membrane, between external sources (in this case food) and the body’s blood stream. The immense influence that our digestive tract has on our overall health is now recognized by both scientists (Valdes, 2018) and the public. A healthy microbiome protects our body, a distrubed microbiome endangers the body’s health. The microbiome researcher James Kinross, who was interviewed in a Guardian article (Seal, 2021), contextualises the importance and related implications of the digestive tract microbiome, “The gut microbiome is the most important scientific discovery for human healthcare in recent decades [...].”.

THE VULVOVAGINAL MICROBIOME

It’s not far-fetched at this point to wonder if the vulvovaginal microbiome might hold similar keys to specifically female health and whether it could be the next big discovery. On a quest to close the gender gap in research, scientists have already begun to explore effects on the success of conception, the protection of a pregnancy, and a damaged vulvovaginal microbiome makes it more susceptible to bacterial vaginosis, yeast infections and sexually transmitted infections (Amabebe & Anumba, 2018; Banga, 2021; Chee et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021) which has been described by Gupta et al. (2019) as “a broad, fast-moving, contentious and complex research area”.

VAGINAL MICROBIOME COMPOSITION

Gupta et al. (2019) explicitly provide a deeper insight into the composition of the vaginal microbiome and the factors that influence it. For the future concept, the composition of the vaginal microbiome after puberty and after menopause is of particular interest. According to the diagram, a healthy vaginal environment is basically an acidic pH value, which can vary around 4.5, and this is primarily characterised by the dominance of lactobacilli, which in turn leads to an acidic pH value. Lactobacilli function as a barrier to potentially dangerous microorganisms. Other microorganisms that can be found in healthy environments are streptococci, enterovacteriaceae, s. epidermidis enterococci, ureaplasma, gardnerella

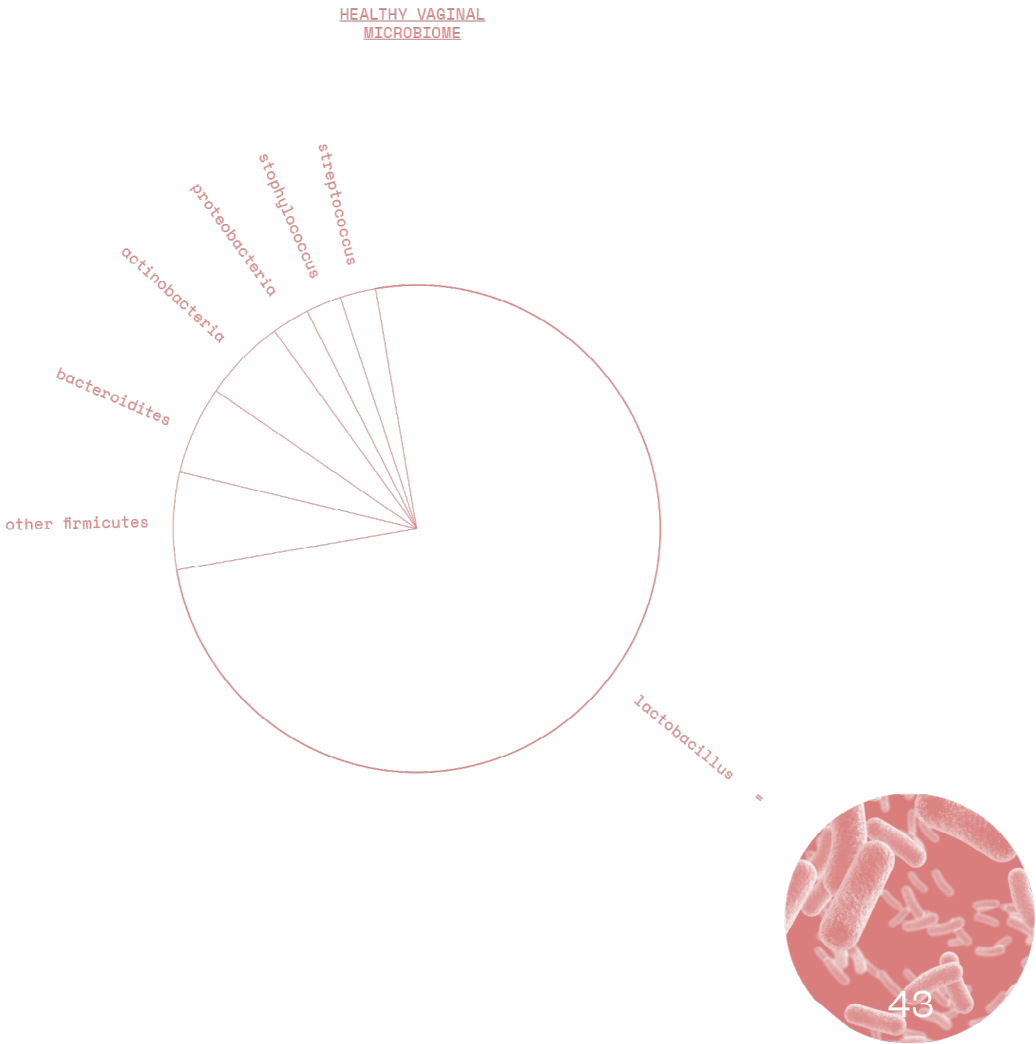
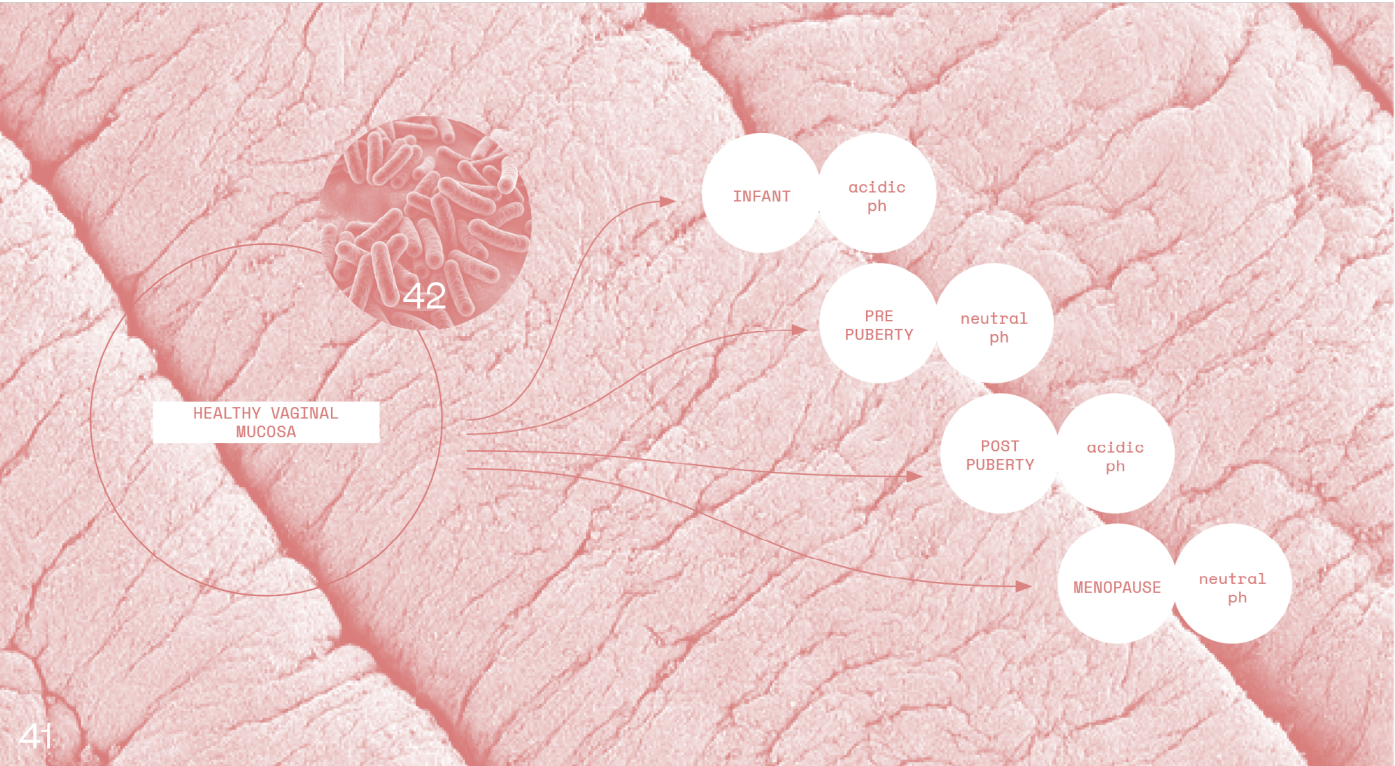
and mycoplasma. After menopause and the associated hormonal changes, the drop in oestrogen levels, the lactobacilli in particular are in strong decline. Lactobacilli are basically five different types, each with different strengths and weaknesses in defending a healthy harmonious vaginal microbiome. But in summary, it’s about strengthening the lactobacilli. And this is demonstrably possible through probiotic and prebiotic supplementation. (Gupta et al., 2019)

MICROBIOME SENSORING

The call by Guota et al. (2019) for a biosensor to make the detection of vaginal microorganisms more accessible in the future is also exciting at this point, they describe this need as follows:“Diagnostic methods used for detection of several vaginal microbial communities [...] are mostly laboratory-based procedures which are costly, time-consuming, laborious and require highly skilled practitioners. Thus, it is necessary to design rapid, portable, real-time, low-cost, point-of-care (POC) and sensitive microbial detection tools. Current research scenario has entered into the generation of biosensors [...] and lab-on-chip platforms [...] owing to the recent developments in nanotechnology and VLSI (very large scale integration).”. Imagine what such a device could mean for the (admittedly far) future of home testing and thus the future of yoni.

VULVAR MICROBIOME COMPOSITION

A little less is known about the vulva microbiome, but in 2021 Pagan et al. conducted a systematic review of the evidence to date, showing that the vulva microbiome is distinct from that of the surrounding skin, the digestive tract and the vaginal environment. According to the studies on which the work is based, a healthy vulva microbiome is particularly characterised by the majority of firmicutes (which also include the previously mentioned lactobacilli) and actinobacteria. In addition, because the vulva is potentially exposed to harmful pathogens through its proximity to the anus and other external factors, it has a more acidic pH of 3.8 to 4.2 (Banga, 2021).





What this means for the conceptual product is as follows; since the environment of the vulva and the vagina are different, it is worthwhile to do two smears. In the case of the vulva microbiome, the aim is to test whether the pH is in a good range and whether firmicutes and actinobacteria are in the majority, as this indicates a healthy flora, as already mentioned. In the vaginal environment, the aim is

to test whether the pH is in the normal range and whether the Labctobacilli are in the majority. In addition, it can be tested how high the remaining diversity of microorganisms is, which should be rather low. There are five test values that can give users an insight into the status quo of their vulvovaginal microbiome.

Test results of the vaginal swab				Test results of the vulvar swab	
Your PH		Your lactobacillus level looks ...	Your lactobacillus level looks ...	Your PH	Your lactobacillus level looks ...
Information levers	On the acidic side	There's plenty, so no worries	Low, all good	On the acidic side	In majority, all good
	On the acidic side	Just on the border, let's support them	Medium, this may be causing some issues for you	On the acidic side	Just on the border, let's support them
	On the acidic side	They are in minority, we should address this	High, we should address this	On the acidic side	They are in minority, we should address this
Care consequences	Match to acidity level	Add probiotics to cream (different intensities)	Add probiotics to cream (different intensities)	Match to acidity level	Suggest different cleaning routine and protective barrier cream
	Or suggest seeing a doctor if other symptoms are there	Or suggest seeing a doctor		Or suggest seeing a doctor if other symptoms are there	

D23

What it isn't

What Yoni's care products and microbiome testing cannot do is replace medical care. It may be that the results of the test indicate that a medical professional, such as a gynaecologist, needs to be consulted to treat infections such as bacterial vaginosis or STI with antibiotics. As this piece of information can be frightening for users, it is important to clarify at this point what it could be, how it can be (easily) treated and that there is no cause for concern if consulted in a timely manner. For this reason, Yoni must be careful to communicate this product as a preventive measure to protect a healthy vuvlovaginal flora.

D24

What users get

What users ultimately receive is an analysis of the composition of their vulvovaginal microbiome and the associated care recommendation (whether an improved care routine is enough or whether they need to seek medical assistance). On the other hand, users can put together a customised vulvovaginal care routine consisting of a daily moisturiser, wash lotion and nourishing lubricant. The care products can be personalised according to ingredients, richness, desired consistency and with regard to other skin conditions such as eczema. Finally, the packaging of the products is labelled with the customer's name.

User experience

AWARENESS

Below you can see the future customer journey of the concept product. Across the steps shown here, some of the steps need to be looked at in more detail. First, there is the product's biggest hurdle at the beginning, a communication campaign that explains what the vuvlovaginal microbiome is about and what makes the products based on it different. This has to be done through clear concrete language so that no misunderstandings happen. It is about care products that are made for YOUR vulva. Only the best for your vulva. For a healthy microbiome, for well-being and comfort, every day.

CONSIDERATION

When users are triggered by this information, Yoni is seen as the brand that offers this revolution in care and has built trust and reputation with its users up to this point through previous campaigns, products and interactive educational content. Yoni is a brand that stands for bringing vulva care forward through smart, quality, transparent and visually appealing digital and physical products. This story again underlines the importance of vulva care. It is also interesting to note that as the number of users grows, a growing data set could be accumulated, which in turn could be used to get to know customers better and tailor products and marketing efforts to them.

DECISION

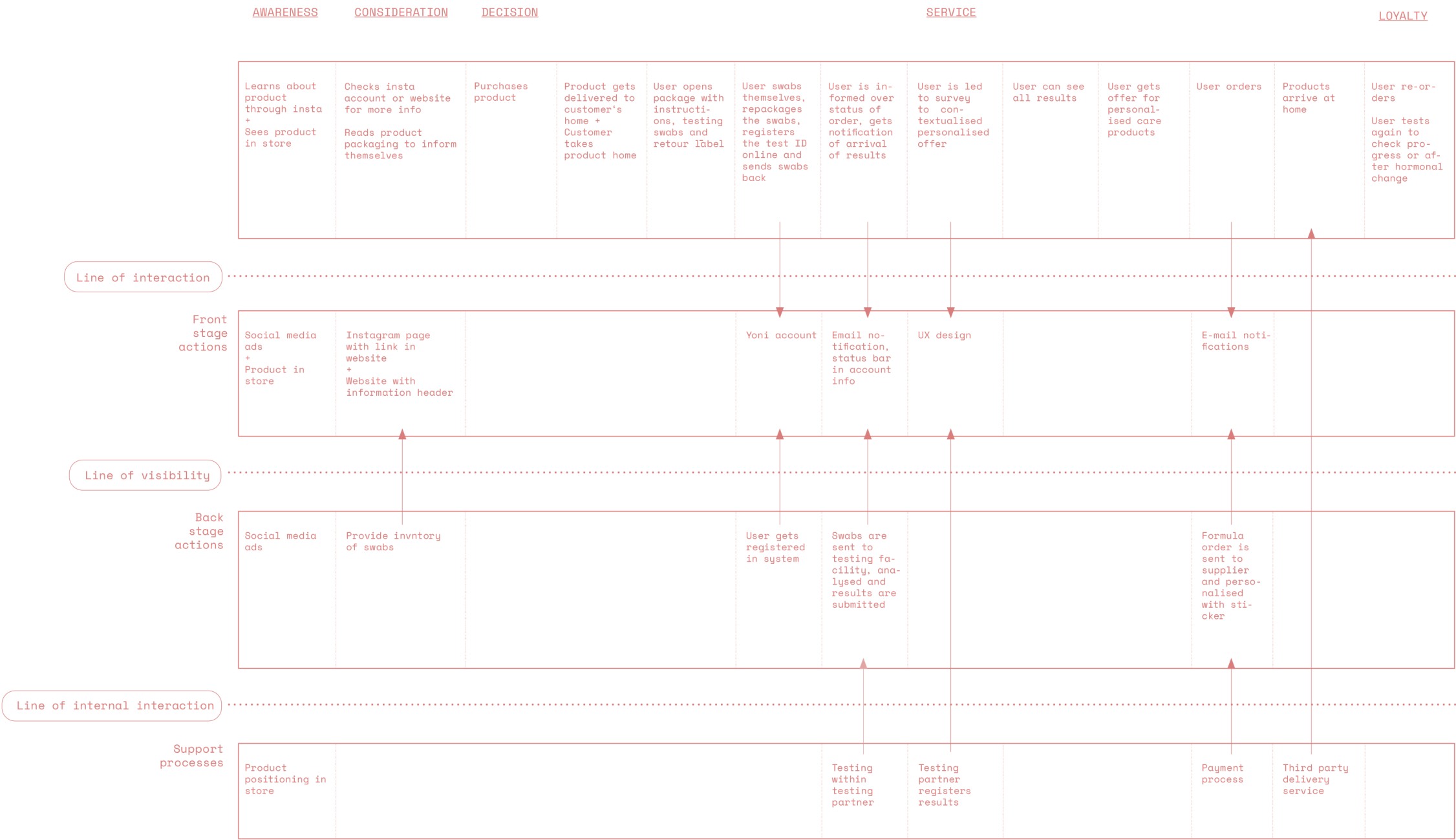
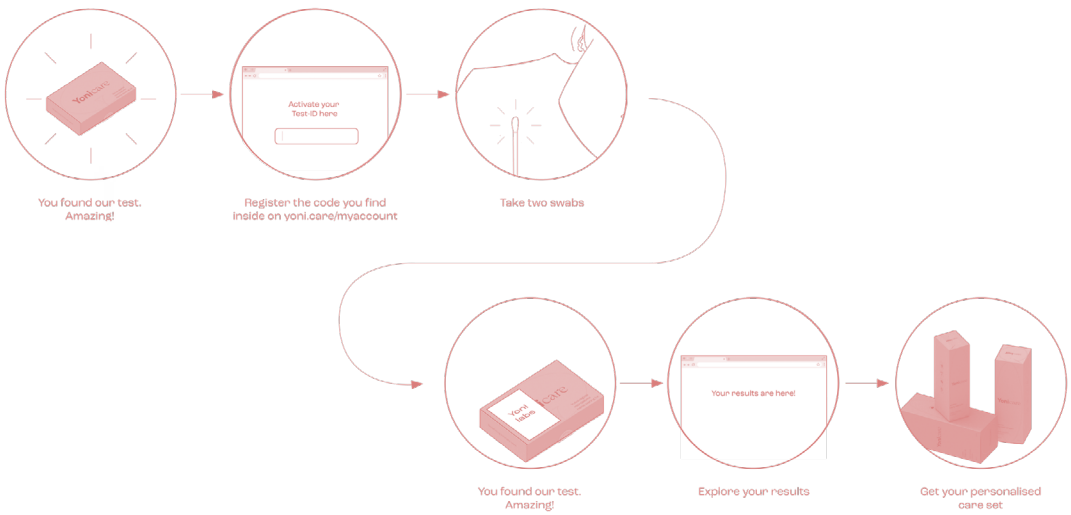
The quiz that the user has to fill out after sending in the swabs should also be looked at more closely. On the one hand, criteria such as age must be given, as the microbiome differs depending on whether the person is at reproductive age or in menopause. Then, it must be clarified whether the person is undergoing hormone treatment, such as testosterone treatment for trans men.

SERVICE

For the personalisation of care products, various aspects must also be queried, such as allergies, whether skin complaints (such as dry skin) exist, how often the user plans to use the product (to determine the product size) and others. Finally, the user must be shown how the skincare products are formulated, and to convey trust and transparency, there must be a strong focus on explaining the ingredients one by one in understandable terms, where they come from, what they do in the product and how they help. Finally, an explanation of the ideal skincare routine is included in the packaging of the skincare products.

LOYALTY

After three to four weeks, an email is sent to the customer to ask about their experience so far and also to check on their progress regarding their vulvovaginal well-being.



D4

YONI 2.0

D41

Brand DNA

BRAND COHERENCE

Brand coherence, according to Beverland (2018), is about finding a balance between the three aspects of a brand’s DNA: positioning, personality, and vision. Yoni is about social change, with a novel focus on vulva well-being and proper care. It’s about dismantling taboos through knowledge transfer and providing tools that allow users to explore themselves. As a result, it is critical to take on a previously unfilled role in the vulva care chain at the personality level. It’s about being a trusted leader who boldly drives the conversation while also being a friend and empathising with people who are ashamed of their bodies, their level of knowledge, and so on. It’s about expressing „I (Yoni) have looked into this for you (the user) and found exciting things I’d like to show you, I’ll meet you wherever you are and we’ll do it together and with the laugh here and there to relieve tension.“

BRAND RELEVANCE

Yoni can use the revitalisation of the brand to draw attention to a gap in the user’s life and then fill it, based on the context and user research conducted

previously. Yoni can fill a knowledge gap by engaging users in meaningful ways and empowering them with information, resulting in a culture of assertiveness around vulvovaginal wellness advocacy. Yoni can be the first point of contact for people who want to change their vulvovaginal health relationship. As a result, the adapted brand DNA is linked to a variety of contextual factors and blind spots revealed during user interviews. A quote from an interviewee exemplifies this realisation: “ [about her vulva] I’m not doing the best I could, I’m really neglecting her. [...] I would love to have the vulva emphasised as part of your body, something that needs to be addressed. You have to personify it, it’s like your little friend, your pet, that you do things for and to. You can’t neglect it.”

BRAND FIT

Brand DNA is a good fit for the concept product because it is the ideal partner in the process of decoding and nurturing the vulvovaginal microbiome. The knowledge that the microbiome is out of balance can be alarming, so it’s critical that Yoni stays close to the user and communicates that this is a problem that can be solved (together) and that it’s a reason to act, not to be concerned.

Guiding principles

As Yoni we are...

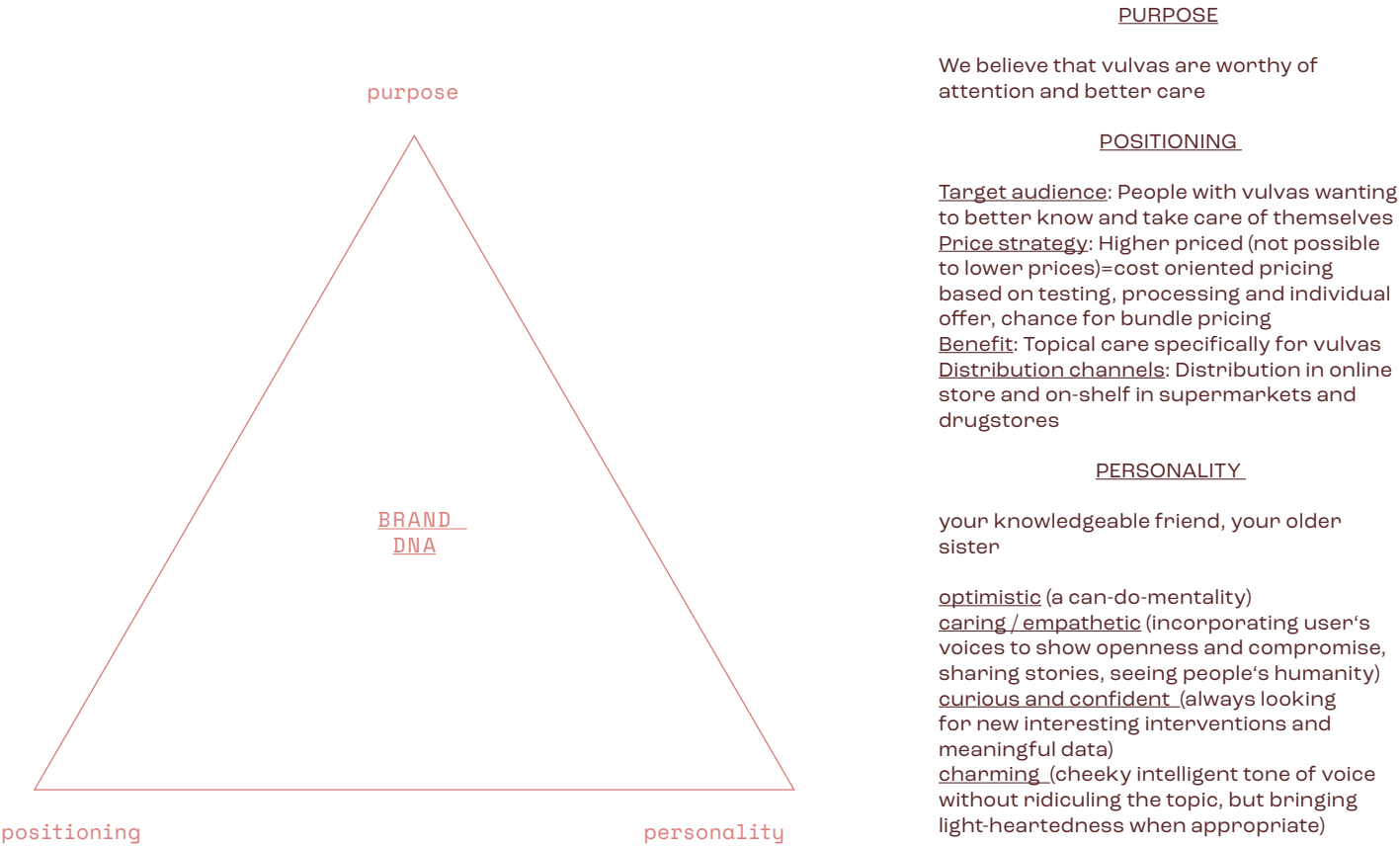
Transparent // This is where Yoni started and we want to continue to offer our users the transparency they deserve.
Curious // We embrace our natural drive to learn, explore and find ways to share our insights and the joy of curiosity.

Empathetic // To listen to one’s body means being sensitive and conscious of oneself. Our bodies are wonderful and worth exploring, we cherish them and nourish our relationship with them. We practice self compassion.

Straightforward // We are proud to say it how it is, use straightforward language and leave ridiculous euphemisms behind.

Judgement free // We respect and include the reality of different levels of knowledge, experiences and comfort zones.

Courageous // It takes courage to change trajectory and it takes courage to change the world. We keep pushing ourselves and embrace change.



Did you know that not only do no two vulvas look the same, but they are in fact incredibly diverse and unique? They are sensitive, complex, transformative, and capable of incredible things.

But until a few years ago, they were chosen to remain a mystery. Clitorises weren't found, depicted in anatomical books and denied as the female sex organ. And their vulvas were bombarded with perfumed and chemically enhanced products or even surgically altered to shame and deny their naturally ingenious design. Really talking about what goes on between our legs is something we do far too seldom, leading to a lack of not only dialogue but general knowledge, and a sense of shame that can prevent people from taking appropriate care of their health and wellbeing.

We believe that it is long overdue for a societal change, a shift in attention, and a movement towards clarity and transparency. We believe that it is time that we declare our vulvas worthy of attention and adequate care.

Beyond products, we want to redefine the concept of true care in a holistic way and be the go-to platform for vulvovaginal wellness topics. It's about converging available information to make it accessible, explorable and actionable.

As a community, we want to tell each other's stories, share our experiences, and work toward a more open and self-determined approach to our bodies.

We want to address often taboo issues that many people with vulvas face and provide tools for symptom relief, effective communication guidance and the appropriate gentle care.

Brand narrative

D42

D43

ROADMAP

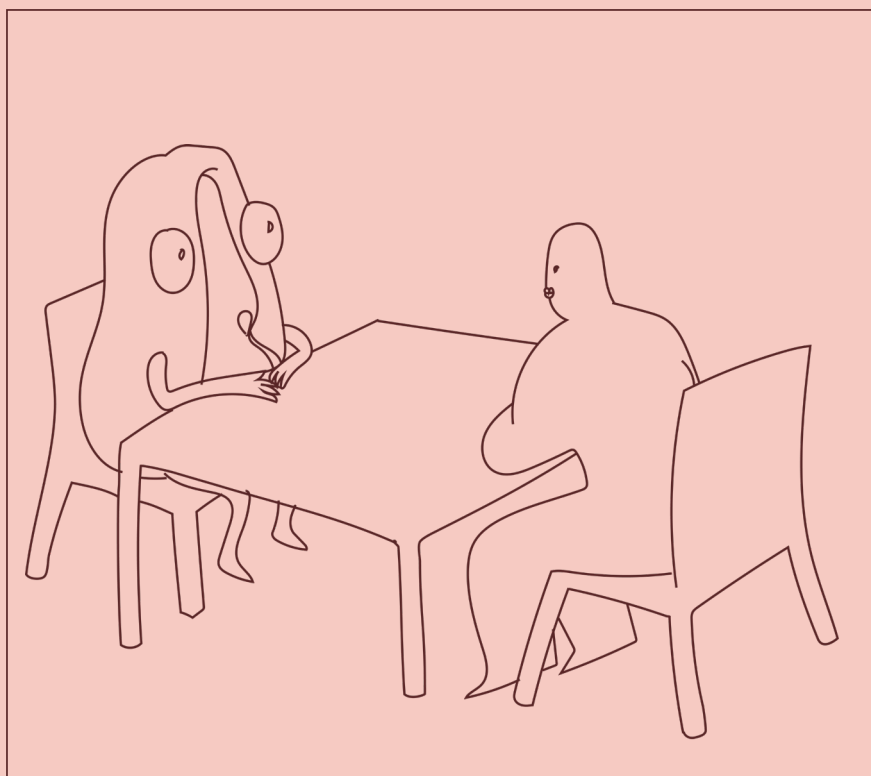
The lighthouse for Yoni's brand development was already described in the previous chapter. Of course, the concept for an intelligent vulva care range is a concept car defined at the beginning of the project. This means that it does not necessarily have to be adopted one-to-one, but should be seen as a materialised vision of the future that points towards a desirable future. Since the development of an intelligent vulva care series is a big step for Yoni, the following pages describe the path to this goal in three steps, based on the model of the three horizons by Curry and Hodgson (2008).

YONI'S FUTURE

Redefining what it means to care for our vulvas



STAGE	PREPARE AND ENTER THE MARKET		DEVELOP A STANDING IN THE MARKET		CHANGE THE GAME, CHANGE THE MARKET	
MISSION	Start the vuvla care conversation and teach vulvovaginal basics		Engage users through different topics and enable vulva care experiences		Integrate insights and care capabilities into an intelligent personalised care journey	
MARKET TRENDS	<div>Post-taboo wellness</div> <div>Rewilding</div> <div>Knowledge is power</div> <div>Beauty bleed</div> <div>Apps for social good</div> <div>Gender neutrality</div> <div>Something to be hidden</div> <div>AI</div>		<div>In touch with oneself</div> <div>Home testing</div> <div>Health empowerment</div> <div>New intimacy</div> <div>Trans vulva</div>		<div>Health self efficacy</div> <div>Quantified me</div> <div>Branding together</div>	
COMMUNICATION INTERNALLY	<div>RAISE AWARENESS</div> <div>[1] Launch the first vulva care product and the correspinding repositioning campaign</div> <div>[2] Adress the need for better care products designed for vulvas</div> <div>EDUCATE USERS</div> <div>[1] Become the platform to learn about what goes on between one's legs in a fun way</div>		<div>OFFERING OCCASIONS TO INTERVENE</div> <div>[1] Breaking down shame through topic educating and supporting self exploration</div> <div>ENGAGE USERS</div> <div>[1] Unlock insights into vulva care and offer treatment options that can be integrated in daily life</div>		<div>TEACH ABOUT THE MICROBIOME</div> <div>[1] Unlock insights into user's personal microbiome makeup</div> <div>TAILORED EXPERIENCE</div> <div>[1] Truly personalised products</div> <div>[2] No more second guessing about vulvovaginal care</div>	
COMMUNICATION EXTERNALLY	<div>REBUILD</div> <div>[1] Restructrune the internal capabilities towards tech enabled care</div> <div>[2] Build partnerships</div> <div>[3] Align company efforts towards the new vision</div>		<div>IMPROVE</div> <div>[1] Further streamline customer feedback loop, care products and supply chain</div> <div>[2] Build knowledge reputation</div>		<div>ENVISION</div> <div>[1] Dive into the next possible steps, the next product category extensions, etc.</div>	
VALUES	<div>HIGHER CARE PRODUCT STANDARDS</div> <div>KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER</div> <div>GROWTH AND INNOVATION</div>		<div>DOWN WITH TABOOS AROUND VULVA CARE</div> <div>MAKING UNSEEN ISSUES SEEN</div> <div>LEARN THROUGH INTERACTION WITH ONESELF / OTHERS</div>		<div>MAKING SCIENCE ACCESSIBLE</div> <div>CLOSING THE VULVA CARE GAP</div> <div>GET INSIGHTS INTO BIOME CHANGES</div>	
USERS (B2C)	Sees room for improvement in their knowledge about their own body and wants to make conscious choices about their vulvovaginal wellbeing; but is overwhelmed by the available information; is design focused		Is curious about vulovaginal issues they hven't adressed for themselves and/or with others and seeks guidance, exploration and intervention possibilities		Seeks a custom fit in their consumption to avoid useless purchases, protect their vulvovaginal balance and regain control over their vulvovaginal wellbeing and health; is curious about the underlying workings of their body	
PRODUCT SERVICE	<div>CURRENT BUSINESS</div> <div>Organic period products</div>	<div>FIRST ORGANIC VULVA CARE PRODUCT</div> <div>„A product designed for vulvas without unnecessary stuff“ = cream/lube designed to be used daily + Introduction of vulva chat bot that allows users to talk to „their“ vulva up close and personal and raise all the questions they never dared to ask = first step towards a more holistic notion of vulva care</div>	<div>GROWING VULVA CARE PRODUCT KITS</div> <div>Growing vulva care issue kits adressing vulvovaginal issues with educational interactive format (= a website with topic related exploration; similar to the “wheel of foreplay”)</div> <div>Topics might include:</div> <div>[1] Pain during sex</div> <div>[2] Grooming care</div> <div>[3] Transitioning to menopause</div> <div>[4] Trans intimate care</div>		<div>INTELLIGENT INTEGRATED VULVA CARE</div> <div>[1] Questionnaire</div> <div>[2] Home testing kit</div> <div>[3] Personalised product line</div>	
RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNALLY	<div>Product innovation department</div> <div>Gynaecological advisor</div> <div>Dermatological advisor</div>		<div>Freelance UX designer and/or Programmer</div> <div>Copywriter</div>		<div>Product and service quality management</div>	
RESOURCES NEEDED EXTERNALLY	<div>Investment for internal and external development</div> <div>Home testing company partner</div>		<div>Skin care producer allowing influence</div>		<div>Partnerships for category extension</div>	



STEP 1

Introducing people to their vulva

D44

Horizon one

Preparation + enter the market (change in internal capacities and external communication)

INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT

Yoni's first phase of development is to restructure and realign Yoni's internal and collaborative capabilities. The goal of this phase is to launch the first vulva care focused product at the end of approximately 18 months. The internal restructuring is about building a company that can be a real leader in the femcare market. This is about building confidence in the company's capabilities among its users. To achieve this, Yoni needs to invest in internal competencies. With regard to the concept product, it is primarily a matter of communicating capabilities at the technological level, at the level of the quality of the products and at the level of knowledge-related expertise and establishing them in the minds of the users.

HUMAN RESOURCES

For this reason, it is recommended that Yoni invests in human resources and hires someone who is purely responsible for product innovation, so as not

to fall back into the position of having an outdated and competitive product. In addition, the standard of a medical professional who is an advocate for the brand's quality and product is being established. This could also be a great gain for Yoni, on the one hand in the level of internal expertise and co-creative input, and on the other hand in external communication and credibility, which could increase Yoni's persuasiveness. For this reason, it is recommended to hire a gynaecologist on a part-time or consultative basis. This could be further supported by an internal researcher working to build internal knowledge capacity on vulvovaginal care.

Then on the technological side, explicitly on the programming and UX side, it is important to build skills, ideally to find someone who enjoys developing experimental digital formats. It's about showing that Yoni not only has a wealth of knowledge, but can also translate it into interactive, experimental and innovative formats, adding an entertaining layer for users.

PARTNERS

In addition, Yoni needs to establish collaborative structures with care product manufacturers, ideally

in a way that allows Yoni to regularly improve the product.

EXTERNAL DEVELOPMENT

This step is basically about creating an organisational basis for positioning Yoni in a new direction at the end of the 18 months, tending away from the topic of menstruation and much more towards the question of what vulvovaginal care can still mean.

RELAUNCH

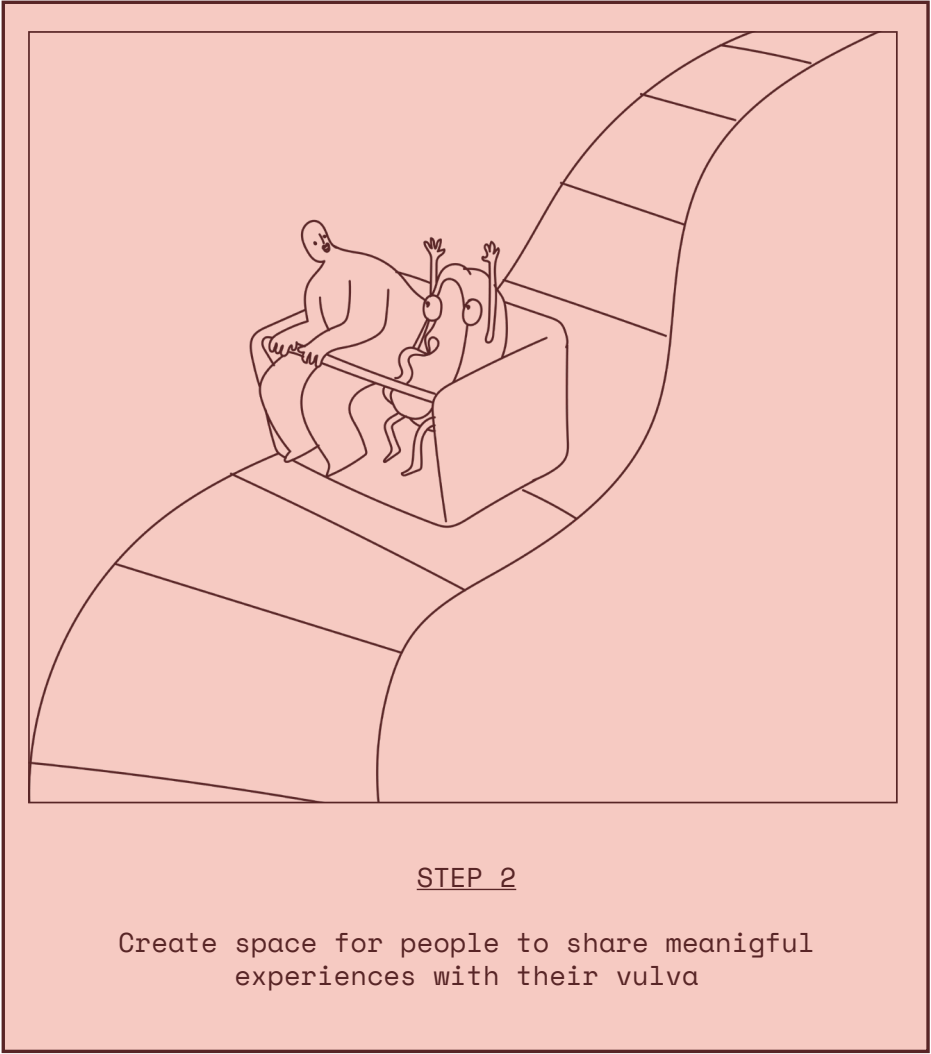
This relaunch was to be carried out through a video clip, a new design of the website and social media and the launch of the first vulva care product and Yoni's vulva chatbot. The care product, conceivably a barrier cream for vulvas that not only cares for the skin but can also be used as a lubricant, can be based on existing products. In addition, the vulva chatbot is intended to raise public awareness of the question of whether it is time to pay more attention to our vulvas, to enter into a dialogue with them and to learn how we can take better care of them.

This combination of digital and physical products is designed to appeal particularly to people with vulvas

who recognize that they have limited knowledge about their bodies and would like to be able to make more conscious decisions about their vulvovaginal health. In addition, it is about filling the scattered and often overwhelming amount of information into an intuitive and interactive format (a chatbot) and thus creating easier access. And finally, as always, it's about design-oriented aesthetophiles who enjoy being surrounded by visually appealing products.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS

Financially, the investment can be borne by selling the product in the online shop, in drugstores and on social media. In addition, it is conceivable that the app with the Yoni chatbot will have to be purchased for a small price after a certain test phase. In this step, the contextual factors post-taboo wellness, rewilding, knowledge is power (and its associated factors), beauty bleed, apps for social good, gender neutrality in design, something to be hidden and AI will play a role.



STEP 2

Create space for people to share meaningful experiences with their vulva

D45

Horizon two

Establish standing within market

In the second phase, which in turn takes place in the following 18 months, the aim is to establish a stable position in the market and develop a new brand understanding of Yoni towards a more proactive role. This step is about strengthening and establishing the newly gained internal skills and at the same time finding new external partners in order to prepare for the final step of the roadmap.

PRODUCTS

It is conceivable for this step that a series of thematically specific products will be brought onto the market, each addressing a very explicit problem that many people are concerned with vulvas but rarely finds public attention. On the one hand, it is about creating awareness for this topic, clarifying it and offering a solution in the form of a product. This gives users an opportunity to intervene in old behaviour patterns and gradually dissolve internalised shame through enlightenment and self-exploration.

USER EDUCATION

Above all, it's about educating people about general vulvovaginal care, addressing significant issues, and establishing a new habit in the user's life, so that they might touch base with themselves, question their behavioural patterns and attitudes, and make way for new habits. At this point, Yoni can discuss topics such as pain during sexual intercourse, how best to take care of your pubic hair from the point of view of your vulva, how best to deal with recurring urinary tract infections and how these can be prevented, how the hormone balance and thus also the vulva change in perimenopause and menopause and thus also change care needs, how best to take care of your vulva in testosterone treatment or how best to take care of a neo vulva and vagina. A large number of exciting and often overlooked topics are possible and Yoni should also be guided by internal personal interests when selecting the topics to be addressed in order to find the best possible intrinsic motivation to work them out appropriately. Each of the products should be complemented by a digital product that explores a theme in an interactive and visually appealing manner, similar to the wheel

of foreplay (Cole & The Future of Sex Lab, n.d.). These digital formats can also be staged in a way that is effective for the public and thus ensure visibility in the press.

TARGET GROUP

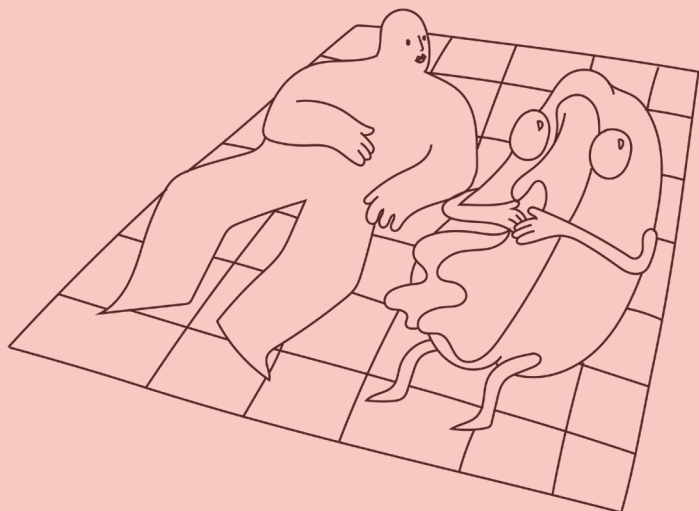
The products are for people with vulvas who are curious about vulvovaginal well-being issues and would like to address them for themselves but also with partners or friends, want to create a space for them but need access and guidance.

INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT

On an internal level, it is about making contact with dermatologists in order to make specialist knowledge available, similar to the advice from gynaecology. In addition, a partnership must be established with a company that specialises in the facilitation and analysis of vulvovaginal tests and slowly but surely build a supply chain for the final step. In addition, it is about further optimising the previous processes, taking user feedback and actively incorporating it into the processes and generally building a reputation as a specialist in the field of vulva care.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS

Financially, the investment can be borne by selling the product in the online shop, in drugstores and on social media. In addition, it is conceivable that the access to the web format is granted through the purchase of the products or that certain contents are unlocked through in-website purchases. In this step, the contextual factors in touch with oneself, home testing, health empowerment, new intimacy and trans vulva will play a role.



STEP 3

Offer people the opportunity to get to know their vulva on a deeper level. (microscopic so to say)

D46

Horizon three

Change market

The final step, the next two years, is about launching the final concept product.

USER EDUCATION

It is about educating users about the vulvovaginal microbiome and showing the far-reaching influences on health and personal well-being. The aim is to show that it often only takes small, day-to-day behavioural adjustments to remain in holistic balance. It's about implementing vulvar consciousness every day. It's about implementing a seamless integration of insights into one's own body and how it works and the treatment that is geared towards it. It's about better understanding the vulvovaginal microbiome and inviting you on a journey with your own body.

CHANGE THROUGH PERSONALISATION

With this step, the market could be fundamentally changed, products could be truly personalised as already seen individually in skin care for the face, and produced, for example, by three-dimensional printing (TREND HUNTER Inc., n.d.). With this product, a new

standard could also be achieved in the expectations of users and a general call for better femcare could be made. Trial-and-error product purchases might be made a thing of the past.

TARGET GROUP

The products are for people with vulvas who are looking for a more personal approach to their vulvovaginal well-being and are tired of making unnecessary purchases. It is for people who are curious about how their body works and what actually happens between their legs and at the same time want more control over their vulvovaginal well-being.

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Finally, it can be noted that starting from this step, further category extensions are possible, which repeatedly question and interpret the concept of vulva care. For example, a series of detergents for underwear is conceivable that is explicitly designed to protect or support the vulva microbiome or other caring products such as caring bath additives or cleaning products for sex toys, condoms that are

designed with a view to better vulvovaginal care or a new tracking app that allows tracking progress on vulvovaginal issues.

In this step, the contextual factors health self efficacy, quantified me and branding together will play a role.

E

Delivering



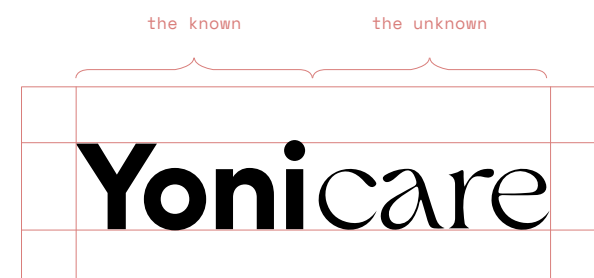
5

A refreshed Yoni

GENERAL THEMES

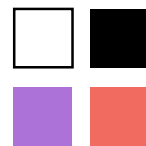
In the diagram on the right, you can see the general themes that will play a role in Yoni's brand identity in three to five years. The overarching themes are vulva centric, care and science, which in turn are broken down into these descriptive themes. These themes will be communicated visually and in terms of content. An example application is illustrated on the following pages.

Its about embracing the body positivity Yoni is visually known for and adding onto this visual identity by embracing elements from the scientific realm as well as a more conversational and educational visual language. It's about providing people with the tools to facilitate positive change in their lives - through conversation, products and interactive learning tools. It's about visually communicating that Yoni is knowledgeable and bringing in professional qualified people, not hindered by any taboos concerning people and their vulvas and stressing the importance of connectivity, community to move towards the future.

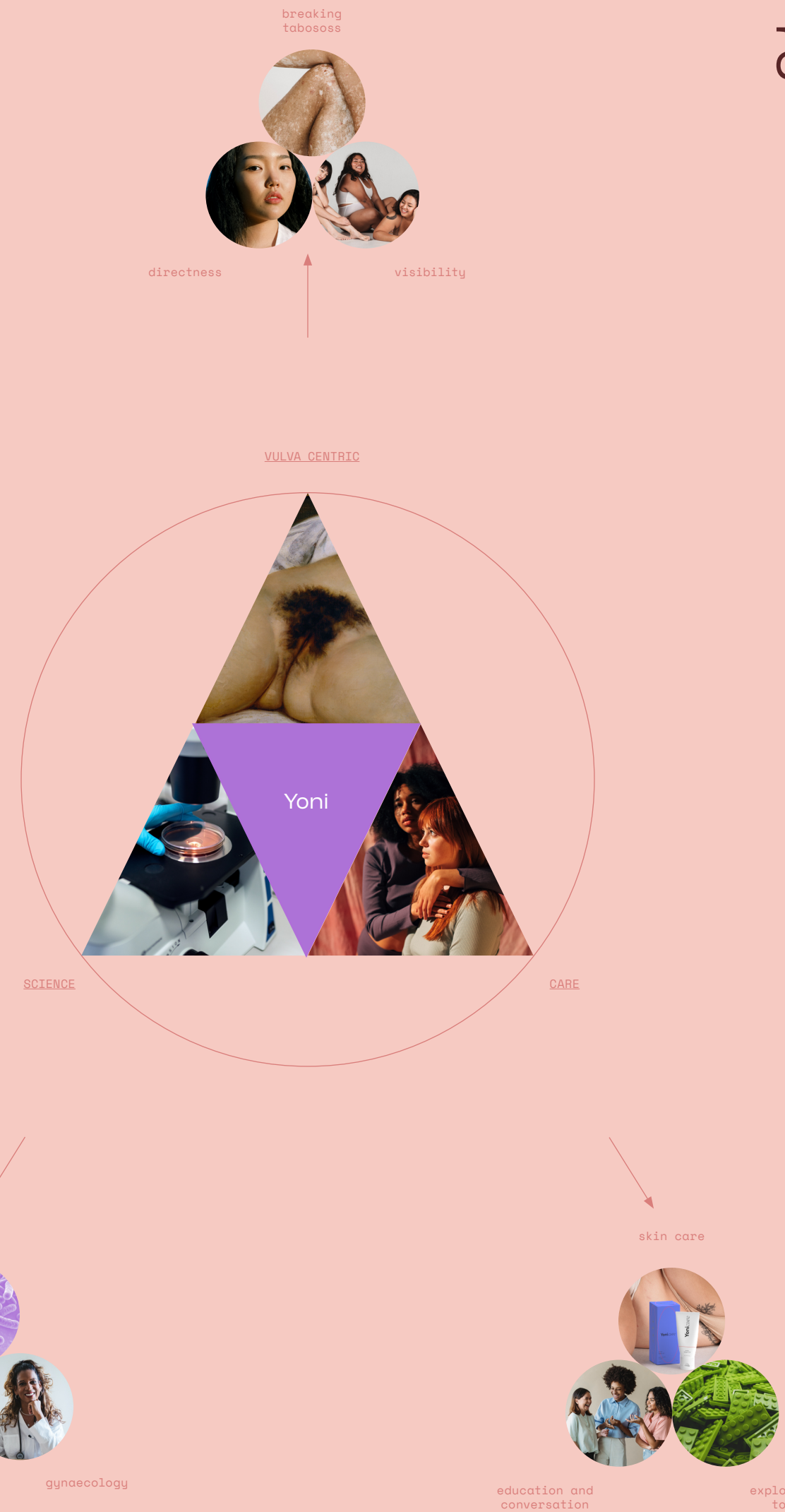


Roc Grotesk Bold
Roc Grotesk Regular

A simple sans-serif to communicate a digital and modern vibe.



A more limited colour palette to effectively communicate focus on a visual level.



The website

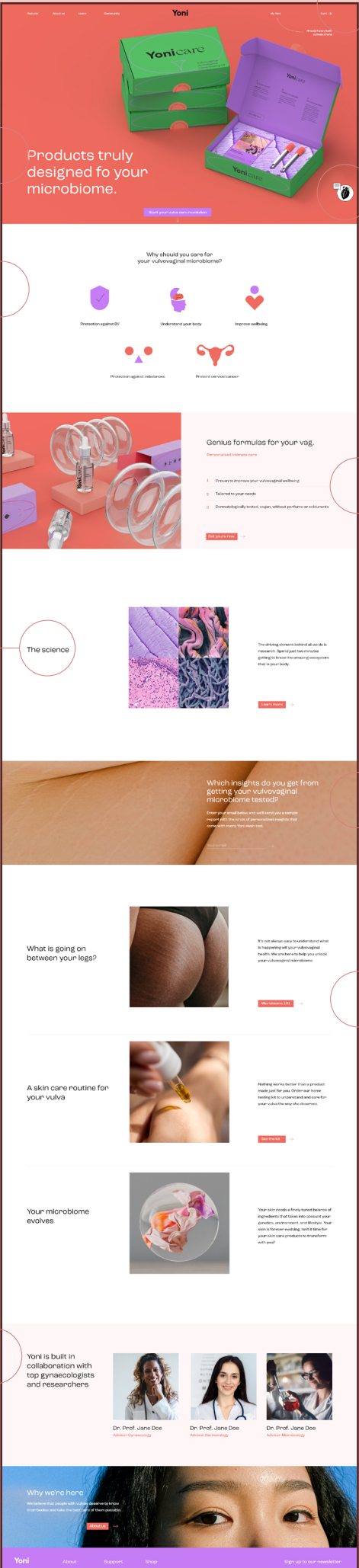
INTRODUCING A NEW PRODUCT CATEGORY TAG

The website represents the tangible manifestation of the original concept car. The website is the practical application of the developments for Yoni described in the roadmap. The website is thus to be seen as an artefact of a vision of the future that would be found in three to five years. It is the iteration of the concept of the concept car that signifies the beginning of this thesis. It's meant as a boundary object, a communication piece to start a conversation.

The website can be seen shortly after the launch of the microbiome test kit, which is presented as a novelty at the top of the website. The test kit also introduces a new product category called Yoni care. The new product category consists of the test kit, which can be ordered directly online, and three other products that will be suggested based on the test results. „Yoni care“ is used to describe the product category, but is also used as an overarching signifier of the core meaning of the concept, truly caring for vulvas and stepping into the care industry.

The website not only introduces the new product category, but also implies previous developments that constitute the new focus of the brand, such as a tab called „learn“ where various topics are scientifically researched and offer users insights into the world of vulvas. In addition, there is a tab called „community“, where users can exchange information with each other in forums and thus form communities around specific concerns or projects initiated by Yoni. The constant companion for the user is the vulva-icon, which is the voice of the vulvas and provides advice and support.

On the next page, the flow of the web pages is depicted. The website offers different layers of exploration opportunities and is designed with an exemplary account and microbiome insight report. Each page fully exported as an image can be found in the appendix.



The page starts with the newly released vulvovagial microbiome home test kit, Yoni's next step in their vulvovaginal wellness journey with their users.

Illustrating the general benefits of looking and caring for one's vulvovaginal microbiome

Something new for Yoni, incorporating science and sharing their insights with the community in accessible language.

As indicated in the roadmap, to future-proof Yoni gynaecological advisory staff is necessary as well as someone from dermatology and possibly research to further the internally accessible knowledge and improve user trust in Yoni's capabilities

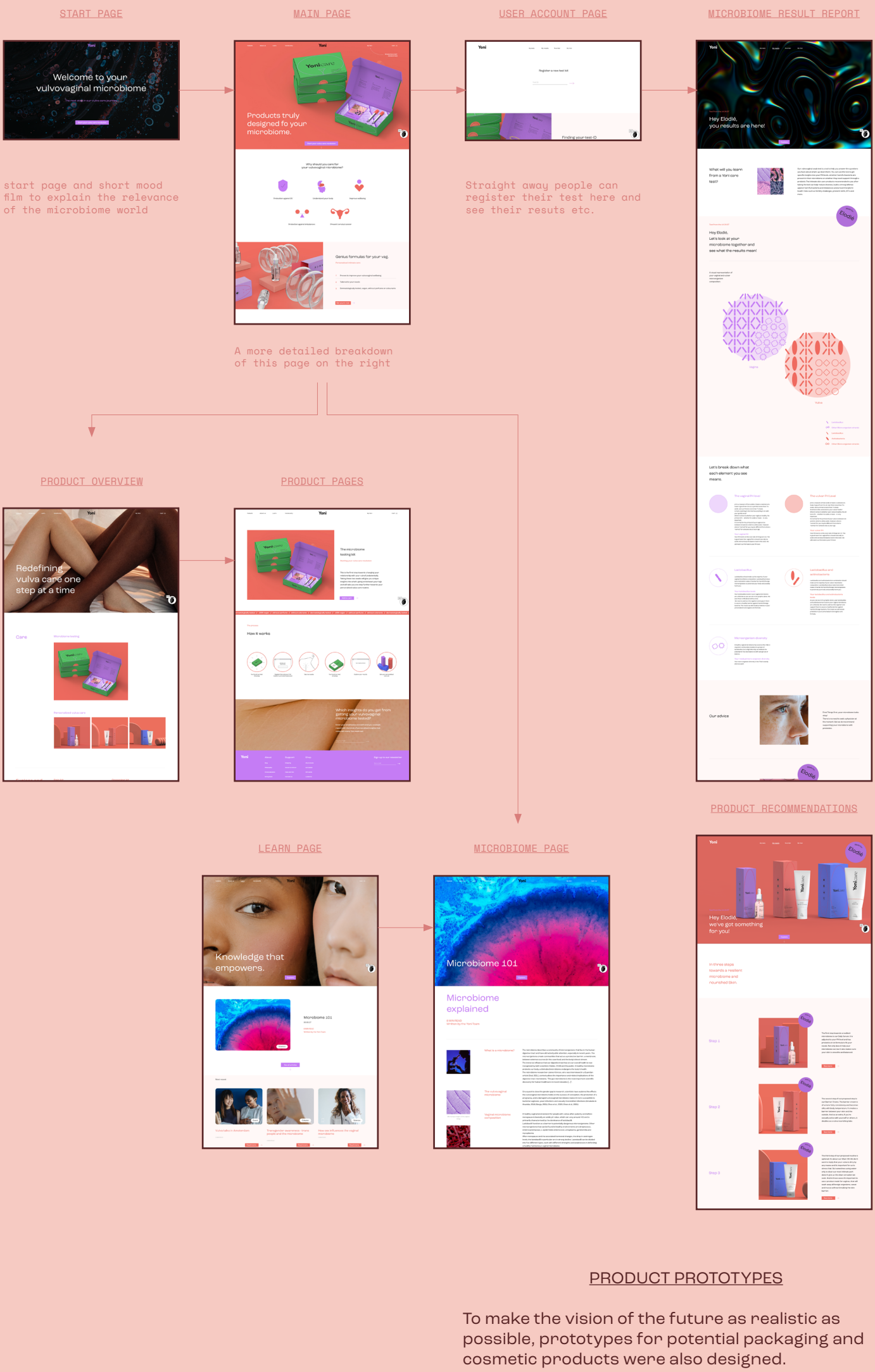
The new header shows Yoni's new brand columns - vulva care products, their belief and mission, being a platform for learning and for facilitating community.

This icon is a reference to an earlier stage in the roadmap, the „vulva chatbot“. It allows users to ask an AI vulva questions and remind people of their vulva's point of view.

Benefits of personalised vulva care products

Offering a sample report of the insights people gain into their microbiome ensures transparency and facilitates more involvement also through getting people's email addresses for future communication

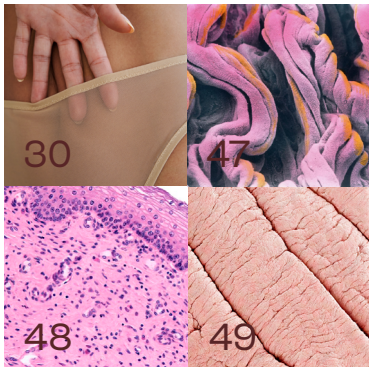
Explanation of the general journey with one's vulvovaginal microbiome, from discovering what's between one's leg to tailored skin care and microbiome changes







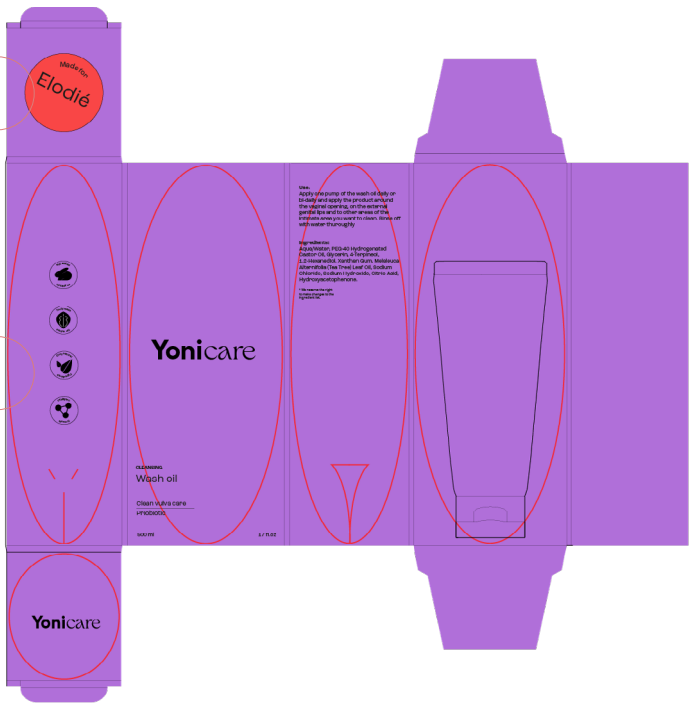
Age and trans inclusivity



Giving an experimental manufactured vibe

To visually communicate the personalisation of the care product formula, the package has a sticker with the customers name on it.

The package uses an abstract geometric shape of the pubic area and the ass crack in the back in a cheeky way.



of inspiration and motivation alive in the longer term,

Yonicare
What are your first thoughts about the concept?
really good approach. The presentation is very detailed and well structured. The concept is presented looks realistic and achievable.

Yonicare
What are your first thoughts about the concept?
As you described your interview with all these persons about vulva & vagina issues, I directly needed to change the presentation, break down the information into smaller parts.

Yonicare
What are your first thoughts about the concept?
Amazingly impressive and thorough. Looks amazing. I really hope you will take this route. Good luck with all your further research and projects!

Yonicare
What are your first thoughts about the concept?
Very interesting. Good to hear the insights. Many people struggle with and what to do about it. I can't wait to see what the next steps we have to take!

Yonicare
What are your first thoughts about the concept?
I'm already let you know that I'm excited (March here, hi!). I think the biggest challenge for you will be to maintain a focus on time to make the changes needed as an organization esp. in terms of knowledge & the ability to test & share insights as well as perhaps the online resources needed.

Yonicare
What are your first thoughts about the concept?
I'm really impressed about your presentation beyond the next level and see a lot and please continue doing these research.

Yonicare
What are your first thoughts about the concept?
I think that you created a very clear and detailed roadmap how you go to "Yoni's 'concept arc'". The substantiation that vulva/vagina are high probably the future for Yoni and society. Their level approach was very convincing. It shows sensitivity to the present situation and shows the way to the ideal future.

Yonicare
What are your first thoughts about the concept?
I'm a fan! I think this concept could be a huge thing for Yoni as well as the female care industry. It's ahead of it's time, which is amazing. It's a shame this is becoming a thing just now.

Yonicare
What are your first thoughts about the concept?
Impressive work for so little time spend, this could be a 10 product instead of one because the concept is so universal. I think it is a very good go! Now you are differentiating itself as a disruptive player in the market because people are more & more interested in their bodies & health.

Yonicare
What are your first thoughts about the concept?
Really out of the box thinking. Great conceptual frame. Long time horizon. (6x10^10 years, 10^10 years)

Yonicare
What are your first thoughts about the concept?
The best thing is that this concept is for all women (Grand)mothers, daughters, sisters, friends. It's probably suited for a lot of ages. So you can help the young people with their first experiences, all faces that is coming into pause etc. We need this.

Yonicare
What are your first thoughts about the concept?
I am very practical monitoring side & I love how clear you got to a category female & product ideas. I love the best → personal when I wrote down insights like "knowledge is power" "the female natural way" "education".

Yonicare
What are your first thoughts about the concept?
By the way: I think the design of the whole insights test feels like a very professional for companies to go through a process like this.

Yonicare
What are your first thoughts about the concept?
Really out of the box thinking. Great conceptual frame. Long time horizon. (6x10^10 years, 10^10 years)



F

Reflection

Discussion

The aim of this project was to develop a “concept car” for Yoni, to explore where the brand could develop by deep diving into contextual research based on the need for change in Yoni’s trajectory after environmental change.

It was about profoundly understanding the world of vulvas regarding medicine, politics, economy, psychology - feelings and behaviours, education and culture and finding spaces of opportunity to be the facilitator of positive change in people’s lives.

Within the first chapter it was explored which weight and meaning the notion of “concept cars,” as requested to explore by The Young, hold and how it could take shape later on.

Afterwards, it was indeed confirmed that Yoni will need to change trajectory to stay competitive as a brand and a sense of urgency has been communicated regarding their innovation capabilities as the market surrounding vulva-related products is taking up speed.

This led to the question where Yoni might go, to find promising and rich opportunity spaces contextual research was conducted to truly understand the intricacies of the world surrounding vulvas. This research showcased the rich and not commonly known world of information and opportunity to be tapped into. Multiple directions for brand visioning were identified and eventually reduced to one in close collaboration with Yoni to achieve ideal brand fit. An intentionally aspirational and inspiring direction and concept product was developed and finally used to deduce intermediate steps of brand development and necessary actions.

CONCEPT CARS

With this thesis the notion of concept cars was explored and a concept product was delivered. Whether this method was a successful driver for brand development cannot be proven within the limitations of this graduation and need to be explored over a bigger time scope. An evaluation of the method after a few months of introduction would be necessary to investigate whether it was the right format for Yoni and which factors influence the workability. Furthermore, for now the communication tool of the concept product and corresponding brand development visualisation consisted of a interactable website. This choice was influenced by the current status quo of technology as well as my own abilities. With different technological developments, skill sets and resources a different outcome is plausible.

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

The need for organisational change within Yoni was identified within this thesis, a need for new personnel and development of innovation capabilities. But this is easier said than done. To make the concept truly

viable internal sessions of co-creation and discussion need to be organised. Furthermore, only around half of Yoni’s employees were involved in the development of the final concept which may result in only limited acceptance and embracement.

REPEATABILITY

As with any design project, the outcome of this thesis is to some degree affected by individual decisions and the rated potential of original ideas and the outcome has been influenced by personal choices on my and the client’s side as well as the formal structure of a graduation projected. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the outcome might have been different in other circumstances, especially speaking about the creative work after the research chapter.

TARGET GROUP

A point was made of diving deep and having extensive conversations with users at the beginning of the project and 8 1,5 to 2 hour long interviews were facilitated. The limitation to address is the age range - seven out of the eight people were below thirty years old, one was fifty years old. Within these interviewees the most variety of characteristics was sought out, but the unintentional exclusion of people between thirty and fifty is an aspect to be considered. It is possible that valuable insights into this demographic haven’t been included.

PROOF OF CONCEPT

One recommendation is to further seek proof of concept by continuously involving users and employees in future endeavours of Yoni to ensure relevance within the market. This involvement is further necessary to keep employees aligned and nurture a sense of commitment and involvement regarding development.

RICHNESS OF DATA

A personal achievement of this thesis is the sheer richness and diversity of data gathered. The world of vulvas is fascinating, infuriating, inspiring and has enriched my personal life and started many conversations within groups of family, friends and colleagues, it truly is a gift that keeps on giving. This richness is a beautiful and deeply valuable place for Yoni to be at, much work is to do, knowledge to share, community to build.

Personal reflection

This project began with the motivation to find a topic that was personally intriguing and relevant to me. I wanted to work on a project that would give me the opportunity to further my education in terms of content and methodology. Looking back on the last few months, I can say that I have been able to accomplish this.

I was able to learn an incredible wealth of information about vulvas, the societal implications, feminist discourse, influences in art and (pop) culture, historical perspectives, medical breakthroughs and biological basics, the world of menstrual products, intimate care, and genital manipulation. I found the absurd, the surprising, the infuriating, the frustrating, the fascinating and found myself wanting to share what I had learnt and have valuable conversations. This filled me with a purposefulness of work that I found deeply fulfilling, right up to the completion of the project. And the topic also gave me the chance to confront myself and my own body and to get to know myself better. And I am very grateful for all these insights.

But also professionally I was able to try out new things on many levels. This master’s thesis was my first project with a real client that was proactively managed by me. This was not always easy for me and I still see potential for improvement, especially with regard to the speed at which I sought contact and collaboration. But I am proud to look back on a project that was independently led by me. And yet, with the knowledge of this skill, I am very much looking forward to more collaborative work in the future.

I was also able to develop the Yonisphere research document and I am convinced that this format will be a valuable communication tool in future design processes.

And I am grateful to be able to combine my knowledge especially from the courses Strategic Product Design Research, Design Strategy Project and Culture Sensitive Design and Brand and Product Commercialisation into one project. I have developed massively as a designer in the last two and a half years and will carry this knowledge into my future.



G

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