A TOOL FOR CONCEPT VALIDATION
FROM BRAND TO CONCEPTS

Master Thesis Design for Interaction
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September 2019

Delft University of Technology

A Tool for Concept Validation

From brand to concepts

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Acknowledgments

To live is to choose. But to choose well, you must know who you are and what you stand for, where you want to go and why you want to get there.

Kofi Annan

Executive Summary

There is an increasing number of products in the market. Many of them get copied the second they launch. In the end, everything looks identical. Digitalization is the main reason behind. As the world gets digitized, commoditization of the products occurs (van Erp, 2011). Eventually, a brand becomes the only thing creating difference among competitors. However, instead of blaming the digital revolution, it is possible to take a step back and find a way out by creating a difference with designing for the collections of associations in consumers' minds (Vorst, 2015, p. 29), in other words, by designing from the brand perspective.

So, what is the brand experience? Brand experiences can be defined as the overall experiences that cover customers' sensations, feelings, thoughts, and actions lived within a certain brand. These experiences cause customer responses through brand-related stimuli (Brakus et al., 2009). Brand experiences can be shaped both by the company and the consumers, and today, many companies desire to create a matchless brand experience.

Designers play an important role in the creation of brand experiences by translating the brand into the design. A touchpoint is considered as the final version of a design that is made for a certain brand. It can be a website, mobile application, packaging or a tangible product. Therefore, the design of the manifestation is a quite similar process with the standard user-centric design processes. The only difference is that while the user-centric design processes have the focus of the user, in this design process the focus is the brand. During the brand experience design process, there are many difficulties that designers face. The main reason behind is that in the literature, there are no inductive or deductive methods for designing for brand experiences nor is there a process for making a product or a service 'on brand'.

Moreover, decision-making is an essential part of the brand experience design process. Like it is valid for many design processes, most of the time, deciding which idea to move forward with decides the product's fate. During the analysis phase, it has been understood that in concept judging, an intuitive process followed by a rational process provides the optimum conditions. Therefore, that knowledge has been applied in developing the design solution.

During the design process of the project, the synthesis method has been applied. It consists of three layers of knowledge, and this knowledge has been generated through the interviews, literature review and initial ideas' evaluation sessions. It is also revealed that when it comes to designing for a brand, many variables are affecting that decision-making mechanism. As explored through the project, in the case of the brand, the design concept should fit the company's values and personalities. In addition, the concept should be able to convey the right emotions that the brand carries. Therefore, early concept making and concept judging phases are regarded as the key points of the brand experience design process. The project mainly focuses on the concept judging to help designers with the selection of the concept that is 'most on brand' and validate their choices.

Think the brand out loud is a tool consisting of a manual, card set and two boards. The card set is a selection of brand values, personalities, and emotions, and boards (explained in the manual) help both to define the brand's core elements and to select concepts according to those core elements. While the tool guides the design team to discuss and reach a consensus, at the same time, it reveals the strengths and weaknesses of each design concept and helps to define directions for the final design.

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1. The Project

This chapter creates an overview of the graduation project by introducing the topic and explaining the project context. Following that, the design goal, research questions and the gap in the literature will be presented. The related design approach will also be explained in this chapter.

1.1. Introduction

Brand experiences can be defined as the overall experiences that cover customers' sensations, feelings, thoughts and actions lived within a certain brand. These experiences cause customer responses through the brand-related stimuli which are the part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments (Brakus et al., 2009). In this regard, all the means designed to interact with the customers can be defined as touchpoints or designs.

Today, from the perspective of many companies, creating meaningful brand experiences has become a must. The digital revolution is the main reason behind this. Due to digitalization, the amount of manufactured products increases day by day. As the world gets digitized, products tend to commoditize (van Erp, 2011). When a new design with a competitive advantage appears on the market, it can be easily copied within the extensive possibilities of today's technological developments (Kuijken et al., 2017). Thus, the brand is the only thing that creates a difference among competitors. Therefore, the brand becomes more important, (Vorst, 2017, p. 25). Likewise, a brand experience that is formed by the brand pushes the product forward.

Within this context, designers are the ones translating the feeling and meaning of the brand into manifestations. Along the way, they face many challenges. It is mainly because there are no inductive or deductive methods for designing for brand experiences nor is there a method for making a product or a service 'on brand'. Within this lack of guidance, now it is often in designers' or commissioners' hands to judge if the design is in line with the brand or not.

Moreover, there is a key moment in the process, which is the early conceptualization phase, where designers come up with several concepts for the current touchpoint to reflect the feeling of the brand. What makes the conceptualization phase important is that it largely determines the success of the design that will interact with the consumers. At the end of the conceptualization phase, designers decide whether a concept is 'on brand' or not. Still, it is challenging for the designers both to judge and validate their decisions.

Inspired by these discoveries, the project focuses on guiding designers during the judgment phase of brand experience design process. The aim is to develop a tool for designers -and design students- to help them with judging concepts in deciding whether a concept is 'on brand' or not.

This graduation report consists of four main parts. The first part, 'the project', provides an overview of the project, defining the goal, significance, and approach. The second part is the 'analysis' where the literature review related to the brand, brand constructs, brand experience, and decision-making is made. Following the literature review, interviews are made with the designers experienced in the field, which mainly constitutes the basis of ideation. The third part is the 'develop', where the initial ideas are generated to build concepts. Finally, the 'deliver' provides an evaluation of the tool and finalizes the report with a discussion.

1.2. Design Goal & Objective

After the exploration phase, it is found out that most of the experienced designers have the perspective that 'the gut feeling' helps them conceptualize and judge the concepts whether the concepts are 'on brand' or not. However, what constitutes this gut feeling is really the years of experience and gained knowledge. Therefore, the following design goal is formed:

"to guide and inspire concept validation of (in)experienced designers* during the brand experience design process"

*all stakeholders involved in the design process

To explore this context the following main research question and it's sub-questions were proposed:

How do designers judge concepts in the brand experience design process?

• How do designers choose concepts?
• What are the criteria when judging?
• How do designers come up with concepts in the brand experience design process?
• What are the tools and techniques they use when creating concepts?
• What does the brand experience design process look like?
• How do designers benefit from the brand in this process?

1.3. Relevance & Significance

At present, there are many sources related to the brand and brand experiences. Most sources addressing the brand notion evaluate it independently of the design process. On the other hand, sources examining the brand experience are about the importance of creating brand experience (Morrison and Crane, 2007), how to measure brand experiences (Brakus et al., 2009), general view of brand experience design process (Bakker-Wu et al., 2017) or the relationship between brand experience and brand constructs (Chang and Chieng, 2006). However, none of them has mentioned how to validate concepts if they are 'on brand' or not. In addition, none of these sources deal with the brand experience design process as a similar approach with the standard design process.

When the creation of the brand experience is addressed as a mechanism that is integrated with the design process, the phase of conceptualization gains importance. Concepts are fragile ideas that lead to significant and substantial products (Union, 2018). In other words, although a concept may look tentative, it will decide the fate of the end design. Therefore, concept validation is a need in the process, and it involves both the soft and hard factors. Hard factors are tangible, and they are easier to observe and judge. However, soft factors are intangible and harder to judge. They are connected to the meaning and emotional experience of the design concept (Desmet, 2011). As being a capital soft factor, the brand plays an important role in creating meaning (Desmet, 2011). Thus, designing a tool to help designers with validating concepts in understanding their fit to the brand would be helpful.

1.4. Design Approach

The basic design cycle is chosen for the project (Figure 1). The process can also be translated into the double diamond model (Council, 2005).

First, in the analysis phase, a literature review is conducted simultaneously with the exploration part. Through the literature review, the knowledge mainly concerning the brand, constructs of the brand, brand experience and decision-making in the early concept phase is generated. In addition to the literature review, several interviews were conducted with experienced designers from different fields related to brand products, systems or services in order to learn about their current way of working. Besides, the tools and techniques that these designers use during the conceptualization phase of the brand experience design process and their opinions on the process regarding concept judging are explored. Two of the interviews were held in the faculty of Industrial Design Engineering at the Delft University of Technology, two of them through Skype and four of them in Amsterdam in the offices of these designers. After the exploration part, gained knowledge is validated through a repeated literature review. At the end of the analysis, deductions are made in order to define starting points for ideation.

Second, during the develop phase, initial ideas, which are the basis for concepts, were iterated through the two evaluation sessions. The sessions were conducted with Strategic Product Design students from TU Delft Industrial Design Engineering faculty. Following the evaluation sessions of initial ideas, the design concept is formulated. The synthesis method was applied to bring the design components together. Then, the concept is validated with Design for Interaction and Integrated Product Design students to gain a broader perspective. Finally, the final design was made, and four use cases are formed based on an interview with an experienced designer. Then, final evaluation is made with the views collected from experts. In the last chapter, the report is concluded with the reflections.

ANALYSIS   DEVELOP   DELIVER

Literature review   Exploration   Ideation and Conceptualization   Evaluation and Final Design
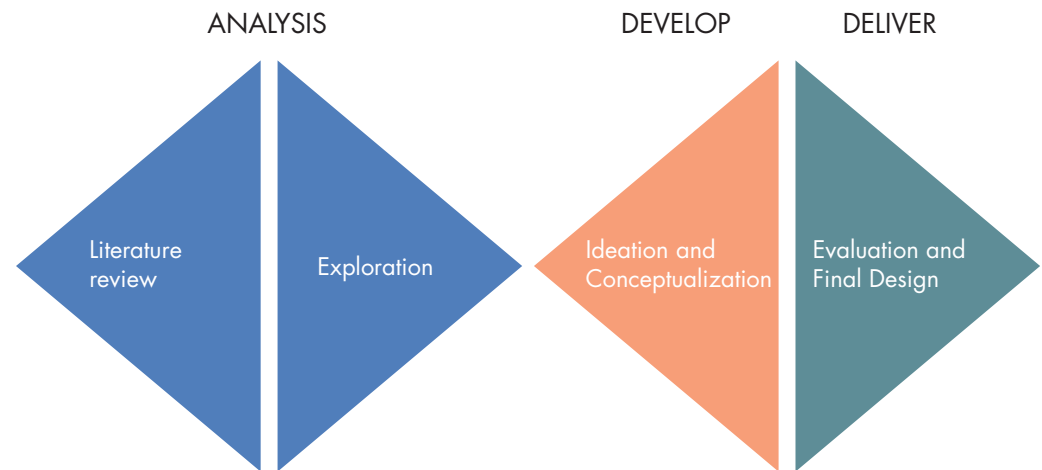
Figure 1. Process overview

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, definitions and terminology that are related to the brand, brand constructs and brand experience design process are provided. As the project moves on, the literature review has been repeated in a way that it will help the design process.

2.1. Brand

As explored and will be mentioned later with the interview results, in addition to standard product design processes, the brand experience (BE) design process moves forward with the guidance of the brand and the brief. While a design brief is created for each project and consists of a set of requirements, the brand is a different phenomenon that is always in transition, thus, has the power to shape the BE design process. Therefore, in order to focus on the conceptualization phase of that process, its epicenter i.e. the brand must be understood first.

All the same, a brand is a broad notion. While it is the strategic interaction point between the firm and its customers (Urde, 1999), it is also the sum of all the associations and beliefs that the consumer has (Feldwick, 1996). Therefore, the brand has a strong relationship with the company's strategic decisions, but at the same time, the brand is something created in consumers' minds with the associations they have imposed to the brand. The company's strategic decisions shape the product design, and designers are responsible for bridging the gap between the brand perspective of the consumer and the product (van Erp, 2006).

Today, many companies make an effort to act brand-driven as they are both aware of the power of the capabilities of strong brands (Esch, 2008) and the ongoing race of gaining competitive advantage in the market. Indeed, creating a strong brand is one way of winning that race. Strong brands not only make the product sell more but also provides means of identification to the firm (Keller, 2003). It is possible to create a strong brand by building a strong brand personality (van Erp, 2011) which will be explained in the next section.

2.2. Brand Constructs

A brand is created or supported by a set of constructs which define various characteristics of the brand. Brand knowledge or meaning are other names used for the brand constructs (Chang and Chieng, 2006). These constructs are defined differently by each source as they have interchangeable meanings. In the scope of the project, only some of them will be explained.

Brand identity: A unique set of brand associations that a company pursues to create or maintain (Madhavaram et al., 2005). The brand identity can be considered as a generic term since it covers the brand's manifestations, brand personalities, values and essence (Figure 2a).

Brand personality: A set of human personality traits that can be attributed to a certain brand (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). In other words, it is possible to think of a brand having the personalities as humans have. Brand personality is strongly related to symbols, communications, and behaviors directed with the touchpoints (Figure 2b) (Birkigt and Stadler, 1986) which are bridges between the company and the consumers. Therefore, the personalities of a brand are related to how the brand wants to be perceived by the consumers and how those consumers perceive the brand.

Brand values: The representation of everything the brand promises. Not only in terms of communications but also the brand's way of operating all of its business processes (Delin, 2007, p.9). Values can sometimes be interchangeable with the personalities of a brand. However, while the personality is associated with the external characteristics of a brand showing the way the brand behaves, values are associated with the internal characteristics of that brand constituting the principle of that behavior.

Brand purpose: Kapferer (2008) defines the brand purpose as 'a recent idea and conveys the emerging conception of the brand, seen as exerting a creative and powerful influence on a given market'. Thus, the brand purpose has a proportional relationship with the brand's positioning in the market in other words how a brand navigates among its competitors.

Brand essence: Constitutes a brand's reason for being. The brand essence together with the brand purpose represents what a brand stands for, i.e. the foundation of a brand.

The tone of voice: The way of communication that the company uses to express a distinctive personality or set of values to be distinguished from its competitors (Delin, 2007, p.10). It is about the language of the brand that is transferred through the designed manifestation. Therefore, the tone of voice of a brand has a strong relationship both with brand personalities and brand values.

Brand DNA: A generic term consisting of the brand's purpose, positioning, and personality (Figure 2c).

Figure 2a.Brand identity onion, 2b.Birkigt & Stadler brand personality model, 2c. Brand DNA

2.3. Brand Emotion

The brand emotion is a notion that is attained to the emotions and feelings evoked as a result of the interactions with a certain brand. It is transmitted from a company to consumers through the brand's manifestations, and strongly connected to the brand personality and values. At the same time, the brand emotion generates a certain experience which is a part of the product experience (Desmet, 2011). Therefore, brand emotion must be considered when understanding if the design is in line with the brand or not (Bakker-Wu et al., 2017).

2.4. Brand Experience

Experience is a private event stemming from the real or virtual interactions with the service provider (Schmitt, 1999, Pullman and Gross, 2004, Berry et al., 2006, Zomerdijk and Voss, 2010). These interactions can be classified as cognitive activities, emotional responses, and behavioral intentions (Chang and Chieng, 2006). In the case of brand experience, it has a certain distinction from the other brand constructs. As it is defined for the experiences, brand experiences stem from the interactions of consumers with brand-related stimuli, certain responses coming from sensations, emotions, comprehension, and behaviors are formed (Brakus et al., 2009). Brand-related stimuli, in meaning, covers all the things related to and created by the brand such as logos, colors, mascots, and brand constructs.
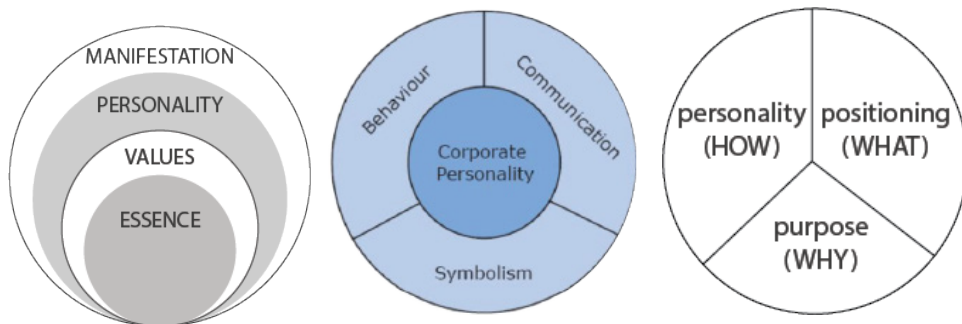
2.5. Brand Experience(BE) Design Process

Creating intense and integrated brand experiences is the desire of many companies, and design is key to its success (Kent, 2003, Bakker-Wu et al., 2017). Creating brand experiences also covers touchpoint design, their prioritization (Bakker-Wu et al., 2017) and consistency (Guzman, Montana and Moll, 2007). Touchpoint can be thought as another word used for a designed product that manifests a certain brand. Therefore, while the brand experience design process has its origins in the brand, it cannot be thought separately from the standard design processes. To better understand the brand experience design process, and its similarities with standard design processes, exemplary design processes are analyzed below.

2.5.1. Design Thinking Model

The Design Thinking design process (Figure 3) is a linear process starting with gaining an empathic understanding of the problem that the designer deals with (Dam and Siang, n.d.). This step is to familiarize with the context and the people involved in the situation. Then, a design goal is defined regarding the empathized problem in order to start the ideation phase. Ideaition consists of series of creative activities to explore the design possibilities. Following that, design prototypes are built to test and validate with users.

Figure 3. Design Thinking model proposed by the Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford (d.school)

2.5.2. Double Diamond Model

The Double Diamond model (Figure 4) consists of four phases: discover, define, develop and deliver. Discover is the phase for understanding the design problem. It can be considered as the combined version of emphatize and define steps of Design Thinking Model. However, the Double Diamond Model presents an overview of divergent and convergent areas for the design process.

Figure 4. Double Diamond design model illustrated by Design Council

Discover is a divergent part of the process since the major part of the research is made during this phase. Second, during the define phase, designers make an effort to make sense of detected possibilities along with the discover phase (Council, 2005). Therefore, it is a convergent phase helping designers to narrow down their focus. Develop phase consists of a series of iterations of the design concepts so as to reach to the final design for the deliver phase.

2.5.3. Conclusion

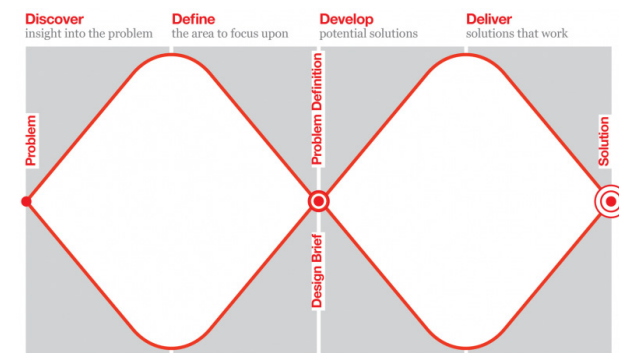Despite their distinctiveness in shapes of the visuals, given design processes follow a similar route. They start with understanding the problem and the context, continue with defining the goal and the area to focus upon. After that, there is an ideation part which considers the possibilities for the design solution. In both processes, ideation - or the phase of concept making - is placed at a climax, which lead the process to a new direction. And, design processes finalize with evaluation sessions to test the solution.

The BE design process has a slight difference from these user-centric design process models. As stated, the BE design has its origins in the brand. Therefore, its process is assumed to be started from the brand and the brief. In other words, as a replacement for the part of understanding the context/problem understanding, designers working on that process focus on understanding, being familiar with the brand. Furthermore, both processes aim at coming up with a design solution. In that sense, while the user-centric approach gives priority to the user when making decisions, a brand-centric approach usually just considers its target group.

There are both similarities and differences observed between user-centric and brand-centric design approaches. Since the knowledge related to the brand experience design process cannot be reached through the literature review, it will be analyzed further in the Exploration section.

2.6. Decision-Making

During the converging phases of an idea generation, design teams assess the ideas that they generated and decide which idea to move on with, and there are two approaches for early idea evaluation decision-making: intuitive and rational (Eling et al., 2015). The intuitive approach can be linked with designers' decision-making through their gut feeling which later will be explained in the exploration part that results from years of experience and gained knowledge. The rational approach, on the other hand, is concerned with finding logical reasons for the design questions in the process. For example, the reason can be related to the user's needs or feasibility of the idea. According to Eling et al. (2015), in order to have an increased quality in idea evaluation, both approaches should be combined. And, to have a higher decision-making speed, the sequence should start with an intuitive approach.

2.7. Combining Visuals and Words in Communication

Judging concepts based on the brand is already a complicated step of the brand experience design process. To reach a consensus on the right brand concept, communication and presentation of arguments are the important aspects of concept judging phase. In the scope of this project, the means used to discuss arguments in the design team and among other stakeholders matter. Based on the studies conducted, in terms of the communication and presentation means, combination of visuals and words creates an optimum efficiency (Pettersson, 1996).

2.8. Conclusion

During the literature review, the gap is validated that there are no inductive or deductive methods for how to design brand experiences nor is there a method for making a product or a service 'on brand'. Moreover, the relationship between the conceptualization phase and brand experience design process is another topic that is not found in the literature. The more detailed knowledge related to 'how the brand experience design process looks' will be generated later through the exploration part.

Within the scope of the project, conceptualization or concept making of brand experience design process will be defined and mentioned as a converging phase (synthesis) -similar to the standard design process- where early/undeveloped ideas form concepts. Since a concept is fragile and tentative (Union, 2018), it plays an important role in deciding the fate of the final design, whether it will communicate the brand in an intended way or not.

Speed and quality are two important factors that predestinate the outcome of decision-making, and concept judging can be perceived as a phase of decision-making in BE design process. Therefore, the findings will be used later in the ideation phase. The sequence of rational approach following the intuitive approach will be aimed for the ideas that will be generated.

The creative process is a multi-dimensional process that targets the multiple areas of the brain to digest the conveyed message. This can be possible through having a framed method of a visual-word combination, which will lead to a better comprehension (Pettersson, 1996). Therefore, in the concept judging process related to a certain brand, the tool that will be designed should include both visuals and words to steer the process.

3. Exploration

This chapter describes the findings of the interviews conducted with the experienced designers that are working with several brands. The findings are analyzed, visualized and concluded to define directions for initial ideas.

3.1. How do designers judge concepts in the brand experience design process?

3.1.1. Goal

This study aimed to see different perspectives of designers from various fields on conceptualization and concept judging phases of the brand experience design process. In detail, I was curious about the tools and criteria they use and the challenges they face during that process. Besides, it was also about learning their definitions of the brand and designers' interactions with different brand constructs.

3.1.2. Method & Participants

To interview, eight designers from different fields are chosen (Figure 5). The interviews are transcribed (Appendix 1), summarized, and the codes are composed for the thematic analysis (Figure 6) (Mortensen, n.d.). In Appendix 2, interview codes for the thematic analysis are given. In addition to the thematic analysis, the similar and recurring terms are clustered. How many times a term was repeated is written in brackets.

Interviewee 1
Design Partner
Gradient Ventures

Interviewee 2
Innovation Consultant
Fabrique

Interviewee 3
Head of Innovation
Rabobank

Interviewee 4
Concept Designer
Just Brands

Interviewee 5
Owner
Design Consultant
THINK+DO

Interviewee 6
Creative Directors
Groen and Boothman

Interviewee 7
Global Design Director
Heineken

Interviewee 8
UX Writer   UX Designer
SHERPA   SHERPA

Figure 5. Participants of the interviews with occupations

Figure 6. Thematic analysis of the interviews

3.1.3. Questions Asked

1.   What is your position at the company?

2.   What do you think about the process of creating a brand experience? How does the process look like?

3.   How do you define the brand? What are the brand elements or characteristics?

4.   How is your brand defined? (if applicable)

5.   I will define the concept as the early/undeveloped version of a design idea, so the version at the conceptualization phase of the design process.
How do you design concepts for the brand? What do you consider when creating concepts? Are there any criteria? What do you get from the brand?

6.   How do you judge concepts/designs if they are on brand? Who judges?

7.   Are there any tools, methods or frameworks that you use to judge concepts/designs?

8.   What is the part most challenging when doing this validation phase?

9.   What can I do to help you and other designers to ease the concept validation process? What are the possible areas to dive deeper?

3.2. Findings

3.2.1. Findings from thematic analysis

As a result of thematic analysis, seventeen (17) topics are created (Figure 7a):
- brand
- branding models that are used for concept making and judging
- brand elements/constructs
- brand definitions
- BE design process
- BE
- design
- understanding the brand, business, and consumers
- concept making
- trends
- core identity element
- what designers need in BE design process
- challenges designers face with during BE design process
- interaction
- judging concepts
- tools designers use to judge concepts
- gut feeling
- design brief
- guidebook
- metaphor technique used for concept making and judging
- visual symbolism
- user test
- decision-makers in the concept judging process
- criteria that a concept should fit
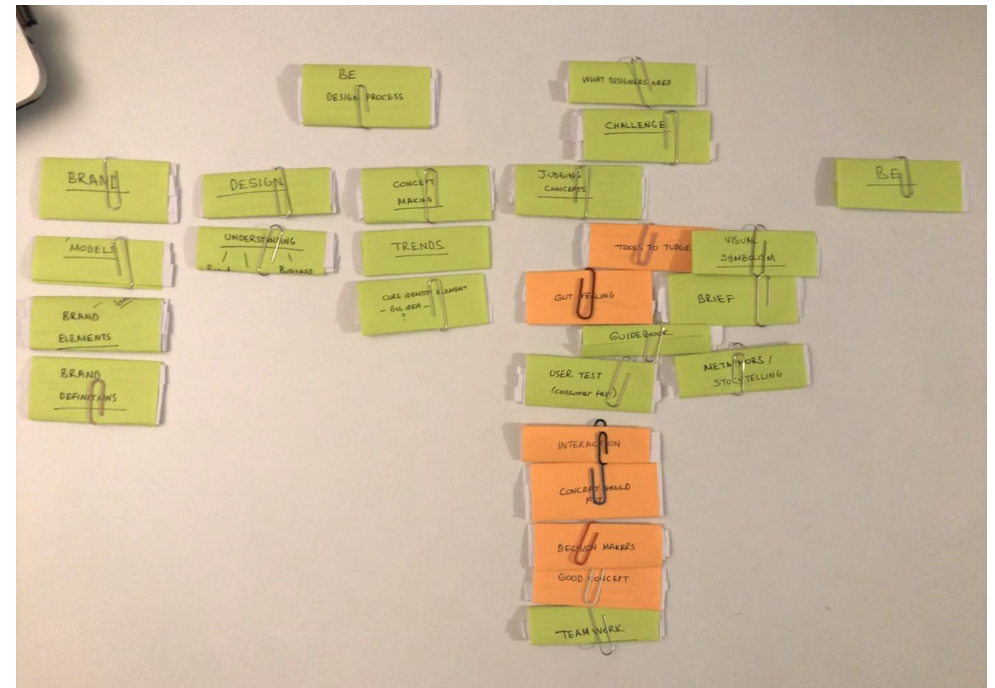- good concept
- teamwork

Figure 7a. Created topics from the thematic analysis of interviews

After the topics are created, their relationship with each other is analyzed (Figure 7b). Following that, knowledge about brand experience design process which focuses on conceptualization is generated (Figure 8).
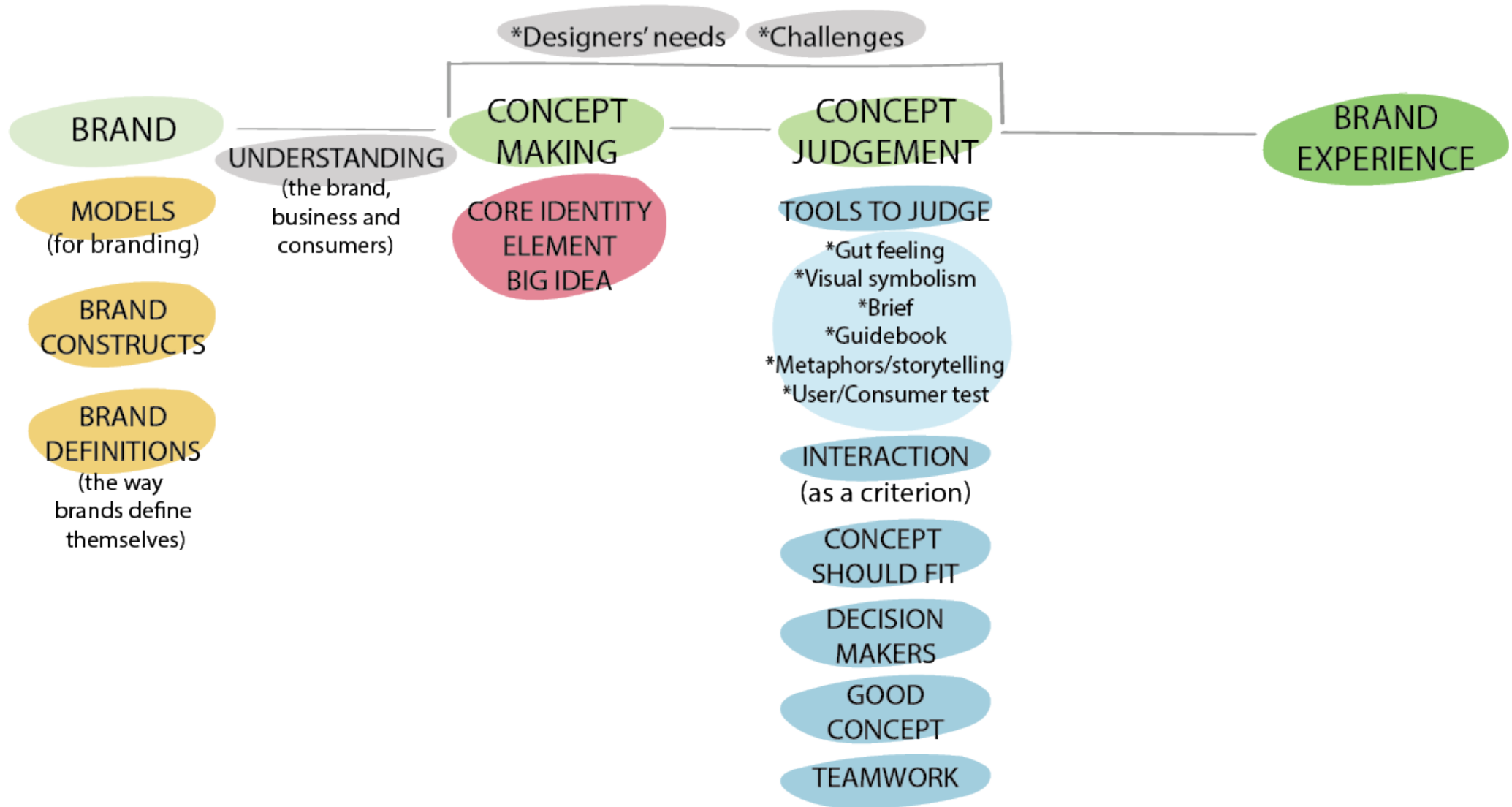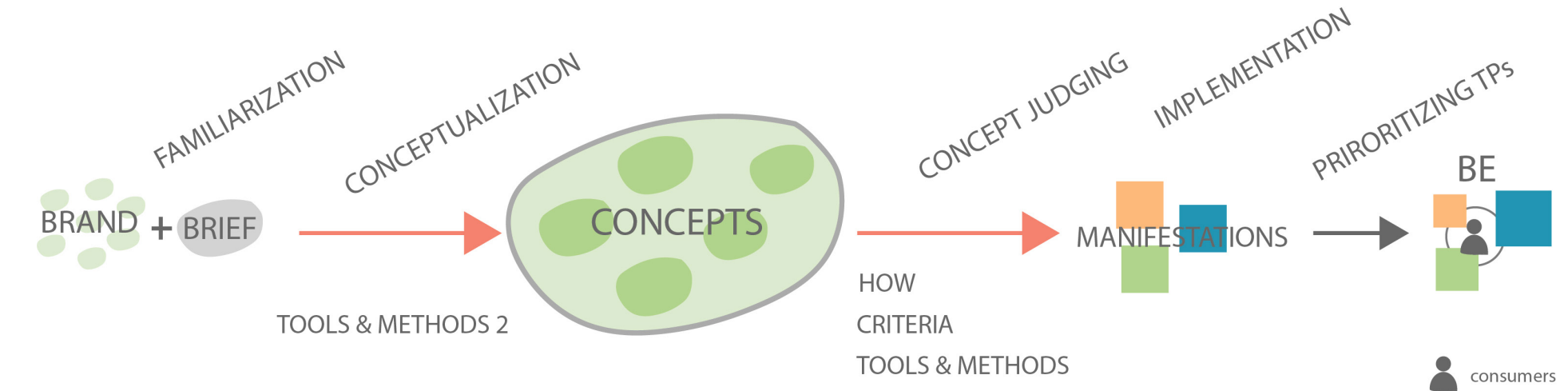
BRAND EXPERIENCE DESIGN PROCESS

*Designers' needs   *Challenges

BRAND

MODELS
(for branding)

BRAND CONSTRUCTS

BRAND DEFINITIONS
(the way brands define themselves)

UNDERSTANDING
(the brand, business and consumers)

CONCEPT MAKING

CORE IDENTITY ELEMENT BIG IDEA

CONCEPT JUDGEMENT

TOOLS TO JUDGE
*Gut feeling
*Visual symbolism
*Brief
*Guidebook
*Metaphors/storytelling
*User/Consumer test

INTERACTION
(as a criterion)

CONCEPT SHOULD FIT

DECISION MAKERS

GOOD CONCEPT

TEAMWORK

BRAND EXPERIENCE

Figure 7b. Searching for the relationship of created topics

BRAND EXPERIENCE DESIGN PROCESS

FAMILIARIZATION

CONCEPTUALIZATION

CONCEPT JUDGING

IMPLEMENTATION

PRIRORITIZING TPs

BRAND + BRIEF

CONCEPTS

MANIFESTATIONS

BE

TOOLS & METHODS 2

HOW
CRITERIA
TOOLS & METHODS

consumers

BRAND
CONSTRUCTS

Brand DNA
(purpose, personality, positioning)
Brand values
Brand essence
Brand identity
Brand heritage
Brand strategy
Tone of voice

HOW

- By validating emotions &
feelings
- Through discussion
- By considering interaction way
- Through teamwork

CRITERIA

- Brand personality
- Brand values
- Brand identity
- What the brand stands for
- Brand positioning
- Tone of voice
- Brand heritage
- Brand experience

TOOLS & METHODS

- Consumer tests
- Sticker-voting method

Based on
brand's perception in mind

- Mood boards
- Storytelling
- Metaphors

Based on
consistency of the story and
brand personality

- Brand guide book
- Branding models

Based on
brand rules/criteria

Figure 8. Brand experience design process with the focus of one touchpoint (TP) design

After the thematic analysis of interviews, the brand experience design process is visualized. The process has five steps. It starts with the familiarization that consists of the brief and the brand. The brand has its constructs that are the elements making the brand unique. These constructs can be exemplified as the brand purpose, personalities, values, essence, identity, and tone of voice. The brief acts as a filter in the process. During this first step, designers understand the brand and the brief and become familiar with them to be able to conceptualize intended touchpoints directed by the brief.

The second step is the conceptualization where designers come up with several concepts. During the conceptualization, some designers use various tools and techniques like mood boards, storytelling, and metaphors to facilitate their design process (mentioned various tools and methods are shown as the second group under tools and methods on the right bottom in Figure 8).

The third step is the concept judging. This step occurs as a result of the concepttualization phase. This step aims to select the most prominent concept that is 'on brand' through concept judging. During the interviews, participants provided some practical information about the way they judge concepts. According to that information, *discussion and teamwork are two important components of this phase.* They also consider consumers' way of interacting with the concepts and the brand emotions that the concept conveys.

Besides the practical information given above, designers have several criteria when judging concepts, and they use some tools and methods to facilitate this judgment. Criteria that is defined by the participants consist of brand constructs and the brand experience. In other words, *designers see brand constructs as criteria to judge concepts. Besides, they expect from an 'on brand' concept to fit the current brand experience of the brand.*

In Figure 8, tools and methods that are written under the arrow of concept judging refer to the means designers used when judging concepts. It consists of consumer tests, the voting method with stickers, mood boards, the storytelling, metaphors, brand guide books, and branding models. It is possible to group these tools and methods in three (right bottom in Figure 8). Consumer tests and the sticker-voting method is about the brand perception in the minds of the consumers and people who judge. This perception is highly related to what each brand constructs mean and the effect they create. Another group is the mood boards, storytelling and use of metaphors. They are about the consistency of the story created, and the story is created mostly based on the brand personality. The last group consists of the brand guide book and branding models. They have their roots linked to the brand criteria as mentioned before. The brand guide books have several rules concerning the brand-related stimuli, and each branding model is defined by different brand constructs. The analysis of the brand constructs will be mentioned and visualized in the following parts.
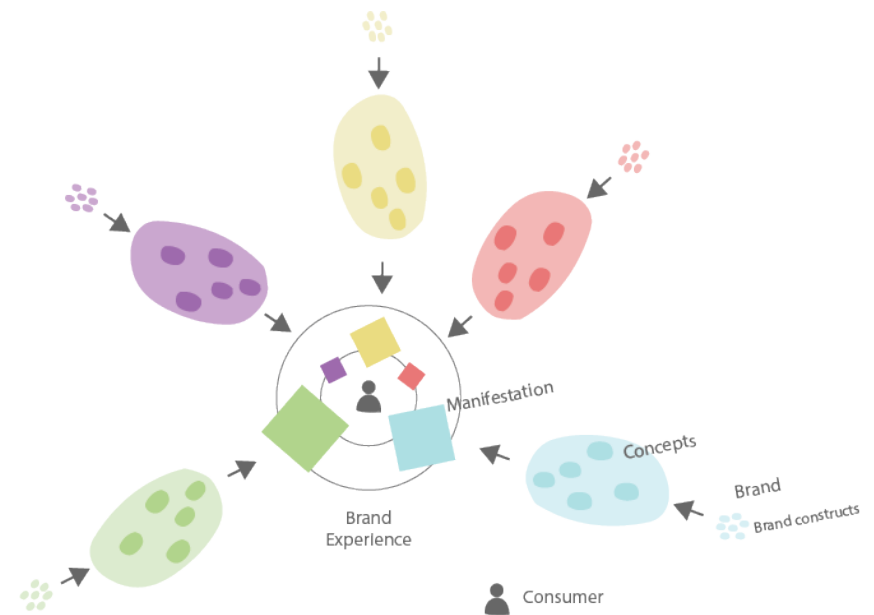

Figure 9. Brand experience design multilinear process

The fourth step is implementation. Within the scope of the project fourth and fifth steps remain superficial. Distinctive colors used represent simultaneously ongoing different touchpoint design processes, which is explained in Figure 9. According to that figure, *the brand experience design process is defined as multilinear*.

The fifth and the last step when reaching brand experience is prioritization of touchpoints since one or more touchpoints can be strategically more important for the company. When creating brand experiences, completion of this process is not sufficient. The interaction of consumers with the created touchpoints also plays a crucial role. Moreover, the success of the brand experience can be measured with the match of the company's intended effect for the experience and the experience that consumers lived.
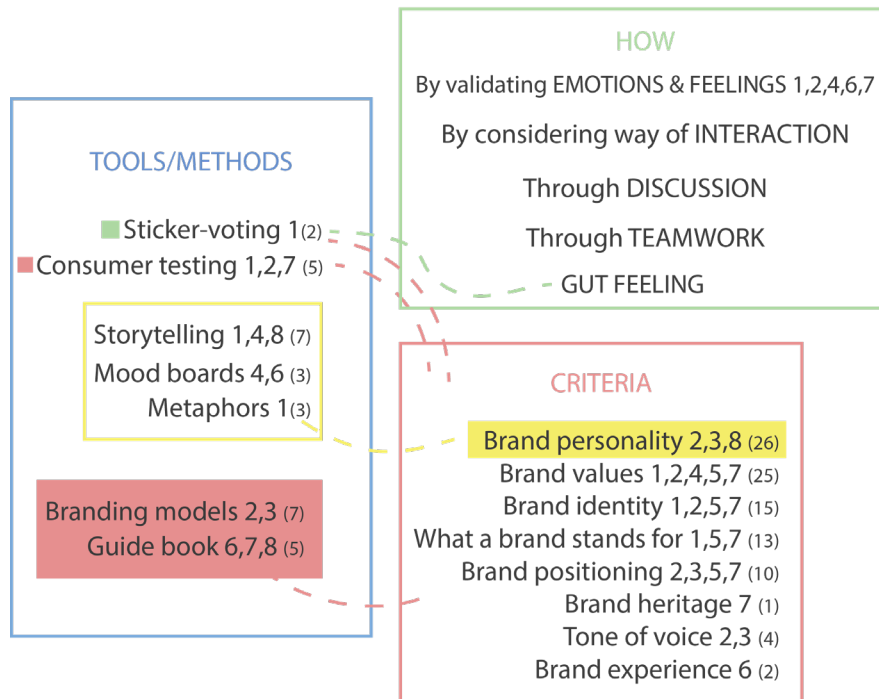
3.2.2. Benefiting From Quantitative Data

Figure 10. Analysis of 'how, tools/methods and criteria' of concept judging

The thematic analysis was helpful to define the focus that answers the research questions. The orange areas that are shown in Figure 8 point out the focus which is the part of the conceptualization and concept judging. The elements that define 'how, criteria and tools & methods' of concept judging loom large for the project. Therefore, how many times brand constructs or tool/method are mentioned (in brackets) by which interviewee is analyzed (Figure 10). The connections are shown with the dotted lines. While 'how' of concept judging is a general list of requirements for judging concepts, 'tools/methods' and 'criteria' has a more interlinked relationship with each other. All the elements in the 'tools/methods' have a connection with the 'criteria'. *Therefore, 'criteria' is the center of focus of the study.*

Among all the criteria brand personality was mentioned 26 times in total. Moreover, interviewee 4 and 5 have mentioned the brand value under the meaning of brand personality. Therefore, brand personality was mentioned more than 26 times, and the brand value was mentioned less than 25 times but more than the brand identity. In addition, since in the tools/methods part, storytelling, mood boards and metaphors are connected to the brand personality, their importance increases. In order to better understand the relationships among the brand constructs, six branding models, which are mentioned in the interviews, are analyzed.

3.2.3. Analysis of Branding Models

The six models, which are mentioned in interviews, are Brand Key by Unilever, Birkigt and Stadler personality model, the brand identity onion, the brand DNA model, Aaker's model and Kapferer's brand identity prism (Figure 11). In the overall analysis, brand personality is located almost in all models. Following the brand personality, brand values, target group, competitive market and essence come respectively.
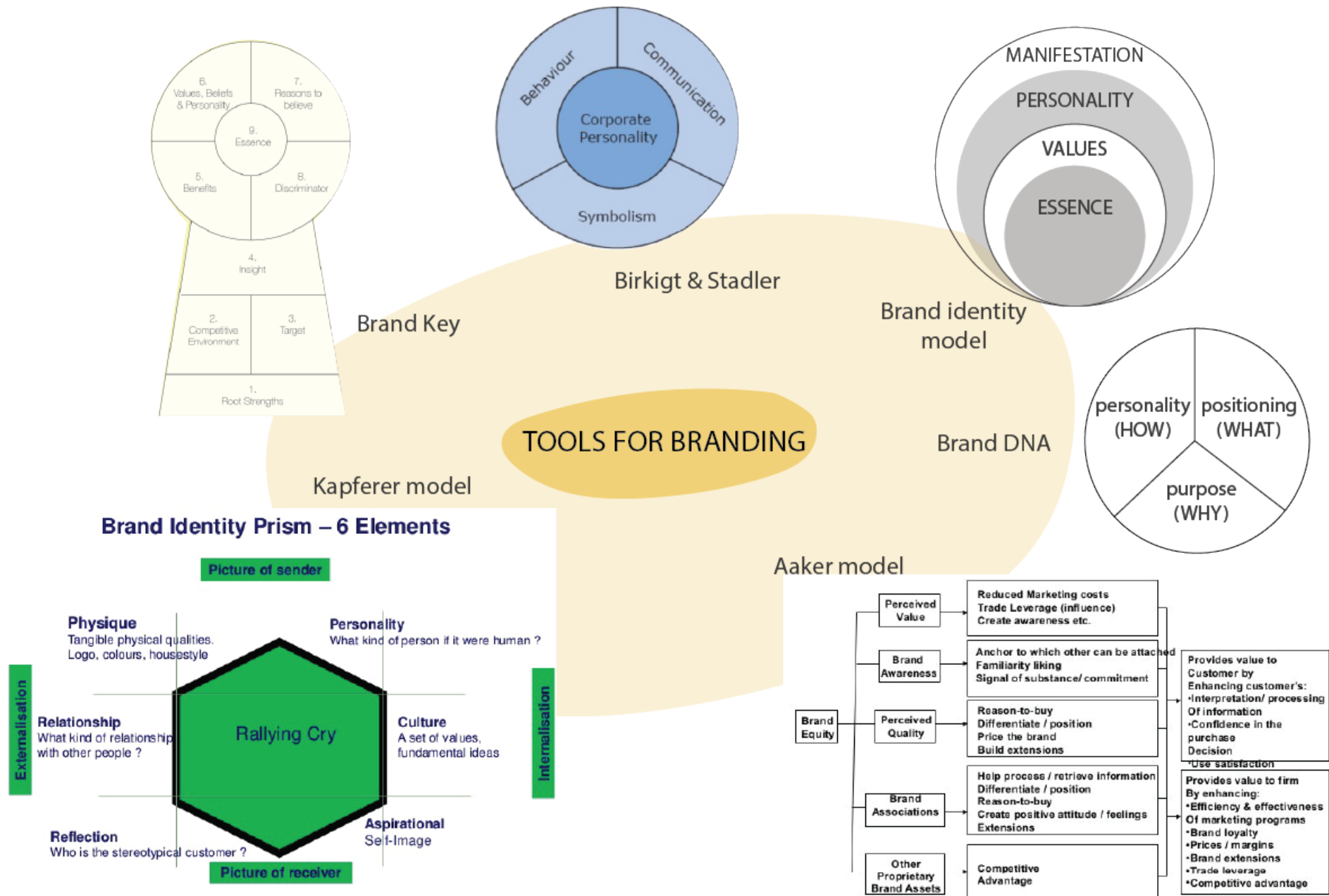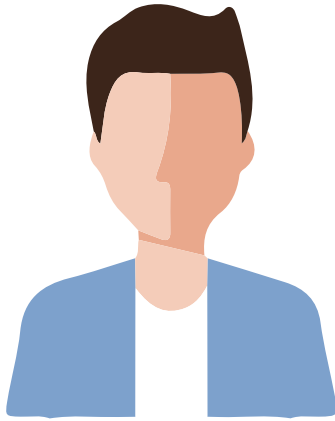
Figure 11. Six branding models mentioned in the interviews

3.2.4. Overall Analysis of Each Interview

Interviewee 1

The BE design is a journey starting from brand strategy and ending with validation with real people. In the middle of this journey, there is concept making. And, to validate a concept with real people, it is tested in the user/consumer tests that if the concept is achieving the targeted strategy. Asking consumers about certain personality traits related to how does the concept feel can help validation.

When it comes to concept making and judging, the brand constructs will be used depends on how people interact with the brand. Still, visual symbolism, color, typography and making use of metaphors are the elements and methods that can be used both in concept making and concept judging. Especially, connecting metaphors with the concepts is beneficial because they can encapsulate many meanings.
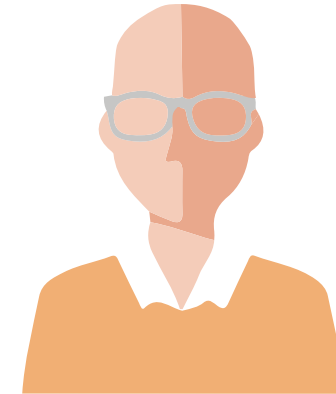
Interviewee 2

The BE design process starts with analysis, then, insights appear to compose the brand DNA. The brand DNA helps journey of the brand to the manifestations. Brand DNA model, Brand Key model and Birkigt Stadler's model can be used in branding. Especially, when a brand is being translated into a product, Birkigt Stadler's model, which puts brand personality in the middle and symbols, communication and behavior around the personality, is helpful.

How to judge concepts depends on the way of interactions of consumers with the concepts. When judging an advertising poster, symbols and communication get involved, but when it is a washing machine, judgment is made according to the behavior of the concept.

There are branding models that can be applied to the concept making and judging stages. Brand DNA model, Kapferer model, Aaker model and Brand Key and brand identity model are some useful ones. Among these models, brand DNA is an outstanding one. It consists of purpose, positioning and personality. While personality together with tone of voice can provide a lot of direction for the visual representation of a brand, positioning helps with the target group and decisions related to the target. Lastly, purpose covers the other two and also defines directions for markets and business domains. Brand awareness, recognition and preference are other criteria to judge concepts. In addition, brief coming from the client can also be used as a tool to judge.

Interviewee 3

When designers cannot explain the reasoning of their actions like how they create concepts or judge concepts, they call that 'how' as intuition or gut feeling. For the interviewee 4, the brand personality and storytelling were the hidden terms meaning the gut feeling. The brand personality can be used in making mood boards to represent the feeling of a concept. All the colors and materials used in the visuals, and all the things creating a certain perception in the designer's mind create that feeling.

Connecting a concept with a story is another way of creating and judging concepts. A designer can judge concepts by looking at the consistency of the story. In addition, there is a challenge in the process about how designers communicate the things in their heads.
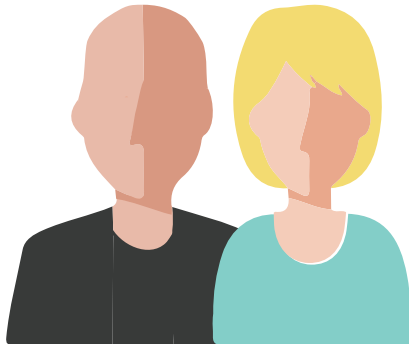
Interviewee 4

Interviewee 5

The essence is the core idea driving the brand and it is also related to what a brand stands for. Designers should be aware of the essence and judge the concepts by considering the essence. In the brand experience design process, the essence is defined together with the three pillars as follows: how can we differentiate from our competitors, what are our core competencies and what do we deliver to the client.

Brand journeys can be valuable sources steering the brand experience design process. The brand is strongly connected to the business, and it can be defined as a bridge at the point of interaction between business and user. **The brand also acts as a filter in the concept decision process.** However, a bigger part of the process is about understanding the brand, where it stands.

Interviewee 6

A brief is an important component of the brand experience design process. It defines the designers' responsibilities. However, a brief is not something coming with a project. Designers may also create a brief based on the "why" related to the brand. Understanding the brand is one of the most essential tasks in the BE design process. Understanding the brand connects designers with the feeling of the brand, and helps them to create a form language.

Overall, designers judge concepts with using brand experience filter. In other words, a concept that is 'on brand' should fit the intended brand experience. Designers that are more involved in making then strategy part of the brand, use the word gut feeling more and they do not work with branding models.

When defining a brand for the fast consumer goods market, color can play a bigger role. Strategic brand documents, also called brand guide books, can be used for concept making and judging. They define a brand's essence, values, benefits, reasons to believe and target group.
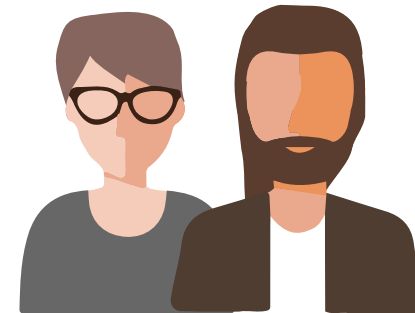
Designers working with that same brand for years gain familiarization with the brand and its constructs. Therefore, they start calling their experiences and knowledge as intuition. **This intuition helps designers to judge concepts.** The brand experience is defined as everything related to the brand, so it is never one thing in isolation. It is the full experience around the brand and developed in multidisciplinary teams.

Interviewee 7

User experience designers have a different way of working than designers dedicated design brand experiences. The difference stems from perception towards people interacting with the concept. While a brand experience designer perceives those people as consumers, a user experience designer has the perception of a user towards them. In the UX design process, that causes overlooking brand rules. Whichever the process is, both communication between the client and designers and communication in the design team are important.

User experience design methods and techniques like journey maps can be adapted to the brand experience design process. Concerning this, interviewee 8 has developed a brand personality map to help their clients.

Interviewee 8

3.2.5. Overall Analysis of Transcripts

Brand & Brand Constructs

• When it was asked, "How do you define your brand?", two participants defined their brands as the following "small, agile and smart" and "masculine". In addition, there were answers like "green", "network", "guiding companies" and "our DNA is tech meets emotion." Interviewee 1 has defined his company by using the words "teary", "bossy" and "servant".

• Interviewees have defined the brand differently. According to interviewee 2,3, 4 and 7, a brand is a set of associations in consumers' minds. While interviewee 3 defined the brand as a notion that aims to create and maintain interactions, interviewee 5 defined it as a bridge at the point of interaction between user and business. In addition, interviewee 1 has defined the brand as units of culture memes helping us to differentiate certain things.

• There are several brand constructs mentioned in the interviews, which are brand heritage, personality, identity, value, positioning, strategy, tone of voice and what a brand stands for. Among these, brand personality was mentioned 26 times by interviewee 2, 3 and 8. All were using the same description when defining brand personality, which is "like it's a human being". The term value was mentioned 25 times by the interviewee 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7. However, interviewee 4 and 5 were using the term "brand value" to point out the same meaning "like it's a human being".

• Following the brand personality and brand values, the brand identity was mentioned 15 times, what a brand stands for 13, positioning 10 and tone of voice 4 times. Furthermore, brand heritage was mentioned only one time by interviewee 7.

- Brand awareness, preference and recognition were the terms used repetitively by the interviewee 3. He stated that they are the metrics which can be measured. How many people are aware of the brand, do people recognize the brand easily, or do people prefer that brand can be the questions to measure quantitatively. The result of measurements shows how successful the brand concept is in terms of reflecting the brand.

- Branding models are mentioned 7 times in total by interviewee 2 and 3. They mentioned six branding models, which are Brand Key by Unilever, Birkigt and Stadler, Kapferer, Aaker, brand DNA and brand identity models. Among these models, five of them include the term brand personality, four of them include the term values and two of them include terms brand essence and target group. Besides the 'target group' was mentioned by 5 interviewees and essence was mentioned 4 times by interviewee 5.

- Participants from UX design discipline have stated that 12 archetypes by Carl Gustav Jung give direction to current brand personalities. They said they made a personality map similar to the customer journey map which includes interactions with several touchpoints. In the personality map, they analyzed the personalities of the brand.

- Interviewee 8 talked about the relationship between UX design and branding. They start the UX design process after the branding part is done by some other design agencies. They usually do not change anything related to the brand. However, when the brand rules contradict with the UX, they sometimes do not follow those rules.

- Interviewee 1 mentioned "visual symbolism" several times. In addition, interviewee 2 mentioned the brand model by Birkigt & Stadler where symbols are considered, and he explained symbols as what a concept looks like.

- Interviewee 5 mentioned the term 'core identity element' 6 times in his interview. He benefits from the core identity element when designing concepts. The core identity element of a brand is usually the first associations that comes to the mind when the brand is thought.

Judging concepts

- There are contradicting opinions on the importance of color when judging concepts. Interviewee 6 thinks it is the last thing to check, and interviewee 1,4 and 7 think it plays a big role.

- Interviewee 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7 have the common opinion that intuition plays a role in deciding which concept is 'on brand'.

- Designers use various ways of judging concepts. The brief, consumer tests, and guide/stylebooks of the brand are the widely used tools to judge concepts. Mood boards, storytelling and branding models come after. In addition, interviewee 1 mentioned the concept voting method with stickers and use of metaphors.

- Designers benefit from mood boards, guide books, brand constructs, form language (defined by the brand), the brief and variety when creating concepts. And, they also consider the way of interaction in this part of the process.

- Interviewee 2 stated that how someone interacts with a concept creates a difference in how to judge a concept. He exemplified the different judgment applied to an advertisement poster and a washing machine. In addition, interviewee 1 stated that the interaction way is important when selecting brand-related stimuli which will be used for concept making.

- Use of metaphors in the BE design process is mentioned 8 times by the interviewee 1. According to him, metaphors can encapsulate wide meaning.

Brand Experience and Design Process

• Communication was mentioned both as a need and a challenge in the BE design process by the interviewee 4, 6 and 8. It is said by the interviewee 6 that honesty, objectivity and ability to discuss are important when working together.

• Use of stories in BE design process is mentioned by interviewee 4 and 8. Both of their companies' brands have their stories, and they get inspired by those stories. While interviewee 8 connects the brand story with how they work and their purpose, interviewee 4 connects stories with her way of concept making and judging. Moreover, making mood boards is another way of telling the stories for interviewee 4.

• The brand experience was defined as "an ecosystem or full experience, including all the touchpoints" by interviewee 7, "total experience connected to all senses" by interviewee 6, and "as any means of delivering the brand" by interviewee 3. Interviewee 1 and 4 have used the word "feeling" when mentioning brand experiences. Moreover, brand experience is another criterion that a concept should fit into.

• Interviewee 1 and 6 have mentioned the word "understanding", but int. 1 has meant understanding both the brand and consumers and their relationship with the brand, and int. 6 has meant understanding the brand. Moreover, interviewee 2 also thinks BE design process starts with an analysis phase and divides the process into brand creation and brand management.

• Interviewee 5 was focused on using customer journeys when starting a BE design process. Journeys were including current situation analysis of the brand, purchase activity and interaction with the touchpoints.

3.3. Conclusions

3.3.1. Brand & Brand Constructs

• The reason that everybody uses different words to define what a brand is is because it is a very broad term in meaning and can cover several aspects of business, human and touchpoint relationship. At the same time, a brand is a living entity located in people's minds, which means it changes and gets bigger also in meaning. And, despite the differences in definitions, words representing associations with the brand and personality traits were the common points in the definitions.

• Although some designers use different naming for brand personalities like brand values, it is a common perception for designers that brand has a personality like a human being. Perceiving brand as a human being can help the concept judging process.

• Although measurement results of brand awareness, recognition and preference can tell the designer about the success of the concept, this success does not directly show if the concept is 'on brand'. In addition, if the concept is on brand, then it should raise brand awareness since the concept itself is an early/undeveloped version of the final design, the measurement does not completely reflect the results.

3.3.2. Judging Concepts

- Concept judging is a process where there are a lot of human interactions. Good communication and discussion skills are needed to steer it.

- People were using mentioned brand-related terms as criteria to both conceptualize and judge concepts. Moreover, how many times and by how many people a term was mentioned give information about the importance of the term in the process.

- The tone of voice is a brand construct that is already connected to brand personality. However, it wasn't perceived as important as the brand personality. Brand heritage is not as important a term either in comparison to values, identity and personality and what a brand stands for.

- The brief, guide books and branding models all cover certain brand constructs when judging concepts like brand values, personality or essence. Those brand constructs also define which questions will be asked in a consumer test. Therefore, defining which elements play a bigger role is crucial. Storytelling, mood boards and metaphors also reflect those elements. For example, mood boards can translate brand personality into visuals.

- Making mood boards, visual symbolism, creating stories and making use of metaphors are all connected and are about having a consistent story related to the concept designed. Therefore, stories help designers to understand and define the brand. To do that, brand values and personality should be well defined.

- Although designers do consumer testing, the biggest part of the concept judging action is done internally.

- Although the core identity element of the brand is important when making and judging concepts, it does not give the intended effect of the brand when the core identity element is directly copied for another touchpoint.

- Although only two people have paid attention, the way someone interacts with the concept is important to judge concepts properly. Comments concerning color also stem from the consumer's way of interacting with the concept: is it something visual or functional? When it is a fashion concept or fast-moving consumer goods the color is more important in judging the concept-brand relation.

- The elements used in concept making also represent the elements of concept judging. Moreover, both have the criteria of brand constructs. Therefore, methods and tools that help concept creation can also help concept judging.

- Although many interviewees have said that intuition plays an important role in judging concepts designers do not only use their intuition but also use various techniques as mentioned. The thing they called intuition results from the years of experience and knowledge.

- Designers who strongly believes in intuition when judging concepts, do not make use of branding models. That is also because visuality and feelings play a big role in their design processes. However, still, they use the terminologies composing the branding models like brand personality. The fact that almost all the branding models that interviewees use include brand personality, and even the interviewees who do not use branding models work with the brand personality, shows the validity of brand personality element when judging concepts if they are on brand or not.

3.3.3. Brand Experience (BE) and Design Process

• Based on the interviews, brand experiences can be defined as overall experiences that result from the brand's and brand-related stimuli's interaction with the senses of consumers by evoking certain feelings and emotions. In this definition, brand-related stimuli cover all the touchpoints of the brand. Definition of brand experiences also informs about capabilities of a concept. A concept that is made for the brand/to create brand experiences interacts with the senses and can direct emotions and feelings.

• The BE design process starts with the analysis where you understand and familiarize yourself with the brand, business and the consumers. The analysis is an essential part of the process. Use of journeys is a good way of easing that understanding.

• User experience design is interlinked with the brand experience design process in some cases where products are not only bought by but also used by the consumers. From that perspective, UX serves for "users". However, the brand experience design guides, considers and sometimes serves for the "consumer" depending on the brand DNA. Furthermore, the methods used in user experience design can be adapted to the brand experience design.

3.4. Design Directions

• The tool should not overlook the fact that concept judging is process in which many stakeholders are involved. It should guide people through the process, but also should allow them to have discussions.

• Brand constructs are an important piece of both concept making and judging. Among the brand constructs the most important one when judging concepts is the brand personality. Following the brand personality, brand values are also important in the process. Moreover, the tool may be used both in concept making and concept judging since these two steps of the process are interrelated.

• Storytelling is an essential element of both concept making and concept judging phases. Therefore, the tool can benefit from storytelling.

• Every concept has a different way of interacting with its consumers/users. However, a tool cannot cover all the senses and all kinds of interactions in the scope of the current project.

• Every brand conveys certain feelings and emotions through its touchpoints. These feelings and emotions should be part of concept judging process.

• The core identity element can be considered, but it should not overrule the brand personality and brand values.

• UX methods like journey map can help to steer the judging process.

• For the tool that will be designed the priority should be for the internal use.

4. Ideation & Iteration

This chapter gives an overview of the initial ideas and explains the implication of the ideas in the evaluation sessions with design students from Strategic Product Design specialization in Industrial Design Engineering faculty. In the end, findings are presented for further development of the tool through the conceptualization.

4.1. Initial Ideas

4.1.1. Introduction

Design Elements

In the previous sections, it is explored that **brand personalities**, **brand values** and **brand emotions** are the most important elements of the concept judging phase in the brand experience design process. Therefore, these elements constitute the basis of the ideation.

How?

As explored in the analysis phase, concept judging is a process where often more stakeholders are involved, and discussions are cornerstones of it. Thus, in the initial ideas, **the aim was to steer the decision-making of the designers through discussions.** To do this, the cards with words and pictures are prepared. It is expected that the cards will be the conversation starter. Furthermore, since storytelling was discovered as an interchangeable element for concept making and concept judging, one of the initial ideas benefits from it.

When?

Although the focus of the project is on concept judging in brand experience design process, it is learned that concept making and judging are two strongly connected phases of that process. Therefore, the ideas can be used reversibly in these phases.

4.1.2. Ideas and Test Materials

There were two ideas: brand visualization mood board and brand-target storyboard. To use in the application of both ideas, the word cards have been created (Figure 12a). For the word list, Aaker's brand personality traits, Canva Design School's brand values, and Pieter Desmet's PrEmo tool are used. There were 20 brand personality traits, 38 brand values, and 14 product emotions in total. Following the word cards, by using unsplash.com, picture cards have been made (Figure 12b). 28 pictures representing the selected personality traits, 43 pictures for selected brand values, and 32 pictures to represent selected emotions. Card sets are given in Appendix 3. In both card sets, personality cards marked with yellow, value cards marked with green and emotion cards marked with red. The purpose behind it was to see designers' choices and detect the most frequently used card group.

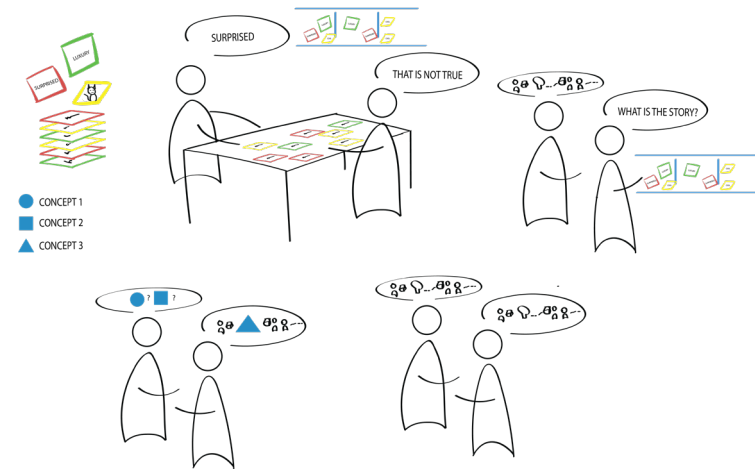Figure 12a. Word cards 12b. Picture cards

Brand Visualization Mood Board

Brand-Target Storyboard

To begin with, when designers finish making their concepts for a specific brand, they are going to benefit from these ideas to judge their concepts. For the first initial idea, brand visualization mood board, participants are given 72 word and 103 picture cards. First, they familiarize themselves with the card decks. Then, they will be asked to think of the brand that they work for and visualize it on an A2 sheet by using the card decks.

Ideally, discussions are an important part of this making part since selecting images and words requires decision making and reaching a consensus. In the end, what they built will look like a mood board of that brand. When they complete building the mood board, it is the second part of decision making, where designers discuss whether each concept fits the mood board. In other words, they discuss and select the concept that fits best to the mood board they made.

This idea is built on storytelling. Like the first initial idea, designers are given the same card sets to get familiarized with them. Concepts will be already designed before participants start testing the idea. Since it will be asking participants to draw, to make them more comfortable and have an opinion of story-making, an example sketch is prepared (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Example storyline drawing for participants

Figure 13 shows a sequence of actions in a simple storyline. The story starts with the exposition of actions, and following an inciting incident, rising action appears. Then, a crisis occurs where the events are tangled. With the climax event, the chaos ends step by step.

After the familiarization, designers will be asked to think of the brand that they designed concepts for. Following that, they will create a story by imagining how that brand behaves (brand personality), how that brand makes people feel (emotions that the brand conveys) and the values that brand represents. When creating that story, designers will be thinking of the relationship between the brand and its target group. In the end, they are going to judge the concepts they made by asking questions like which concept is acting like the character we made or how many different personalities are in this story, and which concept can act like that. This end part requires strong discussion skills to make a concept selection.

4.2. Evaluation Sessions

There were two evaluation sessions to test initial ideas. The second session was including the iterated versions. Both sessions were held in the Industrial Design Faculty with the design students from Strategic Product Design (SPD) specialization. The purpose of having the session with SPD students was to benefit from their knowledge on the brand perspective. The first session was made with three, and the second one with two participants. Design concepts were previously made by the participants based on the brand they created. Brand personalities, values and emotions were also formed previously by the participants. Test evaluation materials can be found in Appendix 4.

4.2.1. Session 1
There were four design concepts. There was one concept more developed than others.

Session Summary

First, participants were asked two short questions: the concept that each one trusts more and the criteria behind their choice. They answered the questions based on their personal opinions. Answers were not announced until the end of the test. However, they all marked the same concept which was the final/most developed one.

To start the session, two card sets are delivered: one with visuals and the other one with words. Then, participants were asked to realize the first initial idea, brand visualization mood board. It was made based on the associations they have regarding the brand, how it behaves, its values and the emotions that the brand conveys.

During the session, there were times when participants looked for some specific pictures which were not in the card sets. They added the word empathic to the word cards. They used 21 pictures and 8 words in total for the mood board. Among them, pictures/words ratios were as follows: 5/1 for emotion cards, 10/4 for value cards and 6/3 for personality cards. In addition, when they were working on the emotions they focused on the emotions that the brand wants to convey rather than the emotions that the target group has.

After the mood board part, the session moved on with the second idea. The simple storyline was explained to the participants. To make the story, they would benefit from the mood board. In the beginning, they were not confident with how to draw. However, the example of a storyline made them feel relaxed and confident. They created the story by using both the visuals and words, and they also drew on paper with a marker. They used 11 pictures and 5 words of cards in total. However, there were 2 emotions written on paper which they did not use cards for. Among the cards used, picture/word ratios were as follows: 5/1 for emotion cards, 3/2 for value cards and 3/2 for personality cards.

CONSENT FORM

What is this study about

The purpose of the study is to understand how design students work with the tool I designed for judging design concepts if they are on-brand or not. Your participation in this study will help improving the tool.

Your participation in this study is voluntary

You can take a break any time.

Information I want to collect

I will explain how the tool works and ask you to use that tool for the concepts you designed for the course. I will ask questions at the beginning and at the end, and during the test I will observe, video record and guide you.

Privacy of the data collected

I will use your comments and video records anonymously in my graduation report.

Your consent

Please sign this form showing that you consent to me collecting these data.

I give my consent:

☐ For the session to be recorded

☐ For the records to be used anonymously in the graduation report.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

---

the test:

y concepts did you create?

ou usually developed?

out the method you have just experienced? Did it help?

efore the test, is it same with the result of the test? What

el you like or dislike about it?

on of the discussion to concept selection?

dgement? Why?

Participant: _____

Date: __/__/__

Instructions: For each of the following statements, mark one box that best describes your opinion.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

COMMUNITY

EFFICIENCY   INTELLIGENCE   HOPE / OPTIMISM

Next step was concept judging. It is asked to judge the concepts by looking at the story and the mood board. First, they could not start a discussion to judge them. Then, I interrupted them by asking some questions like "which aspects of concept 1 is matching with the story?". Together, we checked concepts one by one. Mostly, the words were used to judge. Moreover, for the story, participants marked where they want the brand to be involved and which concept fits those areas.

They wrote down the concepts separately and placed the words that fit under. In the end, there were 2 words under concept 1, no words under the second one, 4 words under the third concept and 3 words under the fourth concept. So, the concept with most words was the third one, but they selected the last one because the word "strong" belongs only to the fourth one, and that word was more important than others. In the end, they again checked the story to understand which capabilities the brand should have and how can they improve the concept based on the should-have-capabilities.

Following the judgment, a short interview was conducted. In the interview, they have stated that the mood board was easier to do, but it was also quicker, which caused incompleteness. They said that if they could have benefited from their past work related to brand DNA and other works, they could have made it more complete. When the discussion happened, the storyboard did help to see the points that must be connected for a successful concept. So, they learned through the storytelling how to build a successful concept, and how to improve current concepts.

The answers of two questions asked in the beginning were announced. They all already knew which concept was more on the brand before the test, which was the fourth one. However, they said that the ideas made them see the rationale behind their choices. Gut feeling is used a lot in concept judging, but usually, they do not know the "why" behind it.

As currently, there are no tools and methods about how to judge, they said that they would use these ideas in the judgment process of concepts. In addition, they stated that they need guidance during the use of these ideas. Having more visuals and words to be inspired more was their final recommendation.

Conclusions

• Pictures were more comfortable to work with. However, there are some words harder to visualize. Therefore, they need both card decks. Moreover, there weren't any significant differences in the number of personality cards, value cards, and emotion cards. The ratio of pictures/words has decreased from mood board to storyboard, so they used the words and pictures almost equally in the storyboard. They used fewer cards and more drawing in the story part.

• They communicate emotions better with pictures rather than words.

• Using the same card set has caused disruption with the mood board. Therefore, cards should be doubled for testing the mood board and storyboard.

• From time to time, participants needed to remind themselves that the focus is brand. Therefore, there can be a clear explanation in the beginning about how to make the mood board or the storyboard.

• Seeing a badly drawn example for the story making part of the test, made the participants feel more confident and relaxed about it.

• Discussions were weak during the mood board building. However, that can be because of that they already worked on the brand and they knew the brand.

• Although they did not speak it out loud, they needed more guidance and/or triggers during the judgment process.

• The concepts they built was not equally developed which, also affected the decision-making process.

• Along with the discussions, the third concept has more common points with the work they did. However, that concept did not reflect the word "strong" which was the most important aspect of the brand. Therefore, they eliminated the third concept, so there are some emotions, personalities, and values more important than others. They are the main ones that play a bigger role in judging concepts.

• They could not differentiate the emotions, personalities, and values.

• The story part was more helpful in how to strengthen the concept and how to make the best fitting concept or concept making.

Findings

First, it is understood that words and images are equally important for concept judging. Some words cannot be visualized. Moreover, one picture can carry various meanings for different designers. Therefore, both images and words will be kept in the following sessions.

Second, it was visible that participants need more guidance on how to keep the focus on the brand and what to discuss when deciding. Therefore, there can be special cards to provide guidance through the idea testing and to steer discussions.

Finally, there was a problem with the prioritization of the words and images in the mood board idea. Some words and images were more important than the others, and those important ones swung the balance. Thus, for the next session, it will be asked of the participants to place the cards according to their importance level.

4.2.2. Session 2

Design concepts of the participants were not ready yet, so the focus of the test was judging the mood boards they made. There were 2 mood boards in the test. However, there was also the mixed (the third) one which they did not bring to the test. Therefore, that one was out of the scope. I will call their mood boards as their concepts while expressing the course of events.

Session Summary

After signing the consent forms, participants were asked two questions. They were asked to answer the questions based on their personal opinions. The questions were concerning the concept each one trusts more and the criteria behind the choice. I did not announce the answers until the end of the test. Indeed, participants have selected different mood boards with different criteria.

To begin with, the picture and word cards were introduced. First, participants were asked to make the brand visualization mood board. To do the mood board, they were asked to draw three eccentric circles, and place the cards with priority in the center. This time, there were also stimulus cards (Figure 14) that contain some sentences or questions to guide and stimulate both mood board and storyboard making.
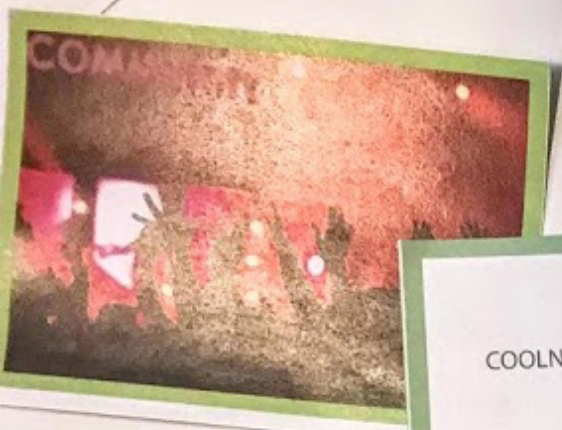
They started making the mood board from the pictures, and then they continued with words. However, they did not benefit from the stimulus cards. They used 11 pictures and 14 words in total for the mood board. Among them, 5 pictures and 4 words were in the center, and all images were value images, and words were in the ratio of 2/2 for values and personalities.

Figure 14. Stimulus cards

When they completed the mood board, they moved on with the second part: brand-target storyboard. An example of a storyline drawing was presented. They used mainly two colored markers and no cards to compose the story. One of the colors they use was representing the brand and the other one was representing the target group. However, like the mood board making, they did not use the stimulus cards.

Next step was concept judging. First, I asked them to judge their concepts by using other stimulus cards that were specially prepared for the judgment part of the mood board. However, participants have found the stimulus cards confusing. Therefore, I interrupted, and together we started picking up the cards from the center circle to place them on the concepts (Concepts were printed out.). In the end, it is observed that concept 1 has included more aspects of the brand than the concept 2.

Second, it was asked them to take the final stimulus cards which were prepared for the judgment part of the brand-target storyboard idea. Since they already made the parts representing the brand in a different color, it was easy for them to answer the questions of stimulus cards. One by one they checked the cards and the story. So, for each brand action, they asked which concept fits that action. The result was the same as the first one: concept1 was leading. However, they thought that they still needed that one aspect from concept 2: "strength" which was already there hidden in concept 1.

Following the judgment part, the interview was conducted. In the interview, they have stated that when selecting images or words, they considered their brand character and how does it behave and its personality. Starting with images was helpful, but using both words and images was helpful to create the brand visualization mood board. They also stated that there are some words that you cannot visualize.

Stimulus cards did not work with both ideas. However, when it comes to the judgment part, stimulus cards would have worked if the sentences or words were more reasoned. They also wanted more challenging questions which help eliminate the concepts when there are more than three concepts. One participant has said that questions could have an order. Moreover, they stated that they have used the picture card deck just to look for facial expressions to draw in the storyline. And, the storyline example that they see in the beginning was inspiring enough.

Starting with the mood board was beneficial to see their priorities for the brand. They have found it interesting and playful. Although they believed that both ideas were helpful to judge concepts, brand visualization mood board was slightly more helpful. They stated that especially for the judging part, the mood board was more useful because for the story they were biased with what they already have in their minds.

The color code of values, personalities and emotions made participants anxious. They preferred either knowing the reason behind it or not having the color code at all. Having a lot of images was a bit tiring but it helped them. So, it was all right in the end.

Conclusions

• With a slight difference, both participant groups preferred using the mood board for concept judging since they found it easier, quicker and more playful. Moreover, both participant groups thought that story method can also work for making concepts.

• Participants did not understand the meaning of the color codes around the cards. However, seeing them without knowing the reasoning behind was confusing for them. Moreover, both in pictures and words, they could not differentiate the values, personalities and emotions.

• Drawing eccentric circles has helped them for prioritization of cards.

• As the user group is designers, they already know how to make a mood board. Therefore, they do not need stimulus cards for that. And, seeing the storyline example was enough to draw. So, they did not use the cards also for the story part. However, to judge concepts, both for story and mood board, they need guidance.

4.3. Primary Insights & Decisions

First, it is discovered through the sessions that to provide a flawless concept judging experience with participants, there should be meaning behind the colored frames of the cards, otherwise they should be removed. This can be possible with further exploration of the relationship between personalities, values, and emotions. Besides, the lists provided for personality traits, values and emotions were provisional. During the evaluation sessions, it is observed that there were some words doubled, and participants have found some missing words like 'empathic'. Though it is not possible to cover the whole dictionary, more comprehensive search will be made, and lists will be renewed.

Second, stimulus cards were designed to ease both the preparation phase of the ideas and the concept judging. However, it is proved that participants do not need much guidance for the preparation phase in this setting of the idea. In other words, they already know how to make a mood board and a storyboard. Also, although participants needed those cards to judge the concepts, the sentences in the cards were not profound enough to help them with the judgment. Participants have stated that the cards should stimulate and challenge at the same time, and their focus should be on the elimination of concepts that do not fit to the brand. It was also stated that there can be an order on how to use the cards, which question should be asked to answer first. Moreover, in terms of guidance, it was discovered that participants need a setting specially made for concept judging. It is necessary to more easily visualize the concept judging process. That setting can guide people through where to place the visual and word cards, and concepts.

Third, making the mood board in eccentric circles has really helped participants to prioritize the cards. Still, it was not clear for the participants from which card to start. Therefore, various shapes for a proper board should be considered.

Fourth, in both evaluation sessions, participants tended to go through the words and visuals separately. Moreover, they all started from the words in the judging phase of the ideas. To emphasize the importance of both card decks and to encourage participants to equally use them in concept judging process, the size difference of the cards will be eliminated.

Fifth, it is observed that while participants are more inclined to use value cards (green cards) and personality cards (yellow cards) as core elements in the brand visualization mood board i.e. placing them to the center circle, they have used emotion cards (red cards) as supporting elements in outer circles. Therefore, brand personalities and values play a bigger role in concept judging.

Finally, there are three reasons to eliminate the brand-target storyboard idea. The first reason was formed after the second session. According to that, it is possible to realize the idea without using the card sets. Only drawing the story with markers can be enough to make it. However, based upon the findings of the literature and the interviews, the card sets that are made out of personalities, values and emotions, constitute the foundation of the current project. The second reason is that both participant groups have found the brand visualization mood board idea easier, quicker and more playful, which also represents the way that they want to judge concepts. Finally, there is a timeline in the brand-target storyboard idea, and participants use the sequence of actions in the timeline when judging concepts. That timeline reflects the course of events between the brand and the target group. It was hard for participants to judge the concepts according to a timeline which is moving and changing not only by the requirements of a brand but also by the requirements of a target group.

SADNESS / GRIEF

RESPONSIBLE

SATISFACTION /
APPROVAL

14. decisive
15. domestic

21. hu...
22. indepe...
23. innocence

C1   C2   C3

C1   C2   C3

Brand

Rabobank
Google
Heineken

Sticker

...da bulundurmak?
...ction - gidime

Jill
email.

Altigen
kartlar
— görsel / kelime eşit —

💡 DÜŞÜN
☐ intro'yu
   tasarlamak
   ~~yazmak~~ için
   ürünün akışını
   hayal et.

THIS CONCEPT
REFLECTS ...
PERSONALITY TRAIT
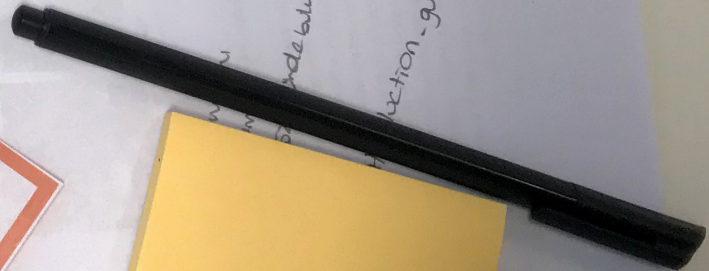
..."board'dan
...ceptlere
...geçiş
...olacak?

Introduction
(en başta)

Brand board
instructions

Brandboa...   uırt-urt

4.4. Discussion & Conclusion

Through the testing of initial ideas, directions for the concept design of the tool was explored. First, in the preparation phase of the ideas, it was an issue whether the randomly selected images related to brand personalities, values and emotions would be found useful by the participants. It is concluded that it is not important that all people think that a picture matches 100% with the intended word. The importance lies under participants' having a consensus on the interpretation of the meaning of the picture. In doing this, discussions play an essential role. Moreover, the fact that different people can attain various meanings to one picture makes the tool elements even more useful.

Second, both initial ideas, brand-target storyboard, and brand visualization mood board were tested through the evaluation sessions with design students. The design students' previous knowledge about the brand and the related design process contributed a lot the evaluation of the ideas. However, it is also important that the tool should be able to help designers with little to no knowledge. Therefore, in the conceptualization phase that will be considered. While the first session worked as pilot testing, the second session was the iterated version of the first one. Though there can be more sessions to evaluate the ideas, there were several reasons, mentioned previously, to eliminate the brand-target storyboard idea.

Finally, my design goal is "to guide and inspire concept validation of (in) experienced designers* during the brand experience design process", and I have two main elements to provide guidance and inspiration with the users. Inspiration comes from the pictures and words written on the cards. They help users to see various possibilities of what a brand can represent. A different interpretation of the pictures creates even more possibilities. Guidance is harder to manage. Yet, instead of using some stimulus cards, I will apply this guidance to the whole concept setting.

5. Conceptualization

This chapter focuses on the design concept and its iterations. It explains the basis for the concept design with the synthesis method. Following the evaluation sessions and results, the chapter ends with the findings and insights that will be used in the final design.

5.1. Design Synthesis

"Synthesis is an abductive sensemaking process", and it helps designers to structure and filter the collected data (Kolko, 2010). The development of the tool has its origins in the synthesis method. The synthesis method has helped to have an overview of the findings to use during the conceptualization. The model in figure 15 shows the different layers of knowledge that come together to build the tool. The core part represents the findings of interviews conducted with the experienced designers. It was discovered during the interviews that when judging a concept that is designed for a brand, it is important to have the criteria of brand personality, brand values, and emotions that the brand conveys. Also, the concept judging process was found to be a process in which many stakeholders are involved. Therefore, the tool should make space for discussions and teamwork.

Following the criteria discovered, a literature review was made simultaneously to build upon the outputs coming from the interviews. During the literature review, four points were found. First one is that the knowledge related to the brand, brand constructs, and brand experience was generated. Second, it was learned that the combination of visuals and words (Pettersson, 1996) in the process are important in terms of better communication among the team. The third one is that concept judging is a decision-making process. In a decision-making process for an undeveloped design idea, it is suggested by Eling et al. (2015) that when the intuitive approach is followed by a rational approach, increased idea evaluation decision-making quality and speed are obtained. As a fourth finding, the need for designing the tool by considering the brand emotions was validated (Bakker-Wu et al., 2017).

The third layer consists of the finding from the evaluation sessions, which led to the decisions made for the design concept that will be explained in the next topic.

Overall, there were many aspects considered while reaching the conceptualization phase of the project. According to the synthesis method, the core forms the most essential and irreplaceable parts of the tool that will be designed.
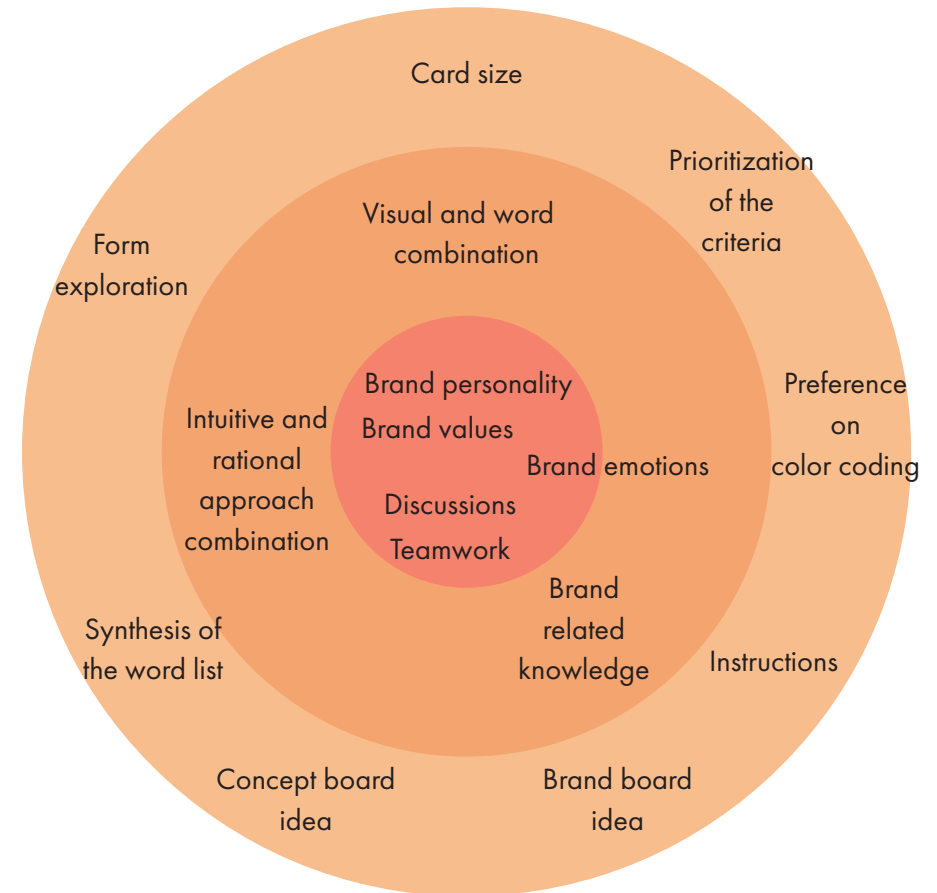

Figure 15. Visualization of the synthesis method for the conceptualization of the tool

5.2. Concept Design

There are four components of the designed concept, which are:

• Tool manual,
• Card set,
• Brand board,
• Concept board.

To begin with, the tool manual is made to partially guide users through how to use the tool. Tool manual is given in Appendix 7. To provide more guidance and clarity, form language is used. It is stated in the the tool manual that to be able to use the tool, concepts must be designed and equally developed. It also points out that the colors behind the cards are placed randomly, and have no meaning (Figure 17). Following these statements, the tool manual guides users by giving instructions when using the brand and concept boards.
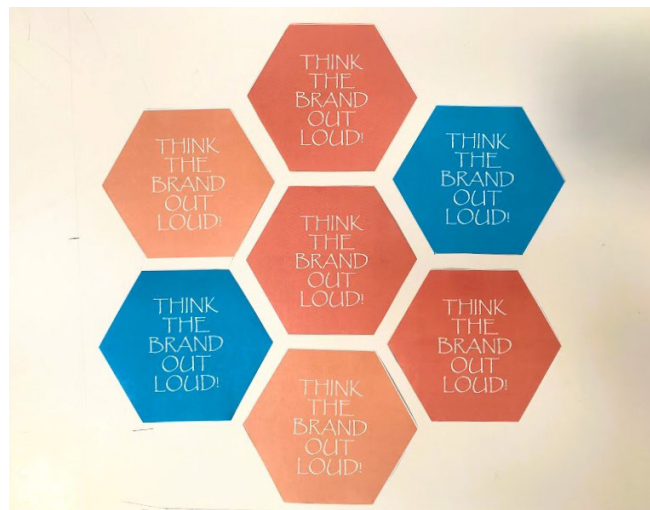
For the concept, the word and visual lists are renewed. They can be found in Appendix 5 and 6. To renew them, I benefited from the card lists made by the University of New Mexico, Fabrique Design Agency and Kouzes & Posner (Figure 17). The findings are built upon the previous knowledge generated from the Aaker's personality traits and the value list provided by Canva Design School. From initial ideas to the concept, the list of brand emotions is not changed. In the end, 37 values, 41 personality traits, and 14 brand emotions are defined. Based on the renewed list of words, 73 pictures are selected from unsplashed.com. The cards are designed in the form of a hexagon to help with prioritization on the brand board. The word cards are designed in the same way with visual cards.

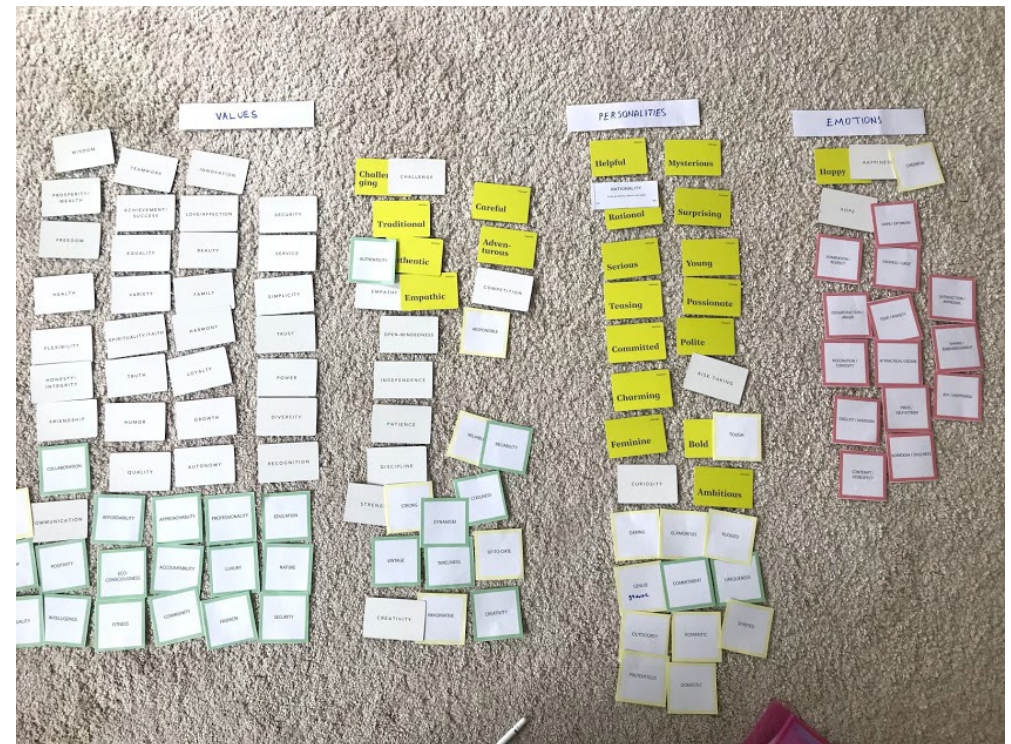Figure 16. Back side coloring of the card set designed

Figure 17. Generation of the new card list

In addition to the manual and the card set, two boards are prepared: brand and concept boards (Figure 18).
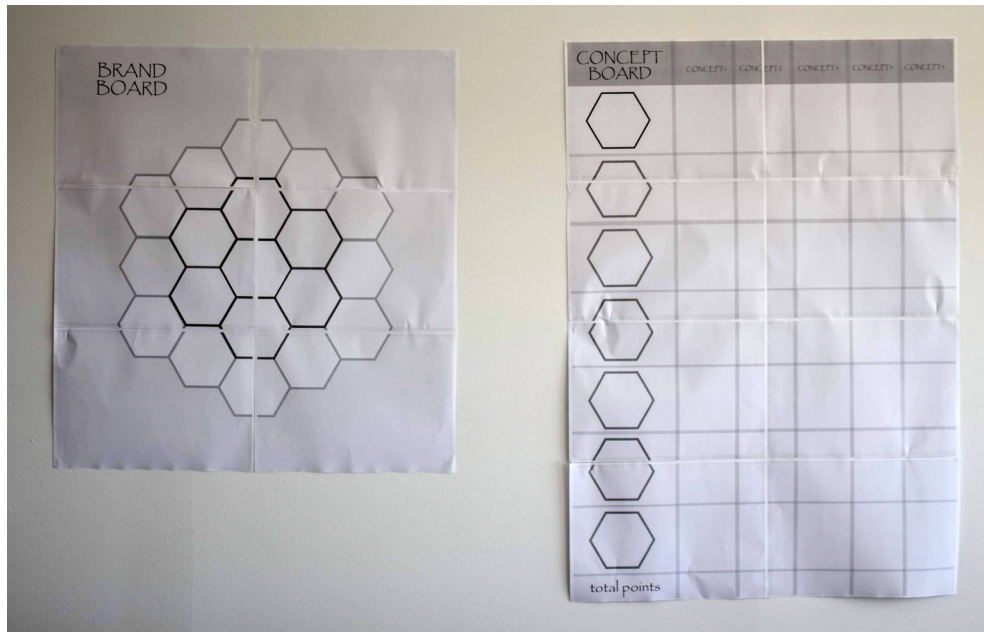

Figure 18. Brand board (left) and concept board (right)

The brand board is designed for the first filtering of the cards selected for a certain brand, depending on the project that the designers work on. The aim is to have a holistic view of the brand on the brand board, so it reflects the experience of that brand. The design team selects the cards that are relevant to the brand they work with. Then, they start placing the cards on the board. The center has the most important card for the brand. For example, in the case of the brand Facebook, bold or open words can be placed in the center.

After completing the brand board, design team can move on with the concept board, the final step where they judge their concepts. On the top row, concept numbers are written as concept1, concept2, concept3, concept4, and concept5.

The number of concepts can change for each project, yet it is planned to have five concepts to judge. On the first column, there are spaces for the cards which will come from the brand board. To make it clearer, the top hexagon has the most important card. In total, seven cards are placed on the concept board. After the design team finishes preparing it, they start giving points. For example, if the card on top is the word "open", they grade it from 1-5 for concept1. They decide on how much that concept fits that word or picture. In the end, they collect the points, and the concept having the most points wins.
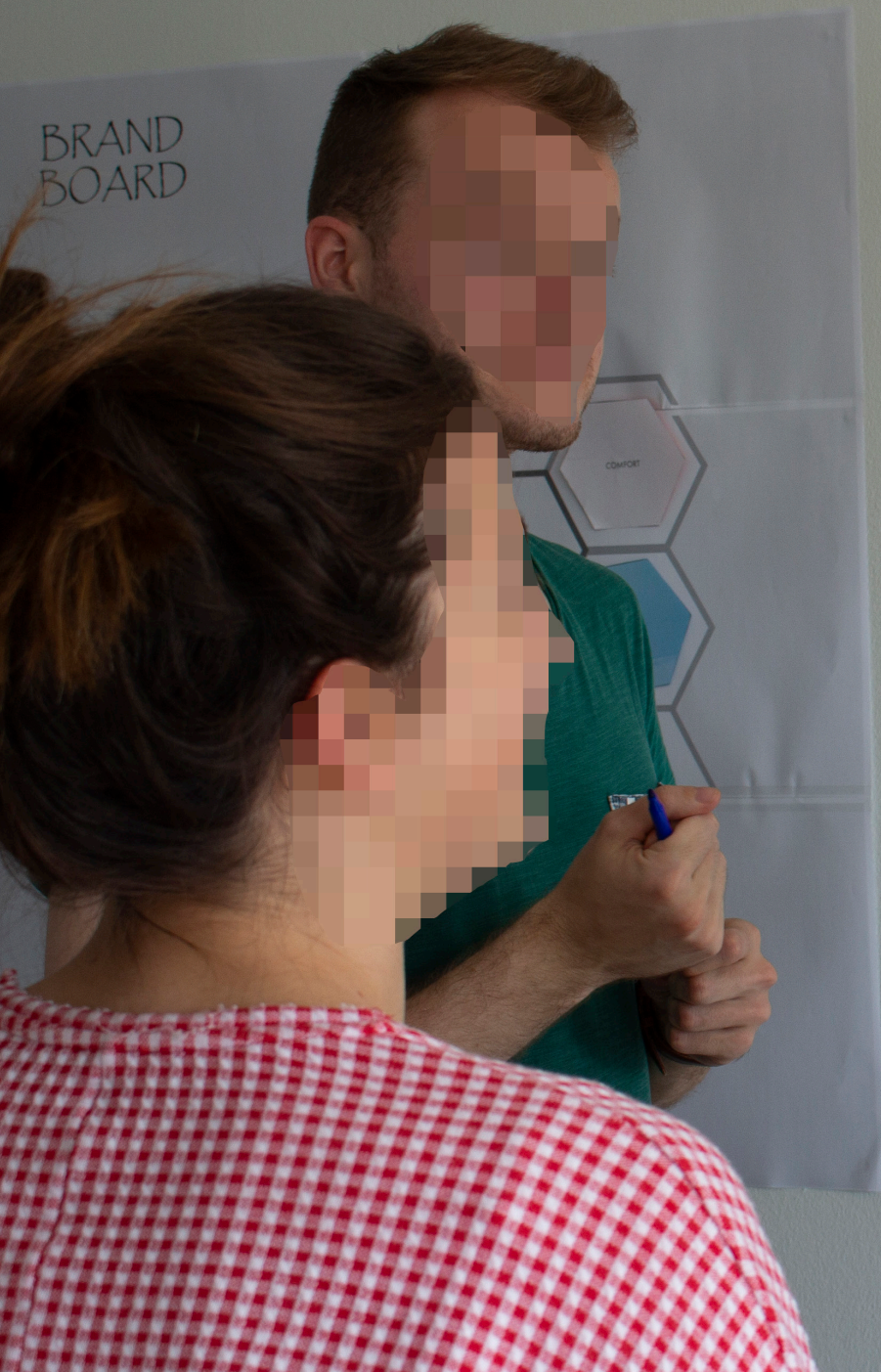
5.3. Concept Evaluation

There were two concept evaluation sessions. The sessions were held in the Industrial Design Faculty. In each session, there were three master's students from the Design for Interaction specialization. There were different participants involved in each session. Participants were given a brand which was IKEA for both sessions. The brand was selected due to its high familiarity. It was planned to make participants design sunglasses concepts for the brand. The product type was intentionally selected as sunglasses since it is not in the product range of IKEA, which made the participants free of thinking or relating to an existing product. For each session, there were three concepts, in the end, to judge by using the tool.

5.3.1. Session 1

Session Summary

First, participants were given a leaflet about the brand (Appendix 8). The leaflet was prepared to make participants more familiar with the brand's meaning. Therefore, the leaflet had helpful information about IKEA's values and personality. The information was taken from the website of the brand. Then, the participants were asked to come up with three sunglasses design concepts in 20 minutes.

Participants were also told to make distinctive and equally developed design concepts. They did not only use the information written in the leaflet but also used their knowledge and perception of IKEA. When making concepts, they were thinking out loud.

"I was thinking of the journey you go through in the IKEA, the experience"

After 20 minutes, concepts were ready. Concepts stayed beside when participants were moving on to the next step. Secondly, the card set of words and visuals was provided together with the tool manual. One person took the responsibility of reading the manual along the process.

"We need the brand board here" (showing the table)
"We are too lazy to stand up!"

They stated that having the board on the wall is not convenient. They preferred working on the table. They were given 20 minutes to complete the brand board. They were discussing each card. They first selected the cards, then fixed them on the brand board with the reusable glue.

"Which side of the card will be fixed on the board?"

One participant was not sure about the right side of the card to place on the brand board. Then, they started placing the cards on the board. The most important card was affordability for them in the context of IKEA.

When they completed the brand board, they moved on with the concept board. The time given was 20 minutes. They prioritized the cards from top to the bottom. Then, they gave points to each concept and calculated the results. The session has ended with an interview which provided many valuable insights.

Insights from the Interview

Overall, they thought the tool is helpful and simple. They have questioned the necessity of the brand board, but they concluded that they need both boards in the judging process. While the brand board gives a holistic view of the brand, and information about the brand experience, the concept board provides a hierarchic look which helps to judge the concepts.

"It is a different feeling when you think the brand holistically and when you think the brand hierarchic. Because if you think about hierarchy, you really become structured but organizational but if you think about it holistically, then you think about the experience, which is very hard to achieve with the hierarchy."

The session made them think about the space, situations, and projects that the tool is used. That is also valuable because the tool is partially being designed for the inexperienced designers. Opening their horizon for the topic of designing for a brand can be inspiring.

" It can create a bond between the design team and the project manager."

They have found the whole process inspiring and guiding.
It was stated during the interview that discussions have helped them to be objective.

" To put everybody on board, so it is a tool for agreeing inside the team."

Their final suggestion was to make the font of the logo more simple, and resolving the confusion that is created by the difference between the sides of the cards.

5.3.2. Session 2

Session Summary

Participants were given a leaflet about IKEA and asked to design sunglasses for the brand. Yet, they were not interested in reading it thoroughly. They quickly started drawing concepts. And, when they were done with their drawings, they discussed to make the concepts more distinctive and equally developed. They have completed this part in 15 minutes.

For the next 20 minutes, participants were given the tool manual and the card set. One participant was a volunteer to read the instructions. In this session, I put the brand board on the table instead of the wall. They spread the card set on on the table and started eliminating through discussing.

" I think communication is an important aspect of the brand."

" What does this picture remind you of?"

They first eliminated the unrelated cards, then grouped the selected ones based on their similarities to make the brand board complete.

" Do we agree on all of them?"

When the brand board was ready, they read the instructions again. They continued with the concept board. They were given 20 minutes for the concept board. Through discussions, they graded all three concepts.

" Do you think that you can rely on a product like that from IKEA that it will not fall off?"

"If IKEA was actually making it, what would you say about the quality feature?"

Insights from the Interview

When they were asked about their opinions on the results, they stated that they trust the results.

" I can see the concept in IKEA."

" The tool helped us to connect the concepts to the brand value, to consider the value of the brand."

Although they perceived all the cards as brand values, it is still valuable that they see the tool as a bridge between the brand and concepts. Besides, they found the tool simple, straight forward. They liked the fact that the tool provides accurate results.

"I can see this working in companies. For example, this tool can be used in IKEA itself. It is creative and fun."

When it was asked what they like and dislike about the tool, they mentioned the accurate results as a liked feature. In addition, they thought that the colors of the boards are boring and strict.

"For me, this, visually, is not very clear."

One participant commented that some cards were not applicable for some concepts. His suggestion was to create an exceptional use or different grading system for that kind of cards.

5.4. Discussion & Findings

Both groups have worked on the IKEA sunglasses concepts. They had a common perception of the IKEA brand when making the brand board. Although they designed and judged different sunglasses concepts, they selected almost the same word cards to judge their designs. Thus, the **validation of the concepts whether they are on brand or not can be trusted.**

Replacing the stimulus cards with a tool manual has made the tool simpler. To comprehend how the tool is being used, the tool manual was enough. The whole setting created guidance. Still, there were minor issues mentioned by the participants. The first is related to the front and backside design of the cards. Making the logo that big and making the backside colorful was puzzling for the first group of participants. The second group also mentioned that the boards looked boring and strict. Therefore, making the boards colorful and more guiding, and making the design of the cards simpler can create coherence in the use of the tool.

Making word and visual cards equally sized has contributed to the unified experience of using the tool. Participants have gone through the cards without any order. While the first group has preferred to use more word cards on the boards, the second group has preferred to use the cards equally. In addition, both groups perceived the cards as brand values. There was no difference for them in terms of personalities, emotions, and values.

After the first session, the need for both boards at the same time was questioned. In the end, through discussions, **they approved the need since there are distinctive purposes of the boards.** While the brand board had created a holistic view of the brand and helped them to understand the experience, the concept board was perceived as a place for prioritization. Thus, creating meaning for the prioritization can help to have more accurate results for concept judging.

As expected, **participants attributed their perspectives and meanings to the pictures.** That has validated my intention to select random pictures. Pictures were only there for creating a common sense out of a given material. Participants must agree with each other about the interpreted meaning. Yet, attributing an interpreted meaning was also valid for the words. Thus, on which meaning they agreed on should be written somewhere.

Redesigning the grading system of the concept board was a suggestion coming from both groups. The first group has stated having a veto for the selected card, which means there would be a minimum point requirement for the card. For example, for the word quality the minimum required point can be 3. Then, any concepts lower than 3 for the quality word will be eliminated. The second group has also suggested that besides grading from 1 to 5, putting a non-applicable (NA) sign can be useful. In short, the grading system can be enriched through these added features. It can add value to the use of the tool, and the judging part can be more playful and more straight forward. Therefore, it will be considered when moving on to the next iteration.

It was satisfactory that both **test groups have found the tool suitable to use in real offices.** They even thought of the effect that will be created by the tool between the design team and the project manager.

Finally, the tool is designed to judge the maximum of five concepts. In a real context of using the tool, there can be more than five concepts to judge. However, it is hard to predict the maximum amount of the concepts that will be in the judgment process. If the tool allows the reusability (rewriting the points), the design team can use the tool in turns. Besides, the size and material of the tool must be considered.

5.5. Concept Iteration & Evaluation

Based on the findings mentioned previously, the concept is iterated and enriched. To begin with, the tool manual has been renewed together with the changes made in the tool in general (Figure 19). Explanations for how to work with the concept board have been added. There are two visuals added to the tool manual, which aimed to helped users with way finding. Also, the front side is renewed with a simpler font.
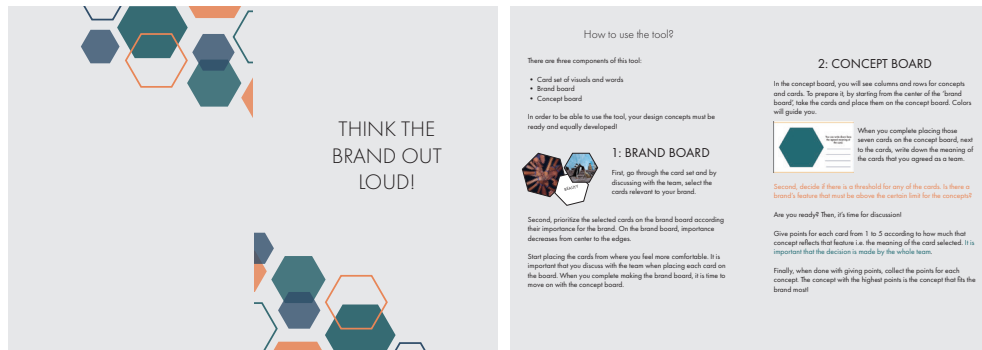

Figure 19. Renewed tool manual, front and back side

Secondly, the back side and the size of the card set have been changed (Figure 20). A regular pattern has been created, and text use is eliminated. Smaller cards size has been tried out to make the colors of the brand board more visible when the cards are placed on it.
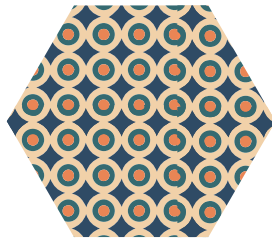

Figure 20. Renewed back side of the cards

Third, hexagon areas have been separeted, and colors have been added to the brand board to make the layers more distinctive (Figure 21) .

Figure 21. Renewed brand board design

Finally, the concept board has been renewed in terms of both colors and features (Figure 22). Next to the areas reserved for cards, explanation lines have been added. In addition, a threshold feature has been developed and added as a new column. According to the threshold feature, some placed cards can have a threshold value that the concepts must have.

CONCEPT BOARD	THRESHOLD For some cards, there can be a treshold points that the concept must have.	CONCEPT1	CONCEPT2	CONCEPT3
You can write down here the agreed meaning of the card:				
You can write down here the agreed meaning of the card:				
You can write down here the agreed meaning of the card:				
You can write down here the agreed meaning of the card:				
You can write down here the agreed meaning of the card:				
You can write down here the agreed meaning of the card:				
You can write down here the agreed meaning of the card:				
total points				

Figure 22. Renewed concept board design

5.5.1. Session 3

The session was held in the Industrial design faculty with four master's students. One student was from Integrated product design specialization and the others were from Design for Interaction. Pariticipants were given a selected brand which was Apple for the session. The reason to change from IKEA to Apple was to see the capacity of the tool, and Apple is another well-known brand that participants can work with comfortably. It was planned to make participants design three water bottle concepts for the brand. The product type was intentionally selected as a water bottle since it is not in the product range of Apple. Thus, it allowed participants to think freely. The number of concepts required was intentionally different from the number of participants. As it was not used efficiently in the previous sessions, a brand leaflet was not designed for the Apple brand.

Session Summary

Participants were given drawing materials, and asked for designing three water bottle concepts for the Apple brand. The time allocated was 15 minutes. The expectation was low quality and equally developed concepts.

All participants started sketching their ideas to combine and create concepts afterward.

"Am I the only one who think three concepts are a bit too much?"

"I don't know Apple very well..."

At the end of 15 minutes, they came up with three distinctive and equally developed concepts that were ready to be judged (Figure 23). The concept drawings were hung on the wall next to the concept board.
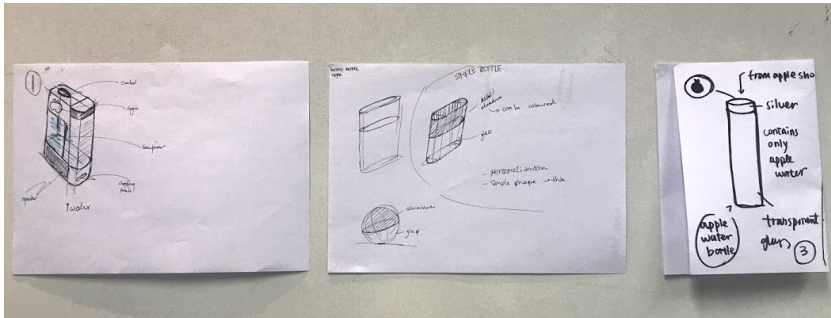
65

Figure 23. Water bottle concept designs designed by the participants

Following the concept making, participants moved on with using the tool. Tool manual, card set and brand board were given. Pariticipants divided the cards into four groups to make the main elimination. They thought that there are some obvious ones to spare for the board. From time to time, they discussed the cards and made comments.

"I think this picture makes a lot of sense because of the strict lines in Apple products."

Figure 24. Brand board made by the participants

They placed all selected cards on the brand board by making connections between them (Figure 24). They perceived the hexagon layers as mindmap branches instead of a separate areas. There was one word "elegant" that they looked but could not find in the card set.

For the concept board (Figure 25), they started from writing the explanations for each card. Sometimes the meaning of a card was equal to five different words. They used post-its to write on the concept board. They also defined threshold points for some cards.

Figure 25. Concept board results

You can write down here
the agreed meaning of
the card

You can write down here
the agreed meaning of
the card:

Insights Collected

For the interview, instead of asking questions, I used the method of "I wish, I like and what if". According to the method, "I wish" stands for the things participants would like to criticize constructively, "I like" stands for the things participants like about the tool, and "what if" stands for the new ideas participants contribute to the design. This method has helped to get more insights than a regularly conducted interview.

Overall, they think the tool helps designers to see the possible areas that should be improved for each concept.

"You can see what are the strong and weak points of all concepts. Right now, we see in the second concept has no real security part it, and we find it very important, so maybe we can do something with it. So, it does have the security part, it might rate higeher."

Also, they think that two boards are inseparable.

"That's a nice evaluation tool, and I think brand board is crucial to use the concept board."

I wish…

" I was able to describe more valid proposition. Sometimes there are more important cards in the brand board. And, you move them to the concept board where they all have equal weight/importance."

I like…

"That the ring of the brand board limits you and gives you freedom at the same time."
"The cards are smaller than the areas on the boards."
"The hexagon shapes and their benefits in the use."
"That the discussion becomes clear after making the brand board."
"All that all the cards have equal weight, so you do not feel pressure."
"That the brand board has helped us to filter brand and have a consensus over it."

What if…

"The top card would count double?"
"There were some blank cards?"
"What if there is a bonus slot in the concept board?"
"There is a weight for some cards on the concept board instead of a threshold. For instance, one card can double the scores for the concepts, and another can have the power of tripling the results"
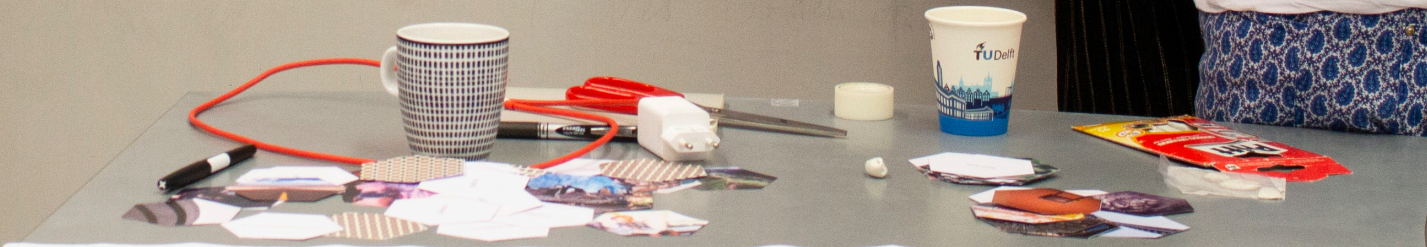
In addition, one participant commented that the judging part might be different when there is a system designed for the brand. The discussion might get more complicated when it is for a system design which includes many aspects of several product concepts.

5.5.2. Discussion & Conclusion

The changes made in the design of the tool have worked. Thanks to the pattern that is made on the backside of the cards, participants did not have problems with understanding the front and back sides. Making the cards slightly smaller than the first two sessions has created a better fit on the brand and concept boards. The common opinion was that the card size was just right. However, they did suggest a bigger text for the word cards.

The whole color scheme of the brand and concept boards was changed from tinted blacks to vivid colors. It made the use of the tool easier to understand. In other words, the connection between the brand board and the concept board has become more obvious.

Besides the changes in the cards and colors, the concept board was improved. The added threshold feature was not that clear, so there was a need for more explanation than the tool manual. However, participants' suggestions during the interview have given a direction to the feature. Turning threshold into bonus power can add more value to the use of the tool. Creating a bonus power can also help the prioritization of the cards on the concept board. Nevertheless, the bonus power feature should also be tested and validated through an evaluation session.

Only in the final session, participants have considered using post-its to leave the board clean. Thus, the reusability of the concept board will be considered for the final design of the tool.

Finally, the explanation areas to write the meaning of the card on the concept board has made participants see their definition for each selected card. The idea has mainly worked for the pictures, but it caused creating more complexity when it was used for word cards. Therefore, it will be reconsidered for the final design.

5.6. Conclusion

Some aspects of the evaluation sessions would work differently in real-life use of the tool. The results would change respectively when the tool could be applied in its planned environment. First of all, the given time for concept making was very limited. Concept making normally is a part of the process that may take a couple of weeks, which makes the concepts more developed and well thought out. There would be more added features and distinctive qualities of the concepts if participants were given more time.

Second, also reconsidering the time issue, indeed, the concepts that were made in the sessions were not equally developed. A more developed concept automatically gets more credit on the concept board.

The third aspect is that, although the participants previously have known each other, they were not working together as a team in a real concept making and judgment process. Yet, the discussions during the sessions were satisfying.

Connected to the third aspect, fourth, participants were not working on the given brands. Thus, they were not familiar with the values, personalities, and emotions related to the given brands. Still, the brand leaflet, provided in the first two sessions, has created some perspective. Yet, a brand leaflet was more needed in the case of Apple, which leads us to the fifth aspect. The participants of the third session were not that familiar with the Apple brand in comparison to the first two sessions and given IKEA brand.

The fifth aspect is that there was a limited time given to use the tool. There are 165 cards in total, which requires paying more attention. Having prior knowledge of the brand together with more time given would cause different results. Currently, participants had to rush. They eliminated some of the cards without any discussion.

The brand board and the concept board are representations of the intuitive and rational processes respectively. In all evaluation sessions, it has been concluded that the concept board cannot be thought separate from the brand board, which validates the knowledge generated through the literature that an intuitive process followed by a rational process gives the best results in the early decision-making phase. In addition, it is also validated that words and image combination strengthens the communication among the team and provides a wider perspective to visualize the brand.

Few actions will be taken concerning the concept refinement. Both in the phase of ideation and the final session of conceptualization, participants looked for blank cards to add new words to the card set. Having blank cards can solve the problem of missing words since it is hard to cover all words in one card set. Therefore, blank cards will be created.

After that, the grading system of the concept board will be reconsidered and renewed. Design students see the tool as a way to validate the strengths and weaknesses of the concepts, and a way to have a consensus over the concept direction. Some design students have reflected that the use of the tool does not necessarily lead them to a final decision. Therefore, which method I choose for the grading system is not that important. The system will be there to prioritize users' actions and at the same time, create meaning for them.

Last but not least, how to provide the tool with designers is a question. Making the tool feasible and easy to reach is important. Living in the digital age, to provide access for the wider crowds, it is foreseen that the digital platforms can be benefited from.

6. Final Design

In this chapter, concept refinements that lead to the final design of the tool will be provided. Besides presenting the final design, access channel for the tool and final evaluation results with conclusions will be put forward.

6.1. Think the Brand Out Loud

Think the Brand Out Loud is a design tool to help designers with the concept judging process. It helps designers to rationalize the reasons behind their choices. By providing the information about which concept fits the brand, it allows design teams to have a consensus. Furthermore, along the judgment process, designers see the strong and weak points of each concept, which is valuable for further steps of the design process. The tool consists of four parts, and users reach these parts through a website.

6.1.1. Tool Components

Tool Manual

Tool manual (Figure 26) provides the knowledge required to use the tool. It starts with introducing other tool components which are the card set, brand definition board, and concept selection board. After explaining each component, the manual guides the user about how to use the tool during the process.
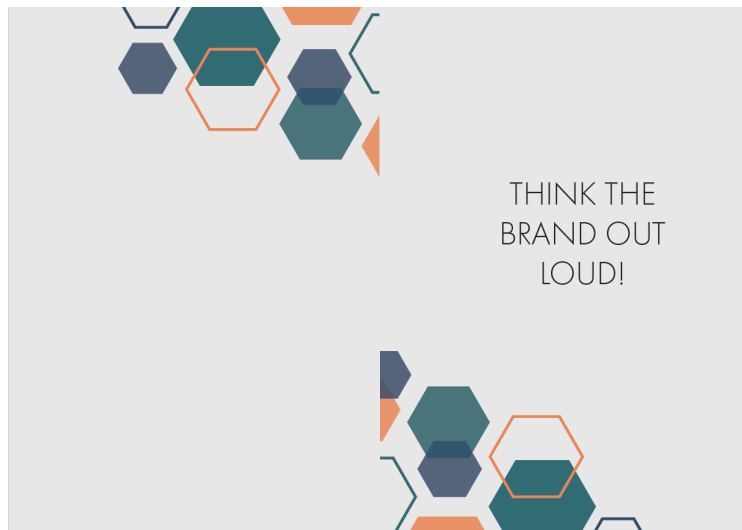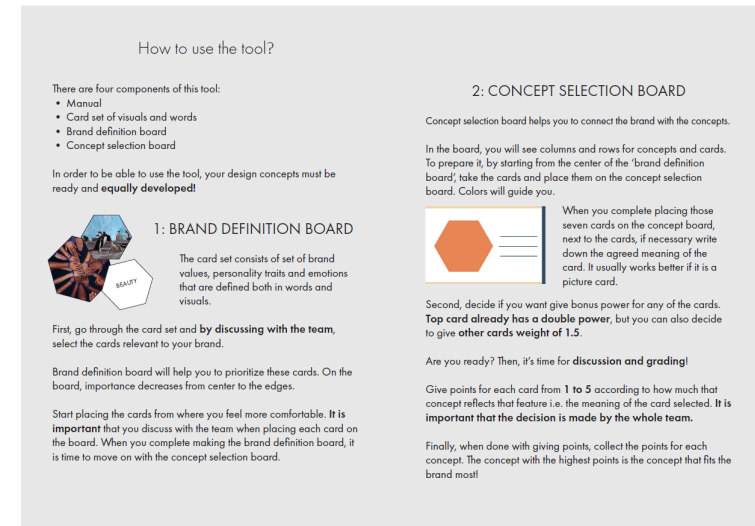

Figure 26b. Content of the manual

Figure 26a. Cover of the manual

Card Set

The card set (Figure 27) consists of a set of brand values, emotions and personality traits that are defined both in words and visuals. There are 92 word and 70 picture cards in total. They constitute the core of the tool. In addition, there are blank cards prepared.

Figure 27. Pieces from the card set

Brand Definition Board

The brand definition board (Figure 28) helps to define the brand through selecting cards related to the brand and having discussions among the team. The board helps the team to prioritize the cards. On the board, the importance of the cards in relation to the brand decreases from the center to the edges.

Figure 28. Brand definition board

Figure 29. Concept selection board

Concept Selection Board

When the brand definition board is completed, the design team moves on with the concept selection board (Figure 29). It helps to connect the brand with the concepts, and it consists of intuitive and rational steps.

First, designers move the cards from the brand definition board to concept selection board by paying attention to color matches. Then, next to the cards they placed, they write the agreed meaning of the card. Following that, they give bonus weights intuitively for the cards they think that have more importance for the brand. In addition, they grade concepts again by discussion and intuition according to how much that concept reflects the feature of the card selected. Finally, as a rational step, they do the calculation and find the winning concept.

6.2. Usage of the Tool

Possible four use cases have been created for the tool after an interview with an experienced design consultant. The use case is based on whether a brand is long-standing or newly developing and whether the design team is external or internal (Figure 30).

Figure 30. Axis for different use cases of the tool

Mentioned previously, concept making and concept judging are two interrelated phases of the brand experience design process. Therefore, the use cases are shaped accordingly. In these scenarios, while the brand definition board contributes to the concept making phase, the brand selection board plays a role in concept judgment phase.

In the first use case, because the brand is long-standing, the internal design team will already be working for the brand for some time and knowing it very well. They do not need to define the brand by using the brand definition board from the start. Instead, they can use the brand definition board as a rule book to stick to it when making concepts. Thus, it can be made only once and renewed when necessary. Besides, concept judgment through the concept selection board can be made together with the project manager

The second use case is about a newly developed brand with an internal design team. Since the brand is newly developed, they may be still exploring its brand identity, values, personalities, etc. Therefore, they can equally benefit from the two boards. The brand definition board can be used both in concept making and concept judging phases. The project manager can take part in the concept selection phase. Both boards will help to strengthen the communication between the design team and the project manager.

The third use case shows the example of a long-standing brand is working with an external design team. This time, the brand definition board can be prepared by the company itself to communicate the brand with the external design team. Thereby, after finishing the design concepts, the external design team can judge them by taking the cards from the brand definition board to the concept selection board. Judgment can also be done together with the company (long-standing brand).

In the fourth use case, the newly developed brand works with an external design team. The card set with the brand definition board helps the design team to make proposals to define the company's core elements. The design team benefits from the brand definition board when making concepts. The judgment phase with the concept selection board can be conducted within the external design team, and the results of the board will help communication with the company.

In all cases, both brand definition and concept selection boards strengthen the communication between the design team and the client/project manager by creating a base for discussions. Furthermore, the concept selection board shows the weak and strong sides of each concept. In other words, it helps to fine-tune and to define design directions if the client does not want to move on with the winner concept. As the tool is used, more use cases will occur, and new opportunities for the tool will be explored.

6.3. Access to the Tool

Each second, the world continues to be more digitized. The developments in the online market have deeply affected our way of living and working. Every source and tool are available online, and online is the first place to look when seeking for more knowledge. Therefore, this has been considered when deciding the access channel of the tool.

A website is designed to provide the tool as a printable material to make the tool accessible for more people (Figure 31). The website consists of four main pages. The home page gives some practical information about the tool and directs the user to 'download now' button which provides user four PDF files to print and get the tool (Figure 32). The learn page gives detailed information about tool components, and the usage of the tool (Figure 33). The community page is there to share knowledge (Figure 34). It is expected that users will learn more from each other. As the tool is explored to be used both in concept making and concept judging processes, there can be even more implementations about the usage of the tool. Finally, the support page gives the user a direct communication chance (Figure 35).

Terms and conditions, contact and about us pages are not created as they are out of the scope of the project.

THINK THE BRAND OUT LOUD

www.thinkthebrandoutloud.com

THINK THE BRAND OUT LOUD

HOME   LEARN   COMMUNITY   SUPPORT

How to understand if your design concept fits to your brand?

Think the brand out loud is a design tool to help designers with the concept judging process.

Many times, designers have hard times to rationalize the reasons behind their choices. Most of the times, they do not know if the concept is 'on brand' or they have hard times to come to a consensus with the team. Through using the tool, intuitive decisions gain meaning.

While showing the best fitting concept to the brand, this tool also allows you to see the weak and strong sides of each brand. It is a rational way of following your intuitions.

Figure 31. Home page

THINK THE BRAND OUT LOUD

HOME   LEARN   COMMUNITY   SUPPORT

download now

✓ Benefit through your whole design process

✓ Ease your communication with your stakeholders

✓ Benefit while detailing your final design

✓ Understand the values of the client

✓ See the weak and strong sides of your concepts

terms & policies | contact | about us

Figure 32. Home page 'download now' button

THINK THE BRAND OUT LOUD

HOME   **LEARN**   COMMUNITY   SUPPORT

Think the Brand Out Loud is a design tool to help designers with the concept judging process. It helps designers to rationalize the reasons behind their choices. By providing the information that which concept fits to the brand, it allows design teams to have a consensus. Furthermore, along the judgment process, designers see the strong and weak points of each concept, which is valuable for further steps of the design process. The tool consists of four parts, and users reach these parts through a website.

Figure 33a. Learn page-1

Tool Components

Tool Manual

Tool manual provides the knowledge required to use the tool. It starts with introducing other tool components which are the card set, brand definition board and concept selection board. After explaining each component, the manual guides the user about how to use the tool during the process.

Card Set

The card set consists of set of brand values, emotions and personality traits that are defined both in words and visuals. There are 92 word and 70 picture cards in total. They constitute the core of the tool. In addition, there are blank cards prepared.
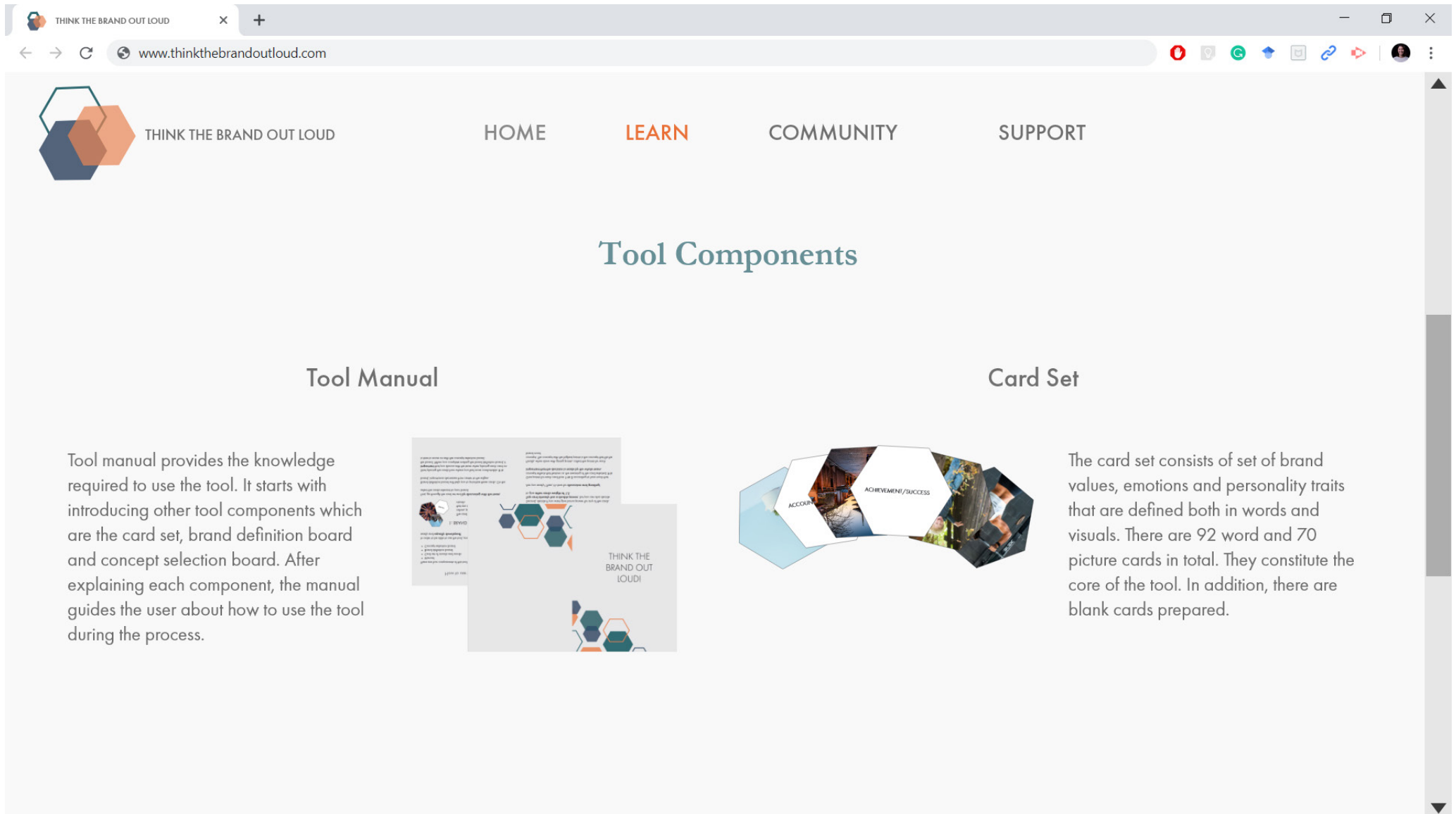
Figure 33b. Learn page-2

THINK THE BRAND OUT LOUD

HOME   **LEARN**   COMMUNITY   SUPPORT

Brand Definition Board

Brand definition board helps defining the brand through selecting cards related to the brand and having discussions among the team. The board helps the team to prioritize the cards. On the board, importance of the cards in relation to the brand decreases from

Concept Selection Board

When the brand definition board is completed, design team moves on with the concept selection board. It helps connecting the brand with the concepts, and it consists of an intuitive and rational steps.

First, designers move the cards from brand definition board to concept selection board by paying attention to color matches. Then, next to the cards they placed, they write the agreed meaning of the card. Following that, they give bonus weights intuitively for the cards they think that have more importance for the brand. In addition, they grade concepts again by discussion and intuition according to how much that concept reflects the feature of the card selected. Finally, as a rational step, they do the calculation and find the winner concept.

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Figure 33c. Learn page-3

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THINK THE BRAND OUT LOUD

HOME   LEARN   **COMMUNITY**   SUPPORT

Share your experience, join our community!

Andrew Wilson - Apple

We are happy to use this tool during our whole design process. Especially it helps us with the briefing process with the client.

Sarah Matthew - Gradient Ventures

We as a company, benefiting from the tool in the final decision making. The tool shows us the weak sides of our selected concept.

Your comment

full name

company

comment

post comment

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Figure 34. Community page

Figure 35. Support page

6.4. Design Evaluation

6.4.1. Goal & Method

Individual evaluation sessions were performed with a selected group of people. The goal was to explore real-life use scenarios and design improvements for the tool. Moreover, it was intended to measure the success of the tool concerning the design goal and learn if participants would use the tool in their work environment. Considering all these aspects, the tool has been evaluated in three dimensions, and that fulfilling the design goal, desirability in the work environment and ease of use.

Each session started with a presentation which introduces the design goal and summarizes the process. The process was about the findings of the interviews and the literature review. At the end of the presentation, the final design was introduced and explained in detail. Following that, discussions concerning the use scenarios and possible improvements were continued. All sessions ended with a semi-structured interview (Appendix 9) where they can evaluate the tool both qualitatively and quantitatively.

6.4.2. Participants

The evaluation of the tool has been done with four experienced designers from different fields of design. It is expected it contribute further development of the tool in distinct directions. Two participants were visited in their offices in Amsterdam, one participant was visited in Delft, and one participant was reached online.

6.4.3. Results

Fulfilling the Design Goal

The validation of the design goal was concerning two aspects: guidance and inspiration in concept validation (Table 1). Participants have agreed that the tool fulfills the the goal.

Desirability in the Work Environment

Participants have agreed that the tool is desirable to use in the work environment. There were different perspectives on how to benefit from the tool. From the brand perspective, the tool has been found useful for the brands who have less routine in the design process. Also, participants think that the tool can contribute to structuring when working with multiple brands. From a consultant perspective, the tool can be used in steps during the design process. As visualized in the interview results, the design process consists of some steps as starting from the brief ending with the final design. In the beginning, the tool gives direction to the project by clarifying the brand. It helps to make a clear decision in concept selection, and act as a final checklist in the phase of final design. From a design perspective, the tool has been found easy to adapt especially to design processes where designers use mood boards in the concept selection process. Finally, the explanation lines on the concept selection board has been found to be very useful as it strengthens the communication and clarifies the meaning of the cards.

Usability

The tool was evaluated as easy to use. However, there was a common opinion that it is hard to judge the usability of the tool without actually using it.

PARTICIPANTS / ASPECTS				
FULFILLING THE **DESIGN GOAL**	"It is really helpful for junior designers to get direction and clarity because junior designers often seeking how to translate the briefing. Also, helping creative directors to guide the junior designers."		"I strongly agree, we have also junior designers. these are really guidelines for them, and experienced designers they already have their goal but they don't usually speak. This tool makes everyone speak."	"I think this is a match. It guides, it helps to inspire because possible to use in co-creation sessions. It also fits inexperienced designers."
DESIRABILITY AT WORK ENVIRONMENT	"In principle, I see a lot of similarities with the tools I use. So, I see there is value in it."	"It will add the most value for brands who have less routine in design projects. The more experience you have with a brand, the less you have to follow the tool completely and tick all the boxes."	"We could easily adapt it to our work environment. we have design days.. every designer sees our brands differently, helping every designer to see the brand in the same way."	"It's something I tend to use already, a different manifestation of the same principle. I would also use this tool with the client."
USABILITY	"For me, it's easy. I need to play with it once. I find it hard to judge right now."	"I think it's a nice, simple tool."	"It is very easy, you can also write new words and adjust according to our brands."	"It's easy but you can also make it slightly easier by making it more self-explanatory. "

Table 1. Responses of participants to the evaluation aspects

6.4.4. Conclusion

There are three aspects of evaluation: fulfilling the design goal, desirability, and usability. Among those, desirability is the only aspect that can be measured with designers' first interaction. When it comes to guidance and inspiration aspects of the design goal and usability, it is hard to make an effective and comprehensive validation of the tool without experiencing the use in the work environment. However, in the design process, the tool has been iterated, and the usability has been validated several times with inexperienced designers. The conceptualization phase of the report would provide a better understanding of how usability, guidance and inspiration aspects work.

During the evaluation sessions, all designers have found something common in the tool with the methods they already use. It has created both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage is that the tool is easy to adaptable in their work environment, which increases desirability and makes it easier to use. The disadvantage is that they may not prefer using this tool since they already have some similar methods. Nevertheless, according to one participant, having a well-structured tool creates more trust in the client and inexperienced designers, and it can be the reason to use the tool over their own methods.

Finally, designers that participated in the evaluation were from different companies with different mindsets. This has been done on purpose to have a broader perspective. Nevertheless, together with the semi-structured interview setting, it has caused focusing on different points. In other words, each designer has focused on different aspects of the tool rather than what was asked.

7. Conclusion

The initial purpose of this project was to design a tool that helps designers -and all stakeholders- in the concept judgment process to find the concept best fitting the brand. For that purpose, Think the brand out loud is designed. In this final chapter, it will be concluded that if the goal has been achieved or not. Following that, recommendations for further design and contributions to the literature and practice will be presented. The chapter closes with a self-reflection.

7.1. Reflection

7.1.1. Reflection on the Design Goal

"to guide and inspire concept validation of (in)experienced designers* during brand experience design process"

*all stakeholders involved in the design process

The purpose of building the design goal as written above was to design a tool that serves both experienced and inexperienced designers in the concept judging process. It was also aimed to include all stakeholders involved in the process, which will be mentioned in the limitations.

Both as a result of interviews and the idea evaluation sessions, it is validated that there is a certain difference between experienced and inexperienced designers in terms of the way of working with the design concepts connected with brands. Therefore, these two designer groups benefit from the tool in distinct manners.

For the inexperienced designers, the design goal fits better as the tool plays more of a guiding and inspiring role in the process. They get support from the tool more easily since these designers do not have years of experience and gained knowledge to judge the concepts. However, from the perspective of experienced designers, they see the tool as a strategic approach to organize the design process. They even have the idea of strengthening the communication between them and junior designers through the use of the tool. Yet, in both cases, the tool plays the role of a facilitator in the brand experienced design process.

7.1.2. Answering the Research Questions

How do designers judge concepts in the brand experience design process?

 • How do designers choose concepts?

 • What are the criteria when judging?

 • How do designers come up with concepts in the brand experience design process?

 • What are the tools and techniques they use when creating concepts?

 • What does the brand experience design process look like?

 • How do designers benefit from the brand in this process?

The questions above were asked to explore the context of the project. Along the process, all these research questions have been answered. The main research question "How do designers judge concepts in brand experience design process" was addressed and visualized in the "Exploration" phase after analyzing the interviews together with "What does the brand experience design process look like?".

When it comes to experienced designers, it has been proven that they all have their own unique way of judging design concepts resulting from years of experience and gained knowledge. Their criteria, tools and methods also differ depending on their type of expertise. Some designers prefer using metaphors or mood boards and some prefer using branding models. However, it has been found out that criteria -the way designers benefit from the brand- mostly occur through brand emotions, brand personalities and brand values.

7.1.3. Reflection on the Design

Through the project, I have explored and proposed a new way of validating design concepts to find concepts that are 'on brand'. This new way of validation has contributed to the process in many dimensions that are explained below.

Brand constructs as criteria

Various brand constructs, which help designers in decision-making, have been named during the project. As a result of both qualitative and quantitative studies, many of them eliminated; brand personalities, brand values, and brand emotions were decided to be the criteria to judge design concepts while using the tool.

Giving space for discussions and teamwork

It was found out throughout the interviews that concept validation process includes many stakeholders. It is a matter of teamwork, and a lot of discussions take place when judging concepts. Therefore, the tool gives space discussions and encourages these stakeholders for teamwork.

Strengthen communication of the brand

It was explored through the literature review that word and the visual combination would facilitate the communication among the design team. This finding was adapted to the project as the communication of the brand. However, the word and visual finding study could have been more comprehensive.

Seeing the brand clearly and judging accordingly

To judge concepts based on the brand, it is important that designers know the brand very well. In other words, they should have full knowledge of the brand personalities, values and emotions. Then, the brand definition board will help designers to both explore, visualize and clarify the brand. And, the brand definition board works in accord with the concept selection board. The latter helps to judge concepts based on the cards coming from the first board.

The effective process through intuition and rationality

It was explored through the literature review that intuitive approach followed by a rational approach in early decision-making leads to optimum conditions. First, the brand definition board helps to clarify the brand. Then, the concept selection board uses intuition during its preparation. Rationality follows it when making the calculations for the winning concept.

Internal and external use

First, the tool was aimed to be a tool for internal use. Then, in the design evaluation sessions, it was explored that it can be placed both internally and externally. However, besides the external and internal use, development level of the brand becomes another concern when deciding how to use the tool. When the brand is a long-standing one, the brand definition board loses its effectiveness.

7.2. Contributions

This project aimed to develop a tool to help (in)experienced designers with the concept judging process in selecting the concept that fits best to the brand. Contributions to related fields are presented below;

7.2.1. Contributions to Literature

It has been explained that there are many sources in the literature approaching brand and brand experience notions. Most sources addressing the brand notion evaluate it independently of the design process. Other sources concerning the brand experience notion view it from the point of creating it (Morrison and Crane, 2007), measuring it (Brakus et al., 2009), its general view (Bakker-Wu et al., 2017) or analyzing its relationship with brand constructs (Chang and Chieng, 2006). However, this project brings a new perspective to looking at these notions.

First of all, mainly the project defines a way for validating design concepts to understand if they are 'on brand' or not. It is a both inductive and deductive way of judging design concepts. While doing that, it benefits from three brand constructs; brand emotions, personalities and values. In other words, the project disintegrates the brand as three brand constructs to benefit in the concept judging process.

Secondly, the project brings out a new notion which is the 'brand experience design process'. It is the process undergone when designers are creating brand experiences. During the first part of the analysis, the brand experience design process was suggested as having a similar approach with the standard design processes. This comparison made it easier to visualize in the second part of the analysis as a result of interviews with the experienced designers. In the end, the brand experience design process was discovered, analyzed and visualized.

Third, brand experience has been defined as the overall experiences that result from the brand's and brand-related stimuli's interaction with the senses of consumers by evoking certain feelings and emotions as a result of the interview analysis.

Finally, the importance of the right order of intuitive and rational approach combination (Eling et al., 2015) has been validated for the concept judging process. The approach (Eling et al., 2015) has been used to design the tool.

7.2.2. Contributions to Design Practice

The tool helps both experienced and inexperienced designers in multiple dimensions. While guiding and inspiring inexperienced designers through both concept making and the concept validation, it helps them to design products, services or systems that are 'on brand'. Besides, the tool helps them to see the weak and strong sides of each concept, and to define directions for the final design.

Moreover, presented in the final design, the tool contributes to both experienced and inexperienced designers' way of working by providing four use cases. Each use case is shaped whether a brand is long-standing or newly developing and whether the design team is external or internal.

It has been validated that the tool highly contributes designers' teamwork during the concept judging. It helps to create a certain direction for the communication of the brand and steers discussions among the design team*.

*all stakeholders involved in the concept judging process

7.3. Limitations

Time Limitation. As explained in the end of conceptualization, there are two issues concerning the time limitation. First of all, the tool is designed to evaluate the concepts that are already designed during the process of concept making. Mentioned before, concept making is a process that takes a lot of time and dedication. During the evaluation sessions, the time given for concept making was only 15-20 minutes which is not enough to design concepts that are equally developed and well-thought. Secondly, the time given to test the tool was limited. The given time to use the tool was approximately 30 minutes both to make the brand definition board and the concept selection board.

Testing in the Real Environment. Going through the real processes of concept making and judging with the stakeholders would be an opportunity for the project. It is expected that it would also affect the evaluation results. How each stakeholder takes part in the use of the tool could have been explored.

Prior Brand Knowledge. Connected to the limitation of testing in the real environment, designers with the prior brand knowledge would lead to smoother use of the designed tool. Building of the boards would be more realistic, as a result, and discussions would be more fruitful.

Views from Experienced Designers. As the project targets both experienced and inexperienced designers, it was a limitation that the evaluation sessions neither could be conducted with experienced designers nor get their views on the project during the process.

Limited Sources. The project's focus contributes both to the literature and the design practice. However, since there are no previous studies concerning the topic, the help provided through these sources was limited.

Brand Constructs Further Research. The tool provides a card set consisting of a set of brand personalities, values and emotions. During the process, their relationship with each other has been searched but could not be concluded. It could have been analyzed further to contribute the working of the tool.

Sufficiency of the Card Set. The card set consists of two parts: visuals and words. To generate the word cards, a research has been conducted by examining current card sets partaking both in the literature and the practice. However, current card sets were limited to work on. Then, pictures for the picture cards were selected accordingly from a website of stock photos. It was not important if everyone seeing the picture cards has the same opinion since the decisions made by the discussions and common sense. However, it was essential that the cards help communication of the brand. By considering that, to measure the suffeciency of both card groups, extended user evaluation must be done, which requires dedication of more time on the project.

Lack of Technical Knowledge. The access of the tool has been designed as a website. However, the design is not realized due to lack of technical knowledge.

7.4. Recommendations

7.4.1. Design

There are four components of the design: tool manual, card set, and two boards.

After design evaluation sessions it was found out that instead of having a tool manual, boards can be self-explanatory. There are enough empty spaces around the boards that could have been used to explain the working of the tool. Thereby, the guidance aspect of the design goal would be more significant.

The card set is designed to strengthen the communication of the brand among the stakeholders, and it consists of a set of brand personalities, values, and emotions. These brand constructs have been decided based on the lists found in the literature and practice. Moreover, there are some blank cards to add new words if needed. However, to have an optimal basis for communication, it is not certain if it is the best list of personalities, values, and emotions. A more extended study can be done to reveal that.

The brand definition and concept selection boards are created within the use of the same color palette. It guides users for the cards that will be transferred from one board to another. However, as the lighter yellow color that is used in the outer circle of the brand definition board is used in the concept selection board, too, it confuses the user.

7.4.2. Use Suggestions

The concept selection board emphasizes three design concepts. These three design concepts can change with concept safe, middle ground and concept extreme to make the tool more realistic. In a design process, when there is an account manager and a designer, designers tend to go for the extreme concept by her nature. Doing this may contribute in many directions because as a participant has said in the evaluation session **"brand has always two polars, they both have to be distinctive, and should fit the brand"**.

The usage of the tool is designed in a way that it visualize and reflect the brand personality of a certain brand together with values and emotions. However, when the usage is integrated also in concept making, the brand definition board helps the user to draw product brand personality, As a result, the concepts will be more 'on brand'.

7.4.3. Further Research

Effectiveness of the tool must be measured. One suggestion to do that is conducting research in which both experienced and inexperienced designers are involved. First, the concept designs will be made by inexperienced designers. Then, the designs will be judged based on the tool and the views of experienced designers who have previous knowledge about the brand.

To find the optimum way of working of the tool, it should be used in different companies for a certain time. It will create various use scenarios. Later, those various scenarios can be mentioned in the tool manual, to inform future users.

7.5. Personal reflection

"You only grow by coming to the end of something and by beginning something else."
John Irving

Looking back at the day I started, I was strongly impressed by the ambiguity of the *brand experience design.* A new term, there were neither academic papers nor explanations of terminology in the way I approached. I was going to design a tool for this ambiguous term, and I did. It was a very challenging and insightful journey of exploring how to design a tool for people working with brands. I met many wonderful people along this journey and learned a lot.

I was coming from an educational institution where there is no such word as 'brand'. We were designing products without considering the brand aspect. For me, this project was the key to the door which opens to a whole new world. I would like to call out to design students who stay in their comfort zones in graduation projects. 'Go, explore and learn!' This graduation project has helped me to broaden my vision towards design.

Looking at the learning goals that I set five months ago, the first one was about gaining in-depth knowledge about brand experience design. I am proud to say that I gained that with the interviews I conducted, I generated the notion 'brand experience design process' and visualized it in detail. I dearly loved working on my project, and that helped me moving forward constantly. Even though I know little about brands and brand experiences.

Second and third learning goals were about exploring the way experienced designers work with brands and they judge design concepts. I believe that I fulfill these goals both with the help of the interview analysis and literature review.

My final learning goal was to experience designing a tool for validation. It was the hardest part among all as it was my first time in tool designing. What makes it even harder was the fact that the tool was being designed for the designers. Still, I managed it with dedication and hard work. It was a process starting with the interviews, numerous insights, and countless days of literature review, and ending with several user tests that showed me directions for the design of the tool.

Personally, although there were times that I felt weak, I believe that I managed to overcome these times quite successfully. When looking at my personal goals, definitely I have improved my communication and planning skills with the project.

To conclude, I am glad that I have been through this process. In the end, I will be grown when I begin my new journey. Cannot wait to go through it!

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