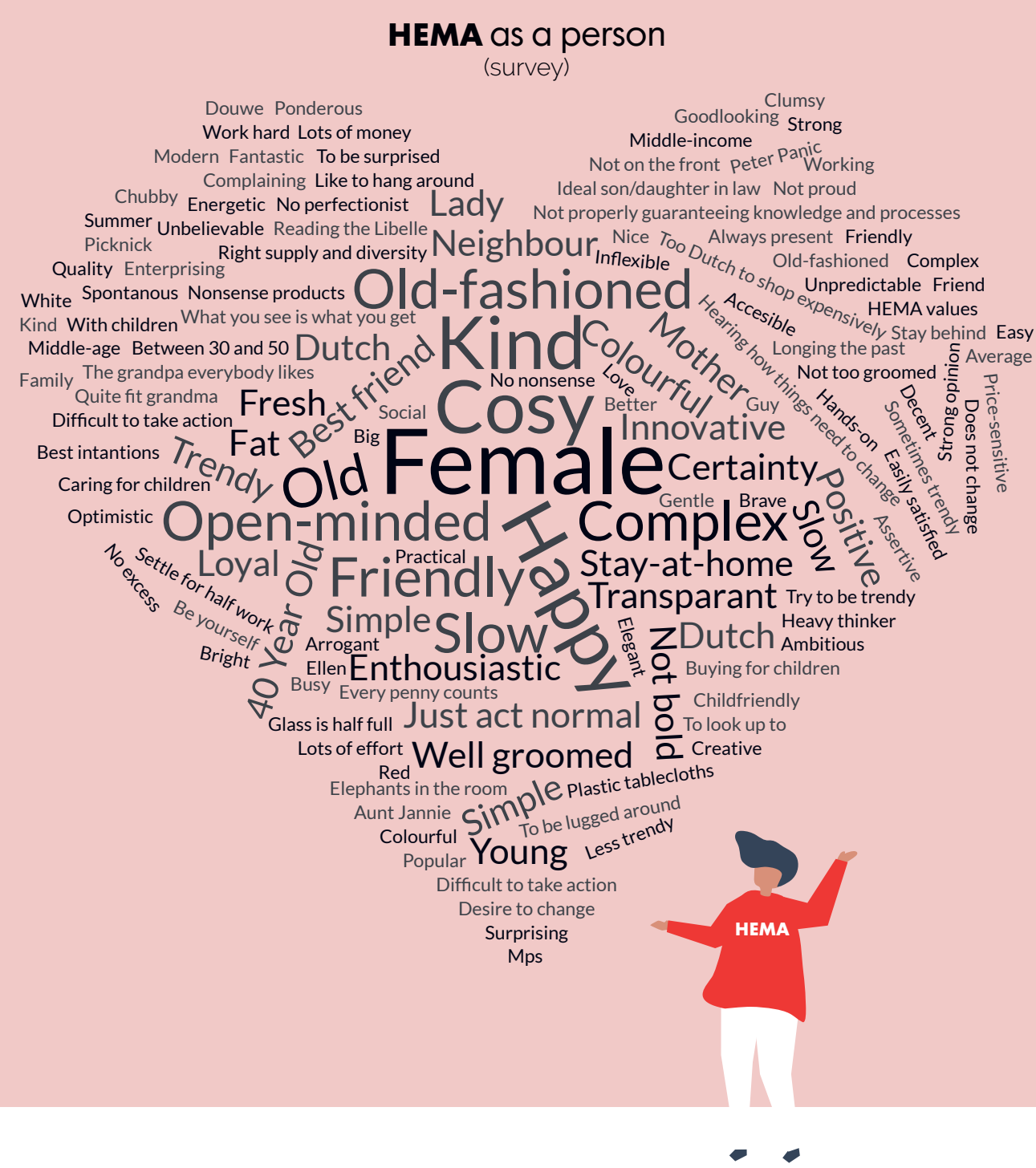


HOW EMPATHY ENHANCES AN INNOVATIVE MINDSET

An exploratory case study at HEMA



The perceived level of innovation among employees should be enhanced.



Employees should **not only acknowledge customer-centricity** but also act upon it.



All employees should **take ownership of innovation**.
It is not a one man's job.



HEMA should **become a frontrunner**; they are right now following other businesses to get ahead.



Employees should **use customer insights in the fuzzy front end** to build the right foundation for their products.

One of the most pressing concerns of each organisation is innovation. It can be reached through product differentiation, but innovation is also obtained through having the right employees. Corporate cultures that support to take the risk and think creatively will be led to new products, services and strategies. However, these innovations are only beneficial if they manifest superior value in the customer-driven marketplace. To do so, companies should act upon customer-centricity: the act of placing the customer at the centre of everything one does, by listening to what they have to tell, studying their needs, and afterwards using these gained insights in one's process. This is how **Empathy-driven Innovation** is born.

HEMA EMPATHY MODEL

Hear what the customer has to say

Experience what the customer goes through

Melt with that experience, make it your own

Abstract and Analyse what you have seen and use it in your design process

HEMA's departments focused on product design are talking the least to its end-consumer.

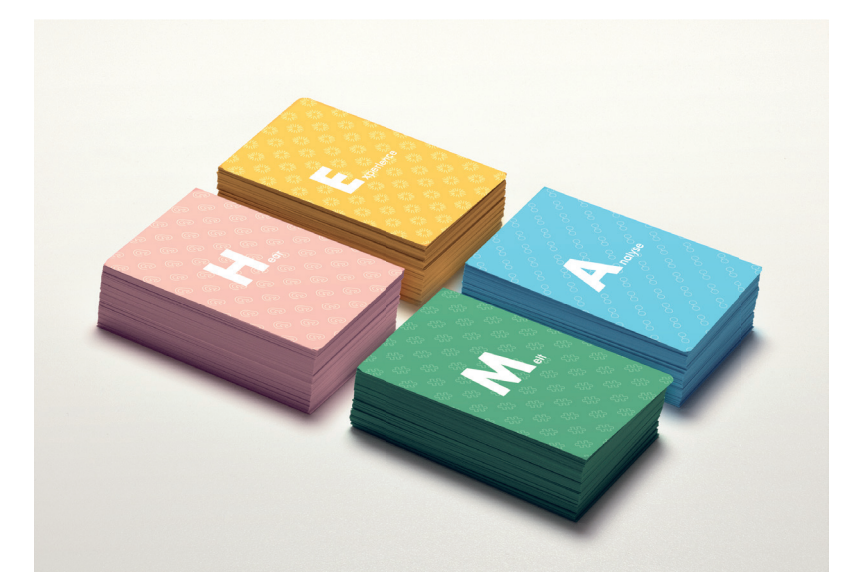
Little empathy happening at HEMA

Based on a Case Study at HEMA, it was found that there is currently limited contact with (and involvement of) customers happening in (design) processes within the studied company. The goal of the Case Study was to find out how much innovation was currently happening through both qualitative and quantitative research. The study discovered five lacking factors of innovation to be improved.

A strategy to integrate customers in HEMA's working processes to become more innovative.

Strategy

The HEMA framework, based on empathising with the customer, is short for Hear, Experience, Melt and Analyse. These four steps in the HEMA model are in the first place easy to remember for employees because of the acronym and second of all, they support the employee to engage in customer interaction. The designed HEMA Empathy Toolbox takes care of the company's lacking factor of innovation. The toolbox contains, amongst others, a HEMA Empathy Card Deck with 42 questions that enable the employee to take on the perspective of the customer. While supporting employees to take on this perspective or to even act as if they are the customer themselves, it stimulates active customer participation in company processes. Ultimately, this HEMA Empathy Framework will improve the rate of customer engagement, and with that stimulate and reach innovation.



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How empathy enhances an innovative mindset:
an exploratory case study at HEMA

May 1st, 2020

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