

BRAND EXPERIENCE MANIFESTATION: A TOOL FOR CONCEPT
EVALUATION ACCORDING TO BRAND ATTRIBUTES AND
TOUCHPOINTS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF NATURAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

JANUARY 2022

Approval of the thesis:

**BRAND EXPERIENCE MANIFESTATION: A TOOL FOR CONCEPT
EVALUATION ACCORDING TO BRAND ATTRIBUTES AND
TOUCHPOINTS**

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ABSTRACT

BRAND EXPERIENCE MANIFESTATION: A TOOL FOR CONCEPT EVALUATION ACCORDING TO BRAND ATTRIBUTES AND TOUCHPOINTS

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January 2022, 109 pages

Brands are not just confined to names or logos. They are instrumental for acquiring and retaining competitive advantages in the modern business world, where consumers are more knowledgeable and demanding. Firms are now offering multiple brands with multiple physical products and digital services through a plethora of touchpoints. Ensuring a design concept's proper representation of brand attributes and alignment with corresponding touchpoints are fundamental for delivering a consistent brand experience. Thus, offering exquisite holistic experiences is imperative. This study aims to understand how brand experience is manifested in practice, through the cases of two firms of substantially different sizes and sectors. The findings of the study highlight a gap in the use and interpretation of terminology, between literature and practice, reveal how the organizational and sector nature may influence the manifestation process, and most importantly highlight a need for more tools that assist with concept evaluation from a brand perspective. A brand manifestation tool based on Multiple Attribute Decision Making principles is designed to address the main pain points that were revealed during the research.

Keywords: Brand Experience, Brand Attributes, Decision Making, Concept Evaluation, Competitive Advantage.

ÖZ

MARKA DENEYİMİ GÖSTERGELERİ: MARKA ÖZELLİKLERİNE VE TEMAS NOKTALARINA GÖRE KONSEPT DEĞERLENDİRME ARACI

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Ocak 2022, 109 sayfa

Markalar sadece isimler veya logolarla sınırlı değildir. Tüketicilerin daha bilinçli ve talepkar olduğu modern iş dünyasında rekabet avantajı sağlamak ve korumak için etkilidirler. Firmalar artık çok sayıda temas noktası aracılığı ile birden fazla fiziksel ürüne ve dijital hizmete sahip çoklu marka sunmaktadır. Bir tasarım konseptinin marka niteliklerini uygun şekilde temsil etmesini ve ilgili temas noktalarıyla uyumunu sağlamak, tutarlı bir marka deneyimi sunulmasında esestir. Bu nedenle, seçkin nitelikte bütünsel deneyimlerin sunulması gerekliliği kaçınılmazdır. Bu çalışma, önemli ölçüde boyut farkına sahip, ayrı sektörlerden iki firmanın vakaları aracılığıyla marka deneyiminin pratikte kendini nasıl gösterdiğini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın bulguları, terminolojinin kullanımı ve yorumlanmasında literatür ve uygulama arasındaki uçurumu açığa çıkartmaktadır. Bulgular ayrıca, organizasyon ve sektör yapılarının ortaya çıkış sürecini nasıl etkileyebileceğini açığa çıkartmakta ve en önemlisi, marka perspektifinden konsept değerlendirmesine yardımcı olacak daha fazla araca olan ihtiyacı vurgulamaktadır. Araştırma sırasında ortaya çıkan temel sorunlu noktaları ele almak için Çok Özellikli Karar Verme ilkelerine dayalı bir araç tasarlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Marka Deneyimi, Marka Özellikleri, Karar Verme, Konsept Değerlendirme, Rekabet Avantajı.

To My Grandparents,

To My Parents,

To My Brothers,

To My Friends,

And To The Sleepless Nights of 2011...

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Owain Pedgley. I am so fortunate to work with you and your guidance and support did not just help through this process, but they inspired me to be a better researcher and human.

To my parents, I would never be able to thank you enough for what you have done for me over the years. I am forever grateful for your unconditional love and support. Words cannot describe how thankful I am.

I would also like to thank my brothers. I could have not done anything without you being by my side.

To my friends, we have come along way, have not we!

Finally, I would like to thank all participants who took part in this study for their time and support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

Brand Experience – BE

User Experience – UX

User Interface – UI

Core Attributes – CA

Emotional Attributes – EA

Functional Attributes – FA

Trending Attributes – TA

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of The Study

The modern marketplace is offering a tremendous range of goods and services that are all fighting for the consumer's attention and eventually their hard-earned money. Amidst the continuously growing competition, companies shifted their focus from products to experiences in an effort to entice more customers and maintain their existing base. The experiential economy is rapidly becoming the norm as customers come to expect more of the products they use beyond quality or functionality, which are nowadays assumed to be given qualities rather than competitive advantages. That shift means that companies ought to consider the bigger picture to successfully establish an extended relationship not only with their customers but with all the stakeholders involved in the design, development, marketing, and sales processes. Within the shift is an emphasis on brand-driven or brand aware design, with relatively new terms such as Brand Experience (BX) emerging, highlighting the strategic significance of developing a comprehensive experience that transcends the limitations of traditional product experience to become an integrated element of our life. Brands are quite comparable to humans; they are born, grow and have a life of their own.

1.2 Aim of The Study

This research has two aims. The first aim is to explore how companies of different sizes and backgrounds manifest their abstract brand attributes into design elements, formulating concepts that correspond to various touchpoints to ensure the delivery

of a consistent brand experience along the entire customer journey. Understanding and reporting on this process are considered to be important steps towards helping companies stay relevant and avoiding becoming out of place within their current and future marketplaces. In other words, the research is intended to reveal important issues that impact on companies' abilities to stay competitive. The second aim is to develop a brand manifestation tool that can be used to facilitate the manifestation process.

This study investigates how two firms operating in Turkey approach brand-driven design in general, and how they manifest their brands' attributes into design elements (of physical products, digital solutions, services, etc.) that ensure the consistency of the brand experience they aim to develop and deliver. The manifestation process – taking defined brand attributes and giving them physical or digital form as design solutions – is not a very well understood process and is under-researched in design studies. This current study is therefore positioned within a general aim of better understanding of the relationship between brand, design, and solution – focusing on the responsibilities of various stakeholders within this relationship.

1.3 Objectives of The Study

When the scope is narrowed to the context of Turkish firms, there is not enough information about designing a consistent Brand Experience. And when we look at the global scene, we find that the main issue in this regard is the lack of tools that facilitate the brand manifestation process. Therefore, this study will result in enriching the current literature about Brand Experience design within the Turkish context and provide a tool that will facilitate the manifestation process by:

- Exploring the effects of different industrial sectors and organizational structure on the manifestation process to paint a bigger picture for understanding brand manifestation.

- Highlighting how the role the legacy of the brand -or lack of- impacts the manifestation process. This is seen as fundamental to formulating brand experience.
- Investigating the disparities in interpreting relevant terminologies in literature and in practice and how these disparities influence the manifestation process.
- Understanding the current practices in firms that offer multiple brands and various physical and digital products to underline common pain points.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions are formulated to cover as many critical aspects of the manifestation process as possible, to provide an abundance of insights that can give better understanding of the current processes and highlight critical gaps that need to be addressed.

- What is the process of utilizing brand as a source of inspiration for design elements for brand manifestation?
- How do designers / brand managers manifest brands' identity using different design elements (tangible/ intangible)?
- What practices are followed to maintain the consistency of brand experience and attributes across multiple product lines and services (i.e., physical product + app)?
- What tools are used to evaluate design elements (tangible/ intangible) during brand manifestation?
- How do designers / brand managers define criteria to evaluate design elements (brand-specific / product-specific)?
- How do designers/ brand managers evaluate brand manifestation in accordance with touchpoints to deliver brand identity / product identity?

1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis comprises six chapters, which broadly reflect the order of activities that were undertaken during the research.

Chapter 1, *Introduction*: this chapter introduces the research topic as well as its significance. Besides that, it also highlights the aim and the objective of this research. It concludes by presenting the research questions.

Chapter 2, *Literature Review*: this chapter commences with an investigation of the literature related to the Experience Economy and how it drives a new meaning to competitive advantage. Then it presents branding related literature from both marketing and design perspectives. Based on that, the study dives deeper into the subject of Brand Experience, brand constituents and how products are understood from a brand perspective. From there, the relation between brand and design and the role of design elements and the issue of brand manifestation is explored. Additionally, relevant decision-making frameworks are discussed in order to get a better understanding about the decision-making aspect of the design process. The chapter concludes by highlighting the literature gap.

Chapter 3, *Methodology*: this chapter presents the methodological approach that was defined for conducting the empirical part of the research. Semi-structured interviews were decided as the main tool for gathering insights. Based on the results of the interview analysis, a proposal for a brand manifestation tool to support brand manifestation was made. This was followed by another round of follow-up sessions to get feedback about the proposed design. The empirical activities ended with a final round of analysis to reveal insights from the feedback that was gained.

Chapter 4, *Interview Results*: this chapter presents the in-depth qualitative analysis of the first round of interviews and discusses the most critical insights.

Chapter 5 *Brand Manifestation Tool*: this chapter discusses the process of designing the proposed tool based on the insights of the first round of interviews. Subsequently,

the outcome of the follow-up sessions, which were conducted to evaluate the tool, is presented and the main insights are highlighted.

Chapter 6, *Conclusion*: this chapter discusses the overall research process, presents the main findings from the work, and highlights the limitations that were encountered as well as suggesting some opportunities for future development.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this literature review the concepts of brand-driven design are explored to comprehensively highlight their growing importance in today's business environment. The design process is going through a continuous development process to become more agile in response to the dynamic business environment. Moreover, the concept of brand experience is attracting tremendous attention as companies realize the significance of products that provide customers with satisfactory experiences. It is worth mentioning that the term 'product' in the context of this study does not only mean physical goods but also digital goods and services.

2.2 Competitive Advantage in The Experience Economy

The modern-day business landscape is evolving at an unprecedented rate. Companies are in a contentious search for new competitive advantages. Pine and Gilmore (1998) have coined the term "The Experience Economy" where experience is substantial element in the development of a value proposition since growth markets where technology-driven innovation is the core focus are rapidly transforming into mature markets. This results in technology losing its ability for differentiation (Gonzalez et al., 2017). Juxtaposing this with the fact that users now are well informed about technology and product characteristics, and can conduct meaningful comparisons between the various products, the current situation is one where users are more demanding of the products (Gonzalez et al., 2017). Such transformations have fundamentally changed the design and value creation processes, demanding a shift

in focus from being technology-driven to human-centered (Brown et al, 2011). This means, according to Gonzalez et al. (2017), that to create sustainable competitive advantage, companies should work on identifying ways that can increase customers' empathy and engagement with their products rather than just focusing on the technical, technological, and operational aspects. Karjalainen (2003) discussed this shift in different words. According to him, as technical aspects lose their capabilities to differentiate between products "in developed product categories," the focus moves towards products' communicative qualities which demonstrate the "symbolic domain" of these products. These qualities are intertwined with a certain set of meanings that reflect the brand behind a certain product (Karjalainen, 2003). In the context of "The Experience Economy" (Pine et al., 1998), a brand is not only capable of distinguishing itself from other brands (Kapere, 2008), but it is also an intangible asset that is capable of reinforcing relations with customers (Gonzalez et al., 2017). Brands are placed hierarchically within commercial structures and are often the public-facing entities of companies. For example, the automotive company PSA owns brands such as Peugeot, Citroën, DS and Opel, with corresponding product names such as 208, C5, DS4 and Crossland. Another example is the white goods manufacturer BSH, owning brands such as Bosch, Siemens and NEFF. The public will have little or no knowledge of the companies PSA or BSH, but will be familiar with the brands. Therefore, strategically managing and utilizing a brand is of utmost importance to create meaningful and sustainable competitive advantage.

2.3 Branding in Marketing Literature

In the marketing literature there is no singular definition of what a brand is. Interpretations rely heavily on the perspective through which branding is approached. Mühlbacher et al. (2008) identified three approaches for brand research. The first approach is based on a managerial and sender-oriented perspective where a brand is seen as a combination of tangible and intangible elements (i.e., logo, name, colors, features, etc.). The analysis of this approach is made at an individual level as

both internal stakeholders, such as staff, and external stakeholders, such as consumers, are actively involved in brand related activities. The second approach is customer-centered, where a brand comprises mental representations shaped by consumers' cognitive perspective towards perceived attributes and benefits of branded products, as well as "image, thoughts, feelings, attitudes and experiences." The analysis of this approach is made at a social level since "brand tribes" of individuals who are interested in particular brand developed social circles that employs brand objects to reinforce their social identity. The third approach is an interactive stakeholder-oriented approach where a brand is constructed according to brand-related experiences and practices on both the individual and social levels. The analysis of this approach is made at a cultural level where it takes into consideration the cultural influence on constructing brand. These examples show the complexity involved in understanding what a brand is and how it is constructed.

Additionally, according to Mühlbacher et al. (2006) a brand is manifested through "material expressions" of its meaning which enables stakeholders to "sensually experience" that meaning. Brand manifestations are not predetermined from brand inception and their perception transcends being "branded objects". Thus, brand manifestation may compile various elements that can be objects, personals, organizations, or activities.

2.4 Branding in Design Literature

The definition of a brand in the design literature appears less complicated than in marketing literature, however, the same issue remains of not having a singular definition. Slade-Brooking (2016) defines a brand as "a set of elements, both physical and emotional, used to evoke a desired response in the minds of consumers or audiences. The aim of branding is to create a unique identity to differentiate a product or service from its competitors." Slade-Brooking adds that a brand often encompasses a set of designed elements that include a name as well as a unique visual style (Slade-Brooking, 2016). Similarly, Gonzalez et al. (2017) considers

brand as a combination of tangible elements (i.e., name, logo, etc.) as well as intangible elements (i.e., emotional value, beliefs, etc.). Meanwhile, Abbing (2010) approaches brand as a shared vision among people, defining the relationship that an organization wishes to have with its stakeholders.

2.5 Brand Experience

Brand experience can be defined as the comprehensive experience that includes consumers' sensations, feelings and beliefs, and actions towards a certain brand. This experience is evoked by brand-related stimuli such as brand design, identity, packaging, communication, and environment (Barkus et al., 2009). Brand experience occurs whenever a customer comes in touch with an organization or its brand (Gonzalez et al., 2017). Because only the settings that support the experience can be designed, and not the experience itself (Vargo et al., 2008), products are considered the core means through which companies can construct strong brand experiences in their customers' minds.

Understanding customers' perceptions and responses towards certain branded products and experiences can better align and improve the product design process with brand experience. Notwithstanding, there is a lack of tools and methods that enables designers to achieve this (Gonzalez et al., 2017).

2.6 Touchpoints

Touchpoints according to Neumeier (2005) are any points of contact where customers have an instantaneous experience with a brand. Touchpoints can be tangible, such as products or environments, or intangible, such as services or conversations (Abbing, 2010). Customers' experiences with a brand are defined by the interactions they have with touchpoints (Gonzalez et al., 2016). Every touchpoint conveys to the user particular brand values (Gonzalez et al., 2016), which is the reason brand values should be manifested into touchpoints that collectively deliver

brand values in an optimum form that corresponds to customers' needs and desires (Abbing, 2017). The strategic importance of a touchpoint determines the complexity level of touchpoint design. Accordingly, achieving consistency amongst touchpoints is extremely critical to ensure an overall harmonious delivery of brand experience in spite of the complexity level (Bakker-Wu et al., 2017). In an interview conducted by Bakker-Wu et al. (2017) with a CEO of a design agency that critical aspect about consistency was emphasized as the interviewee highlighted that consistent touchpoints do not mean identical touchpoints. On a related matter, Abbing (2010) indicates that there is a focus shift in touchpoints as they move from tangible to intangible, from product to services, and from services occurring in the physical world to those provided online (Figure 2.1).

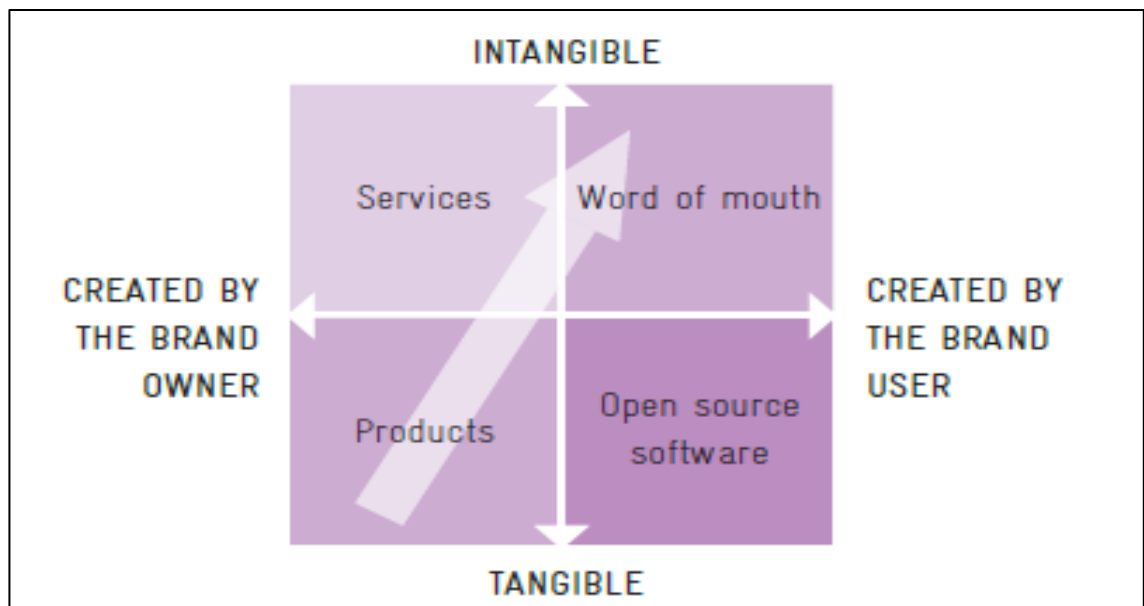


Figure 2.1. Diagram that shows the shift in touchpoints (from Abbing, 2010, P. 170)

2.7 Brand Constituents

Brand as previously established is a complex phenomenon and brand constituents are the unique elements that cohesively shape that phenomenon by giving it distinctive characteristics. Brand constituents include various elements, however, for

the purpose of this study, this review mainly focuses on brand identity, brand attributes and brand essence.

2.7.1 Brand Identity

Karjalainen (2003) mentions that using the term “identity” metaphorically in the context of corporations implies that those corporations are comparable to human beings and can be characterized through certain features, which give both the corporations themselves and their offered products meaning. This assignment of identity is achieved through triggering certain associations that are connected to the corporation’s brand name (Karjalainen, 2003). Slade (2016) defines brand identity as a distinctive compilation of designed elements (e.g., name, logo, colors, icons, etc.) that characterize a brand and convey the brand promise.

2.7.2 Brand Attributes

Brand attributes are the qualities, either functional or emotional (Slade, 2016), that help define a brand as it is expressed through touchpoints during the communication process between businesses and their customers (Newbery et al., 2013). In the context of brand experience, these qualities are expanded to include interactions that anyone may have with the brand (Newbery et al., 2013). Within the same context, it is worth noting that not all attributes are equally utilized during the brand experience process. Newbery et al. (2013) also highlight a critical role of brand attributes, namely their resilience and their ability to create differentiation. Brand attributes can be used to transform a static brand identity utilized mainly for brand recognition into a ‘brand DNA’ that can be utilized as a guideline for the development of various features, qualities and aspects that influence the overall customer experience and engagement with the business.

2.7.3 Brand Essence

Brand essence is the underlying brand values that a business conveys (Newbery et al., 2013) through brand offerings, which correspond to well rooted customers' needs (Slade-Brooking, 2016). According to Newbery et al. (2013), essence represents the 'why', while attributes represent the 'how' of branding, and both brand essence and brand attributes can support each other.

2.8 Understanding The Product

Warell (2015) highlights the fact that products have their own identities that differentiate them from other products. Product identity is considered a type of tangible branding which results from the perception of the design, especially towards the visual design elements, which designer use to represent a brand (Warell, 2015). The perception of product identity results from a composite experience of the product's presentational and representational dimensions (Warell, 2015). Product design is fundamental for the creation of brand identity and value (Malter, 2007) and it functions as a manifestation of brand identity (Karjalainen, 2002). A product when considered as a stimulus, can be dually perceived as either an object in itself or as an agent that resembles something else such as a company, social group or even a sense of belonging (Stompff, 2003). Considering a product as an agent is more closely associated to brand attributes, since the product's qualities aim to evoke certain reactions in customers' minds.

2.9 Brand and Design

The relation between brand and design is substantial. Brands utilize product design to construct brand values through product identity, as products can represent brands through the design of visual elements (Warell, 2015). A brand can be a pivotal driver

of innovation, utilized as a source of inspiration, guidance, and filtration (Figure 2.2.) (Abbing, 2010).

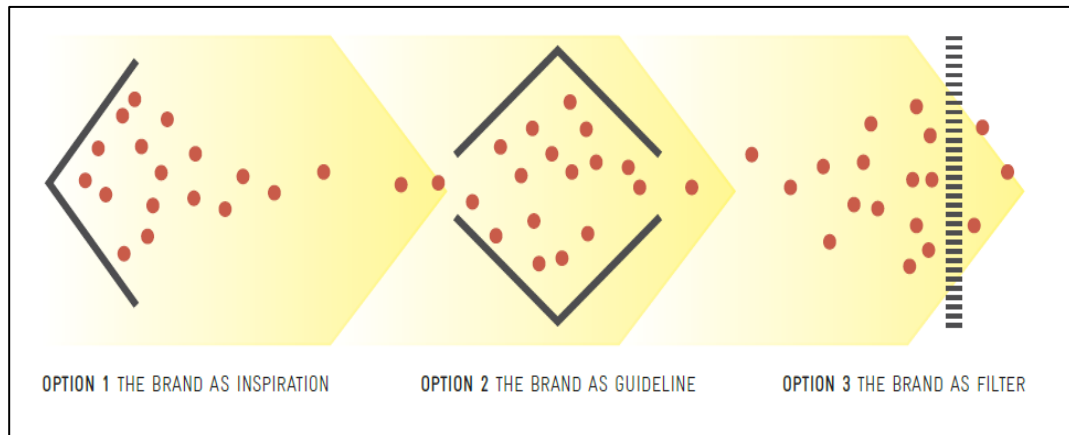


Figure 2.2. Different functions of brand during design process (from Abbing, 2010, P. 82)

Karjalainen (2003) discusses how meaning is not an objective matter but an act of communication that is deliberately created by organizations. Thus, in the act of communication, design is used as a tool to transform abstract intangible ideas such as brand values into tangible actionable solutions such as products (Gonzalez, 2016). This transformation process is what Karjalainen (2003) refers to as semantic transformation. Meanwhile, the process of interpreting design elements and ascribing values and meanings to them is known as semantic attribution (Abbing, 2010) and usually this takes place in users' minds as a result of brand experiences. Both processes are not strict scientific processes, and they are subject to distortion (Figure 2.3.) (Abbing, 2010; Gonzalez et al., 2017). Due to these distortions a gap between semantic transformation, (what the company wants to communicate), and semantic attribution (how users perceive meaning), occurs which is known as Brand Gap (Figure 2.4.) (Gonzalez et al., 2017; Gonzalez et al. 2019; Neumeir, 2003). The distortion especially in semantic transformation results from the poor aesthetic embodiment of brand values in touchpoints (Gonzalez et al., 2017), which results in a widening of the Brand Gap and a weakened brand experience (Gonzalez et al.,

2016). Formulating brand related sense-impression and meaning happens concurrently (Warell, 2015), since products are perceived simultaneously on aesthetic and semiotic levels (Vihma, 1995).

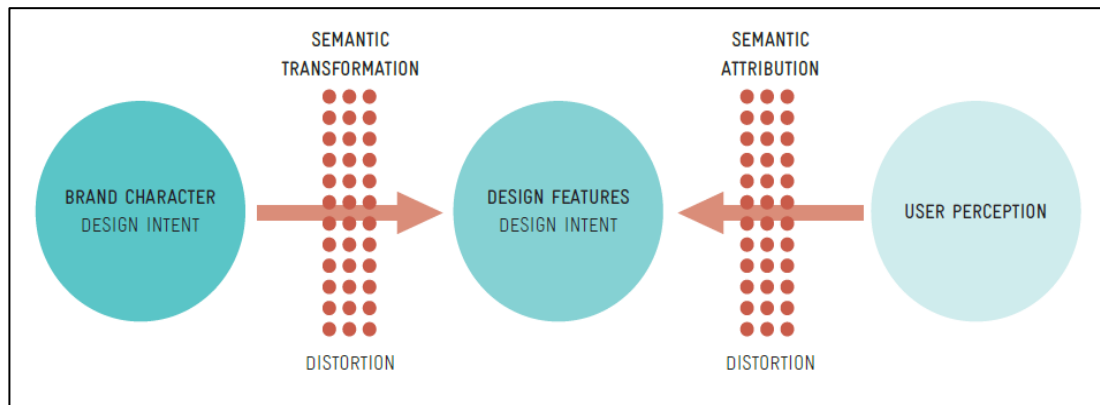


Figure 2.3. Semantic transformation design based on Karjalainen (2003) (from Abbing, 2010, P.59)

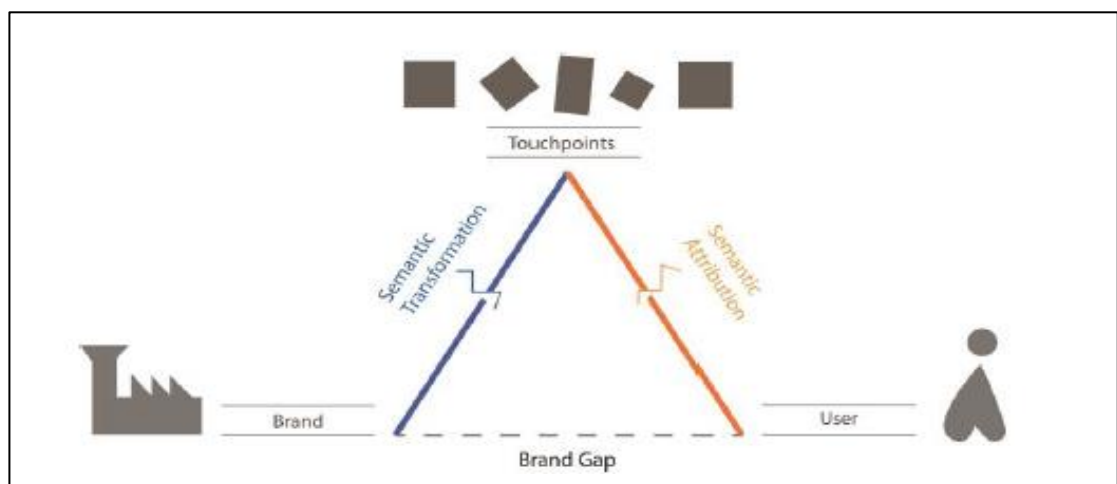


Figure 2.4. Triadic semiotics perspective (from Gonzalez et al., 2019, P.1958)

2.10 Design Elements

Karjalainen (2003) mentions two types of design elements. The first type of design elements is traceable, explicit design elements (such as forms and shapes) that result

from some tangible brand attributes. The second type is non-traceable implicit design elements (such as brand culture) (Ondra et al., 2017).

Providing codes (Karjalainen et al., 2010) or design cues (Warell, 2015) that operate as visual references to the brand (Karjalainen et al. 2010; Warell, 2015; Ondra et al., 2017) in the form of design elements in all design layers (Figure 2.5.) is vital for evoking intended strategic associations in the users' minds (Karjalainen, 2003) and, hence, increasing brand value by increasing brand recognition (Warell, 2015).

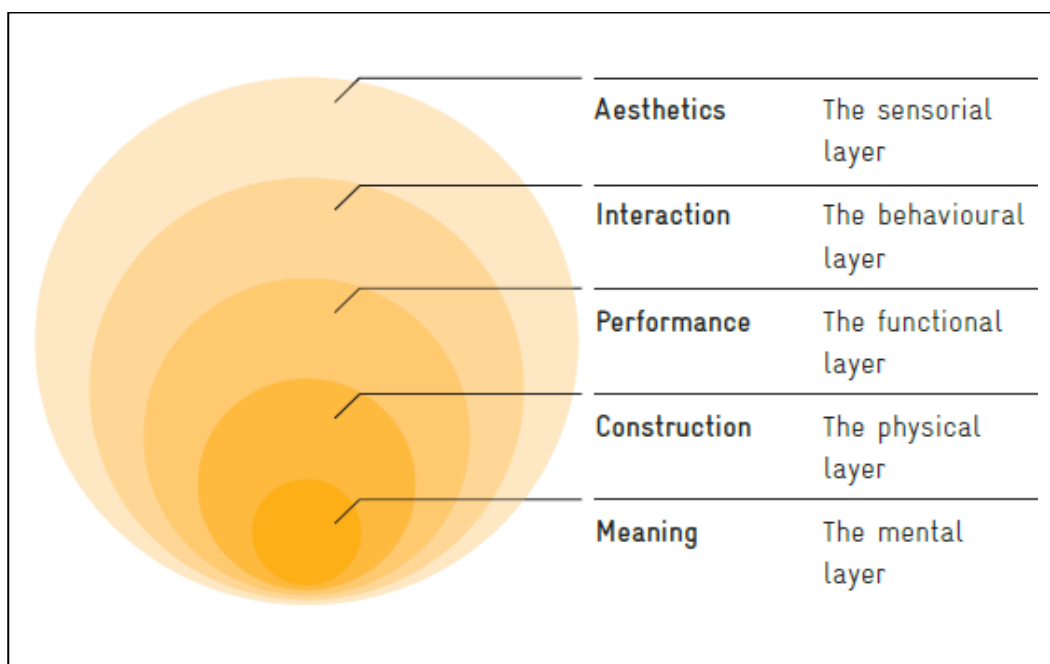


Figure 2.5. Design layers (from Abbing, 2010, P. 55)

Visual design elements that contribute to brand values as they function as references for brand recognition. These elements enable users to attribute meanings to brand based on its history and character (Karjalainen, 2010). As discussed before, both brands and products have their own identities which influence each other yet maintain a degree of uniqueness. Accordingly, brand-specific design elements and product-specific design elements can be identified (Karjalainen, 2003). Analyzing the semantic functions of a product, which are different from other product functions such as technical and communicative functions, is essential for creating product

typologies (Karjalainen, 2002). According to Kreuzbauer et al. (2005), within the same brand the design elements of a product category can be transferred to a new product category by changing the characteristics of the product shape attributes. Hence, products under the same brand would be perceived as constituents of the same identity (Warell, 2015). Furthermore, product appearance in the modern-day competitive marketplace is fundamentally affected by brand identity (Ondra et al., 2017). Ensuring consistent brand identity is therefore critical for becoming successful in such business environments (Aker, 2003) because recognizing brand identity through product design influences customer response (Michell et al, 2001). Additionally, design elements convey information about specific product functions to facilitate physical interaction while using branded products (Kreuzbauer et al., 2007).

Kreuzbauer et al. (2007) organizes the influence product design has on a brand in four categories: (1) perception of product affordance, (2) brand-product categorization, (3) brand-sign categorization, (4) brand-style categorization. Prior to defining design elements, companies ought to define their core competence associations (Conradi, 2001) which are related to their core competitive advantage (Karjalainen, 2003). Doing so would ensure that the correct messages are embedded into design elements to support brand identity (Karjalainen, 2003).

Defining product typologies is critical for determining design elements that communicate brand identity. Karjalainen (2003) utilizes the typological model created by Muller (2001) to analyze brand-specific references. The model offers three levels of classification. The first level is concerned with prototypical features such as basic functions of the product. The second level is the “super-ordinate” level, concerned with solution-typical features such as form and shape. The third level is the “sub-ordinate” level, concerned with behavior-typical features such as the usage context and interactions.

2.11 Decision Making Tools and Frameworks

Dankers (2018) considers decision-making as an act or a process of consideration and deciding which results in an outcome or a resolution related to a future action. The vital role of decision-making within the design process emerges due to the necessity of selecting the most suitable course of action(s) from a pool of alternatives (Jain et al., 2009; Lutters et al., 2014). Because of the nature of the design process, there are mutual interdependencies among the decisions taken during the process, which makes no singular decision independent from other decisions. Lutters et al. (2014) discussed modules for decision making. The first module is *multiple criteria decision-making* (MCDM), which is concerned with improving the process of decision making when multiple conflicting criteria are present by ranking the available alternatives. The second module is *multiple objective decision-making* (MODM), which is concerned with selecting from an enormous number of objectives. The third module is *multiple attribute decision-making* (MADM) which is concerned with ranking a confined set of alternatives. Meanwhile, the lack of adequate documentation of the reasoning behind the decisions made during the preliminary stages of a design process may reduce the effectiveness of the available information used for decision making (Lutters et al., 2014). To overcome such hurdles, it is pivotal to capture the design rationale that involves elaborate documentation of the reasons behind each relevant decision to the design of a particular product during every stage of the process as well as the design history and the context of the product (Moran et al., 1996; Zhang et al., 2013).

Designers mostly rely on their intuition, experience, and their understanding of the brand when making decisions related to concept evaluation and other actions (Ondra et al., 2017). Therefore, objective methods and tools are recommended to be developed or utilized to support designers with certain aspects of decision-making during the design process (Ondra et al., 2017). The available frameworks such as Karjalainen (2003) and Warell (2015) are concerned with analyzing the semantics of the physical design elements of a certain product, rather than being generative and

supportive of conceptual stages of a new design. Relatedly, the Digital BrandUX framework (Gonzalez et al., 2019) is concerned with the evaluation of visual aesthetic characteristics of digital solutions, more specifically websites.

2.12 Literature Gap

In the current marketplace, there is a shift from standalone physical products to physical products that have accompanying services. Accordingly, there is a shift from tangible to intangible touchpoints. Various physical products now have complementary digital products such as mobile applications or websites. However, there is a noticeable gap in the literature concerning basic understanding, frameworks and tools related to brand manifestation that can facilitate the evaluation of design elements of both physical and digital products of the same brand. Additionally, there are few studies related to understanding how brand identity, attributes, essence, DNA, and other brand constituents are communicated amongst designers, product managers and brand managers. This leads to questions about the influence of brand constituents on these professionals' assessment of proposed design solutions. Moreover, there is a need to understand how brands can be fully manifested and recognized, for example through the presence of design policies, guidelines, and limitations (Ondra et al., 2017).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the methodological framework, which was constructed and implemented to attain the primary aims of this study as stated in the *Introduction Chapter*, is presented in-depth in order to explain how each stage functions in relation to the overall study.

Since this study aims to understand how the manifestation process is done, learn the circumstances under which it is done, and highlight the impact of these circumstances on the process execution, a qualitative research approach was utilized. The primary reason is that such type of research techniques is capable of exploring what, why and how questions that will lead to understanding the reasoning behind individual's or groups' way of thinking and behavior and the overall meaning of that. This is unlike quantitative research which is mainly concerned with measuring and quantifying information to produce statistical outcomes (Keegan, 2009). Furthermore, qualitative research is better suited to investigating “relationships between people and/or between people and products, services or brands within a specific cultural context” (Keegan, 2009, P. 13). Moreover, qualitative research encompasses a plethora of methods, however, Darlington et al. (2002) have described the core qualitative methods as:

- In-depth interviewing of individuals and small groups.
- Systematic observation of behavior.
- Analysis of documentary data.

While designing a qualitative study, Merriam et al. (2019) highlighted that a qualitative study should start with formulating a research problem and question

which are adequate for qualitative methods based on the relevant literature. Secondly, “a purposeful sample” should be selected as it will be the main source for data collection. Thirdly, data is collected and analyzed using the most appropriate methods. Methods for data collection include interviews, observations, etc. Methods for data analysis include interpretive phenomenological analysis, conversation analysis, narrative analysis, etc. And finally representing the findings of the study.

That sequence represents the foundation of the field work that was implemented in this study. Figure 3.1 demonstrates the flow of the stages and objective of each one. During this process two rounds of data collection were conducted. In the first round, four semi-structured interviews were conducted with four participants. The literature findings along with the findings of the interviews formulated the starting point for the proposed tool for evaluating brand manifestation. In the second round of data collection that aimed to gain feedback regarding the proposed tool, two follow-up sessions with four participants in total were conducted where the proposed tool was presented and discussed with the participants who gave their feedback on it.



Figure 3.1 Study Overview

3.2 Empirical Study: First Phase (Semi-Structured Interviews)

Semi-structured interviews were utilized as the main method for data collection within the scope of this study. Keegan (2009) characterized qualitative research as being “person-centered” as the researcher attempts to holistically comprehend the background and the environment of the participants to develop thorough understanding of the relationships which the participants have with their surroundings. The interaction between the researcher and the participant(s) is usually

“fluid,” “open-ended,” “dynamic” and is closer to the form of “normal conversation” (Keegan, 2009). Thus, the method of semi-structured interviews is adequate for this study because it is characterized by using open-ended questions which enable the participants to reflect on their experiences and may highlight additional topics during the interview (Merriam et al., 2019) which can enrich the collected data.

3.2.1 Sampling and Recruitment

In order to serve the purpose of investigating the manifestation process in firms of assorted sizes, a sampling criterion was set where one firm should be categorized as a “large” company with multiple brands and product categories, while the other firm should be categorized as an SME. The selected firms should be offering both digital and physical products to their respective customers.

The selected two firms are BSH and Inofab Health represent different sectors and firm sizes, however, they both offer digital and physical products to their respective customer base. BSH is Europe’s largest home appliance manufacturer with a portfolio of eleven brands. There are two types of brands under the BSH umbrella. First global brands such as Bosch, Siemens, Neff and Gaggenau, with Bosch being the most popular brand worldwide. Second, local brands such as Profilo in Turkey and Balay in Spain. Additionally, BSH has digital brands such as Home Connect which is a mobile application to control home appliances. BSH has around 39 manufacturing facilities across four continents and more than 60 thousand employees worldwide. Meanwhile, Inofab Health is an Ankara based healthcare startup that designs and manufactures spirometers under different brands. SpiroHome is brand for home products such as SpiroHome Personal and SpiroHome App. SprioClinic is the brand for clinical products such as SpiroClinic Compact, SpiroClinic Pro and SpiroClinic. SprioCloud is the brand of the digital application for managing and synchronizing data. Inofab has a team of 40 people. Both firms sell direct-to-consumer (D2C) and through a network of distributors either in Turkey or worldwide. The unique profiles of these firms meant that interviewing participants

from these firms would be beneficial for highlighting the similarities and differences in the manifestation process from the perspective of multinational firm and a small startup. It is worth mentioning here that Siemens Healthineers (formerly Siemens Healthcare) which operates in the healthcare sector was not subject of this study as it is not part of the BSH group despite having the name Siemens.

Therefore, the selection of these two firms was considered appropriate and reasonable under the constraints of the project and especially considering the in-depth nature of the intended interviewing.

The literature review demonstrated that the scope of this study is relevant to the fields of marketing, product management and design. Thus, for recruiting participants, a selection criterion was determined taking in to account the size of the organization where the participants come from. So, in the case of a large corporation, it was requisite to recruit multiple senior level participants from departments that are relevant to this study's scope to form a holistic understanding. Meanwhile, in the case of an SME, one senior participant who handles various relevant duties within the organization can be recruited. Therefore, respondent-driven sampling which is also known as network sampling (Patton, 2014) strategy was utilized as this strategy is advantageous in situations where contacting and recruiting the appropriate participants is challenging (Patton, 2014) which is the case when attempting to recruit senior level participants in large corporations. It was not possible to reinvite the same interviewees of the first round to the follow-up session of the second round due to availability issues, however, for both rounds of data collection the participants' profiles were comparable.

Upon recruitment, the research subject matter was explained to the participants, and interview times were scheduled, and participants' consents were obtained.

3.2.2 Medium of Interviewing

Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the fieldwork had to be conducted online. For conducting online interviews, the tool to be used should offer high quality audio and video calling, screen sharing options and recording capabilities so that the recordings can be used for transcription purposes afterwards. Diverse options of video calling tools such as Skype and Zoom were offered to participants to choose whatever suits their situation. Zoom was chosen as the primary means for interviewing participants as face-to-face interviews were not applicable under the circumstances. Certainly, this can be considered a limitation for the research.

3.2.3 Data Analysis of first Phase

For analyzing the data that was yielded from the first round of interviews, two rounds of coding were done. The first round aimed to highlight the common themes which emerged from the obtained data. Meanwhile, the second round was line-by-line coding. It aimed to group the relevant lines with the most relevant theme(s). To achieve this, Qiroks which is a software designed for analyzing qualitative data, was used because it enables the researcher to color-code, create themes, group themes, add notes to certain lines, search words repetition among other abilities as shown in Figures (3.2., 3.3., 3.4. & 3.5.). Chapter 4 presents in-depth analysis and discussion of the insights obtained from the first round of interviews.

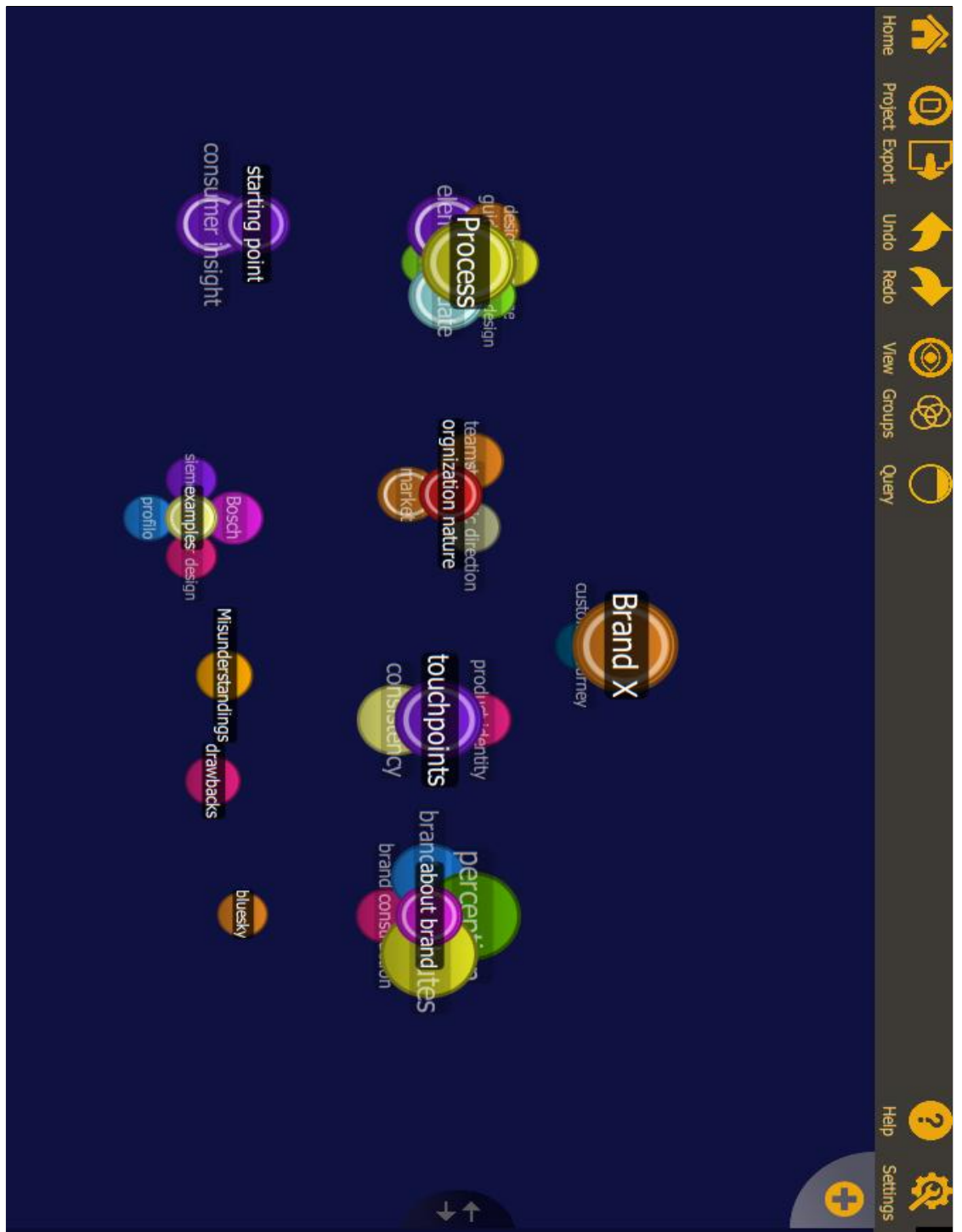


Figure 3.2. Quirkos: Overview of clustered themes



Figure 3.3. Quirkos: Expanded theme group with number of quotes in each category

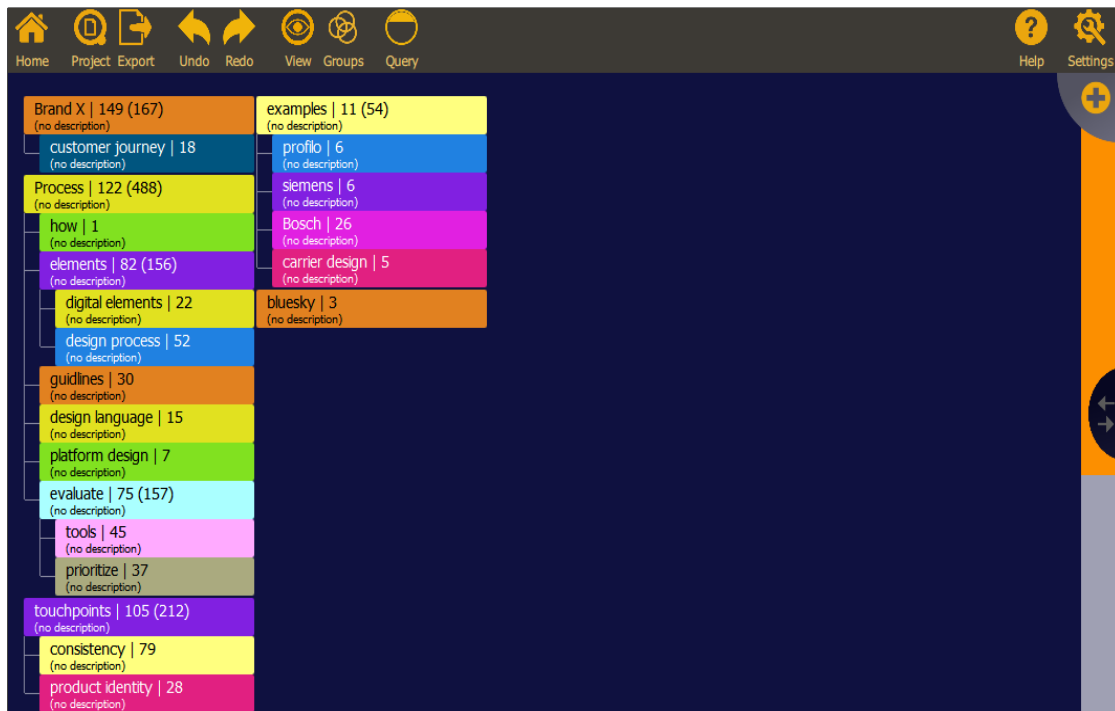


Figure 3.4. Quirkos: Tree View with number of quotes in each category



Figure 3.5. Quirkos: Sorting texts by theme

3.3 Empirical Study: Second Phase (Design of Brand Manifestation Tool)

Based on the insights gained from the analysis of the first round of data collection some common issues were highlighted despite the different markets where each firm operates. Therefore, a brand manifestation tool is developed to these highlighted issues to facilitate the manifestation process. Chapter 5 will thoroughly present the process of developing and designing this tool, guidelines for using the tool as well as an example of using it.

3.4 Empirical Study: Third Phase (Follow-Up Session)

Subsequent to developing the tool, two follow-up sessions were conducted with the participants from the same firms as were sampled for the first round of data collection. The number of participants from the two firms is similar to that of the

first round to ensure consistent balanced representation of views. During these sessions, the developed tool was presented and discussed with the participants.

Following the two follow-up sessions, the transcripts were analyzed. Based on the input and feedback of the participants, some suggestions are proposed for developing the tool further and future investigation.

CHAPTER 4

INTERVIEW RESULTS

In this chapter the main themes that emerged from the first round of interviews will be highlighted and then discussed in-depth. The discussion aims to showcase the similarities and differences between the two firms (BSH and Inofab) based on the insights gained from interviews.

4.1 Introduction

As a reminder, three participants from BSH were interviewed (Interviewee 1, 2, 3) as well as one participant from Inofab (Interviewee 4). In total 4 interviews were conducted via Zoom (Table 4.1). Due to the nature of the semi-structured interviews, some questions were modified or added according to the background of the participant and any new points that were highlighted during the interview.

Table 4.1 Interviewee information

Participant	<i>Firm</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Duration in minutes</i>	<i>Date</i>
Interviewee 1	BSH	Design manager	65	June 2021
Interviewee 2	BSH	Brand manager	55	June 2021
Interviewee 3	BSH	Product manager	56	June 2021
Interviewee 4	Inofab	Co-founder	120	July 2021

In total 45 interview questions were formulated and divided over three main groups as demonstrated in Table 4.2. During the course of the interviews, some questions were modified, added or omitted based on the background of the participant and the course of the interview.

Table 4.2 Interview Questions Groups

Group No.	<i>Number of Questions</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
1 st Group	12	Understand brands and brand experience and products
2 nd Group	16	Understand manifestation processes
3 rd Group	17	Understand evaluation processes

After coding and analyzing the content of the interviews, the results were collected summarized under the following themes:

- Understanding brand
- Brand experience
- Manifestation process
- Company factors

Each of these themes has sub-themes that will be discussed one-by-one in more detail in the following sections. The results in this chapter therefore provide the key insights from the first round of interviews.

4.2 Understanding Brand

This section shows how each of the participants understand, perceive, and analyze the brand(s) and the brand constituents offered by their respective firms. Understanding what brand is formulate the base for effective brand manifestation.

4.2.1 Defining Brand

The first set of questions was designed to understand how the interviewees understand the brand(s) they are working on with all their different components and how they use the brand(s) as a source of inspiration to drive design elements that best manifest the brand.

So, when asked to define the brand, we can clearly see how the answer is shaped by the interviewee's background. Interviewee 1's answer is operation-oriented, where they just started by describing the process where they run "multi brand projects" where a brand neutral platform is utilized during the process where at least two brands are included. This process is "common in white goods" as a mean for facilitating production due to the expensive nature of the large platforms, so companies work on making as many synergies as possible while utilizing "very detailed and very inspiring brand guidelines" for each brand to ensure delivering the distinctive brand promises of each brand.

Meanwhile, Interviewee 2 took an approach that systematically anatomizes the brand. They started by citing the long tradition behind the brand of Bosch and Siemens, which is deeply rooted in history and how the founders "already settled the fundamentals of the brands". The core of these brands, which is "the intention of the brand", is mainly founded upon three main pillars. These are being "benefit oriented", having "aesthetic design" and "being resource efficient". It was stated that, "for brand Bosch, the brand core is invented for life, which is the brand slogan".

The brand core combines innovation and life because from the brand's perspective innovation that does not serve the life of individuals is meaningless. Based on this brand core, a brand character is formulated. The main characteristics of the brand are being "competent", which is shown throughout the various innovations over the years, being "courageous", as a follower brand cannot introduce the same level of innovation, and finally having rooted values which are supported by the long brand heritage.

These brand characters shape the brand promises, given to "consumers to make their lives better". In case of Bosch, the brand promises are formulated around the theme of being a "trustful brand" as trust is core of the brand DNA. The brand promises are its perceivable qualities, which are interpreted as the quality that is felt by all senses, offering "surprisingly simple solutions" (as the brand aims to ease people's life not to add further complications to it), and finally delivering the perfect results each time a consumer uses any of the brand's products.

Meanwhile, Interviewee 3 narrowed down the scope to the product category level which in our case was dish care. From this perspective, quality is based in "the core DNA" of the brand and the "invented for life" brand core is manifested here through the benefits of sustainability that the brand considers a huge differentiator. This is especially the case in parts of the world where the brand is perceived as "having a quite good heritage" in the dish care category, positioning Bosch as a global market leader.

For Interviewee 4, the story behind establishing their startup remains the core component that shaped the brand. The name of the company is a combination of the two words "Invoasyon Fabrikasi", which in Turkish means 'Innovation Factory'. The name represents the philosophy behind the brand as the founders aimed to establish an interdisciplinary team that can tackle different problems from an unfamiliar perspective. This sequence shaped the core brand identity as a "digital health company that improves respiratory care" that has "a design thinking approach."

From the interviews, the origin story behind the brand can be highlighted as the quintessential factor that influences the rest of the brand constituents. The term brand identity was not used when the interviewees were asked to define their brand(s). In the case of BSH, the most frequent term was brand promises, however, in both cases it was the brand identity that was being described, using various terminology and characteristics.

In summary, under this heading the keywords were found to be brand promises, brand core and brand DNA.

4.2.2 Brand Attributes

Based on the constructed layers of brand constituents, brand attributes are primarily driven from the brand promises. During some parts of the interviews, the interviewees mentioned attributes without classifying them as such. They were mentioned while describing other aspects of the brand. For example, Interviewee 1 mentioned that their company tries to make products that are as clean, lean design, basic and ‘less design’ as possible, which are all aligned with the German Bauhaus design style.

Some other attributes were highlighted by Interviewee 2 while describing the design or some actions taken by the brand in case of product recall incidents. Such attributes included being honest, being straightforward, reliability, safety, empowerment, performance, and quality.

These were the overall attributes of the Bosch brand as highlighted, however, we can notice that some category-orientated attributes emerge when we narrow down the scope to a certain brand, which in our case is the dish care category.

Some attributes such as connectivity, customization and sustainability are driven by the digital transformation taking place within the firm and aims to create difference in the consumers’ life to position the brand as a life changer.

Other attributes are driven by the theme of Bosch engineering and Bosch quality such as smooth improvements, simplification, performance, trust, and support.

Meanwhile, Interviewee 4 utilized the well-known attributes of another brand to clarify the attributes of their young brand, “we want to be the Apple of spirometer” they said.

Associating their brand attributes to those of Apple reaffirmed their position as a new upcoming disruptive player in that sector. The comparison was supported by the attributes later mentioned by the interviewee such as being competent, trustful, focusing on providing aesthetic stylish lifestyle products, having innovation capabilities, empowerment through accuracy and usability, and having empathy. Some other attributes were mentioned as part of describing some products (these are discussed shortly, in the product identity section). This is similar to the approach of Interviewee 3, where they narrowed down the scope of brand attributes to the category/product level.

We can see that brand attributes are defined at two levels. First, at a general level which is concerned with the overall brand attributes. Second, at a particular level which is concerned with the brand attributes for a certain product category.

In summary, under this heading the keywords were found to be brand attributes, category attributes and product attributes.

4.2.3 Product Identity

Defining product identity was more ambiguous than expected in the case of BSH. Interviewee 1 did not recognize the term on its own and mainly associated its implications with brand identity, as the main goal is to make products fit within the brand and not have their own ‘standalone’ identity. They mentioned that this term can be more relevant to other markets such as the Chinese market where design solutions in each project are tackled as a solo project. However, Interviewee 1 described some characteristics that can be particularly associated to product identity

such as lean design, basic design, and less design: stating that they “use all these details to give this character to the products”. The usage of the term “character of the product” implies that the product has its own identity, yet it was not that easy to grasp and define.

Meanwhile, Interviewee 3 thought of product identity from a hardware standpoint and started describing the various elements that are used in the product. They also highlighted the different product types which are offered either as a freestanding product or as a built-in product. Different elements are used to highlight the product within the environment where it is being used. The interviewee mentioned the term “category heritage” which implies that the product itself not only has an identity but is also rooted in history that supports its existence within the marketplace.

The appliance itself is [going to] live with the consumer... All along the lifetime of the appliance where it can be updated, where it can be customized according to different needs. (Interviewee 3)

Using verbs such as “live”, “updated” and “customized” to describe how the product (not the brand) would exist within the usage environment are expressions of the unique identity of the product.

On the other hand, Interviewee 4 mentioned that one of their early on mistakes was naming the company and the product as SpiroHome. This created some sort of confusion with their target audience as they were offering a product for home use and another for clinical use. So, including the various product offerings under the SpiroHome brand complicated how they are perceived by different stakeholders. To overcome this confusion, they separated the brand name from the product name. In other words, they distinguished the brand identity “Inofab Health” from the product identity “SprioHome, SpiroClinic, SpiroCloud” with various sub products, such as SpiroHome app, SpiroHome personal, SpiroHome light, SpiroClinic app, SpiroClinic compact, and SpiroClinic Pro.

The name of each product category starts with “Spiro”, which associates all products to the same origin. Then adding either the word “Home” or “Clinic” gives the

distinctive identity of the product category and adding words such as “Personal” and “Pro” enhances this product identity by making it more specific.

To sum up, articulating product identity is not clear enough in many cases as the distinction between brand identity and product identity is not well realized. However, once it is realized, it can lead to enriching the product offerings to better support the overall brand offerings.

In summary, under this heading the keywords were found to be product identity, product customization and, product update.

4.2.4 Perception

The perception of the brand is instrumental for the brand's existence. In the case of BSH, since they are mostly running multi-brand projects where a base platform is utilized, they rely on different materials to give different looks and textures as well as some printings and colors (CMF Design) and other brand-specific design and communication elements.

Communication is fundamental in creating the proper brand perception and assisting with distinguishing the various brands, despite having comparable features. Since each brand under the BSH roof has its unique brand promises (e.g., Bosch, Siemens, Profilo, NEFF etc.), perception does not stop at the appearance of the appliance but should involve all senses especially to convey the brand's perceivable quality and other brand promises and attributes such as “surprisingly simple”, “perfect results”, sustainability, etc. through all categories.

We are still taking care of it, the full picture, but [it is] not that easy sometimes to be honest... Most of the story is marketing. At the end you are providing a good but common experience in each category... In each Bosch dishwasher and Siemens dishwasher...most of the times have very similar features, but you communicate some in different directions and try to catch the attention of consumers in different directions. (Interviewee 1)

In the case of Inofab, perception is more complex due to the nature of the market they operate within. There is always a comparison between products in this space, so for them to stand a chance against the heritage players they needed to display how being an interdisciplinary team helped them to create good-looking and user-friendly products, unlike those that are created by engineers for the competition, and which look “ugly.” So, for the target audience to get this message, the design must be clear and understandable. This is another reason for comparing their approach to Apple’s. They wanted not just to be perceived as providing a medical device but also a lifestyle product.

In both cases, the interviewees highlighted the importance of formulating the proper messages to convey each brand’s intended unique experience consistently through various touchpoints.

In summary, under this heading the keywords were found to be communication, story and market nature.

4.3 Brand Experience

Defining Brand Experience was somehow intricate. Although the essence of the concept can be seen throughout the interviews, interviewees were not able to articulate it directly and clearly. There are various misinterpretations and understandings of the concept. Therefore, in this section there are various direct quotes to show how the state of ambiguity related to defining brand experience, despite mentioned the essence of the brand experience concept shortly after. The state of confusion surrounding this term can be highlighted by Interviewee 1 who stated that “brand experience is... so much micro expertise to meet for product for household appliance. I mean, what do you mean with brand experience is very large for household appliance.” Besides that, they associated the concept with UX team.

Despite these statements, Interviewee 1 mentioned the essence of brand experience multiple times, as the following excerpts illustrate.

I mean if you go and have a look at Bosch brands you see something, some design elements repeating in each category in each product. So, you start perceiving this as a part of brand, and you then afterwards, after a while then the consumer visits back this dealership, for example he suddenly remembers that image in his mind. So, this is one of the things that we are using design elements very often in all products and then... Apart from that, uh, we are also, we have some principles, design principles who say this is important that come;

“Bosch is providing it in experience in the kitchen or culinary world in another way”;

“Most of the story is marketing. At the end you are providing a good but common experience in each category”;

“So, this is most of the times... The common experience... Common but high-quality experience is provided but not everyone specific experience. It's not that way.”;

“We are designing the product itself and the experience [that] product delivers.”

The same trend for discussing the essence of the term ‘brand experience’ – without defining it clearly – continued with Interviewee 2, where they mentioned some critical aspects that formulated the Bosch brand experience, as follows.

“For Bosch, it's really very important to change the lives of the individual to have a better world.”;

“Invented for life means so much to us because we see in every invention improvement of human beings' life... attached to their lives, giving them more time to do good things for themselves... for their loved ones or for the world.”;

“Bosch wants to make people life good in order to improve the world, a world where the woman feel empowered is a nice word, right?”;

“For example, in brand Bosch, that brand comes from the granny to mother from mother to daughter and it goes off on, you know, so this is the experience actually in life which is shared by people.”

Meanwhile, Interviewee 3 highlighted several times the essence of brand experience from a product category standpoint.

“Convince the consumer to buy our appliance and our brand, it means that you're creating a real difference in their lives”;

“Our brand has its own promises with water saving with energy saving and... not only with sustainability, but for the difference in our consumers lives with time saving as well.”;

“So, for me is also working in the dish care category. I'm pretty much linking our brand to sustainability and together with the high-quality promises.”;

“We like, we pretty much use the overall message and not really divide it into the into the segments.”;

“We are using this overall message of global market leader in all products, in order to strengthen the image in the eyes of the consumer.”

They also touched on the subject of new offerings that the brand is offering in the form of digital connectivity and how these new offerings are changing the way the brand considers its overall experience.

In our novelties are not only in the in the hardware side anymore but now with connectivity. We want to be together with our consumers all along their lifetime and even offer them customization in the later stages. For instance, but yeah, yeah, so it's not going to be. It's not going to be the same appliance that you purchase anymore, but you can update it according to your needs. This is like with the very latest novelties that we are offering to the market... It's the appliance itself is going to live with the consumer all along the lifetime of the appliance where it can be updated, where it can be customized according to different needs;

So, I think, yeah, in the previous periods before today, we were pretty much the hardware expert of that area, but from now on, as the global and the regional market leader of that category, we also want to improve our offerings to consumers by this customization and update opportunities;

“Dish care is the very first category to enhance that experience for consumers with connectivity in all value segments.”

They highlighted that the reason behind these observations was the technical nature of the dish care category, however, the rest of the product categories will follow suit.

Interviewee 3 mentioned twice the statement about creating an experience when describing two touchpoints. The first is visiting any place where other brands are displayed and the second one is the product itself.

We want to create this experience to our consumers where, for instance, if you can go to a shop floor anywhere, where you can have other brands products as well, we want to create that experience for our consumers [to have] when they open a dishwasher door and when they take the basket in and out several times, they [baskets] are not going to be feeling shake. (Interviewee 3)

They also discussed the experience that Bosch is going to offer to its consumers through various touchpoints that impact the brand experience. These touchpoints were not mainly revolving around the product but the overall experience.

Now Bosch is going to be offering an experience to its consumers where they would be getting the value behind the money that they paid for appliance itself and ...Bosch will always be continuing its journey, not until the purchase itself, but all along the lifetime with customer service... that is going to create an experience for consumers where the core thing is trust, so the consumers would be.... making a payment, obviously, but this is a Bosch would always secure that... what they invested to the appliance itself is always going to pay off. (Interviewee 3)

One critical aspect that arose from these three interviews was that there is not a clear holistic approach for coordinating the company-wide brand experience goals, as Interviewee 1 stated “there is not a very big holistic experience”. Achieving this in a large firm is not an easy task. Thus, using unified guidelines is vital in ensuring that all departments are following the same design principles.

On the other hand, in the case of Inofab, Interviewee 4 highlighted how the foundation of their brand experience was formed, albeit not recognizing that. They stated that by focusing “on the whole story of the patient life”, they changed the type of concepts they came up with “from product to system solution”. They stated several

times that their motivation or goal is to create “trustfulness”, to become a “trustful brand” and “to create the impactful products or services into patients’ lives” which can be achieved through “detailed design” to “empower the use of the device” in the patients’ daily lives.

When asked to define the brand experience, the interviewee was not familiar with the term, however, they started to describe how they are working on providing the same holistic experience to the customer across the various touchpoints of the journey starting from the website, shipping, and invoicing to the customer support. When the interviewee was informed that what they described was in fact the brand experience, their response was “actually it's good reflecting word.”

Despite these statements, in both cases, there was still some sort of confusion between the characteristics of the brand experience and the brand attributes. Not clearly defining and stating the brand experience goals may lead to missing out the overall picture by not setting the main standard upon which everything is evaluated and may lead to confusing brand experience with other terms such as UX.

Another key difference that emerged during the interviews between the two cases, is considering the experience provided by other brands’ products that may influence the overall experience that each company is trying to provide. In the case of BSH, according to Interviewee 2, they do not consider these experiences as it “is only a perception” and they “cannot act based on perception”. Meanwhile in the case of Inofab, according to Interviewee 4, they “are trying to understand [patients’] environment not only problem stage”, which includes understanding the type of medications or devices the patients use.

In summary, the essence of brand experience exists within the two firms albeit not clearly defined as such. Under this heading the keywords were found to be brand experience goals and brand essence.

4.3.1 Touchpoints

Touchpoints are the artery that is responsible for disseminating the brand experience to the stakeholders involved. Notwithstanding, when asked about how the matching process happens between the design elements and the touchpoints to ensure best possible delivery of the intended experience, Interviewee 1 stated that “we don’t design touchpoints. We design products. Touchpoint design is something different.” Not recognizing that the product is the fundamental touchpoint which a company in the white-goods sector can offer to its customers to convey its brand experience, came as a very surprising and unexpected answer, especially from a designer’s perspective.

They associated the term touchpoints to other elements such as “a fair,” “a retail environment” or even “a digital website,” however, they considered that the main product is anything but a touchpoint.

On the other hand, the remaining interviewees mentioned various touchpoints that the consumer gets in contact with along their journey, such as TV advertisements, social media content, shopping environments, the shopping process along with its internal procedures such as making payment, invoicing, and shipping, as well as after sale support services. Meanwhile, Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 4 highlighted some product-related touchpoints such as the “robust baskets” of the dish washer.

In both cases there is a great understanding of the significance of touchpoints. In the case of BSH, it seems that this understanding is driven by marketing practitioners, however, in the case of Inofab, this understanding is driven by the mindset of the cofounder who is trying to disseminate it to the rest of the company.

In summary, under this heading the keywords were found to be digital touchpoints and physical touchpoints.

4.3.2 Consistency

Consistency is fundamental for safeguarding a brand's position and ensuring its growth. During all interviews, being consistent was the most emphasized aspect. For Interviewee 1, using a design language that consistently utilizes multiple design elements, which are "available for all UIs", such as certain forms, lines, and colors are indispensable for continuously evoking specific perception and reminding the consumer that they are using a certain product or a certain brand.

"We are using a line in the handle always, so we are trying to make it a signature over there"; (Interviewee 1)

"We have some consistent applications, and this consistency is very important for us."; (Interviewee 1)

If you go and have a look at Bosch brands you see something, some design elements repeating in each category, in each product. So, you start perceiving this as a part of brand... After a while then the consumer visits back this dealership, for example, he suddenly remembers that image in his mind. So, this is one of the things that we are using design elements very often in all products and then. (Interviewee 1)

The opening statement cements not only the importance of being consistent but also the state of misunderstanding some terms, since it contradicts the previous notions made by Interviewee 1 that they design the product and not touchpoints as well as associating brand experience as part of UX.

Furthermore, according to Interviewee 1, consistency is rooted in the product development philosophy at BSH since they do not introduce radically new looks or features but subtle incrementally consistent improvements. Unlike other brands such as Arçelik where every few years they fully overhaul the design of products, according to the interviewee who also participated in this process during their time at Arçelik. Although such an approach can be liberating for designers from a creativity standpoint, it may not be an appropriate approach for creating a consistent brand, unless values such as 'complete change' or 'adaptability' is at the core of that brand.

It is not relevant or I [do not] think fitting to the idea of creating a brand, a brand awareness, a brand design language. Because then your brand is looks like that way this year and the other year it looks completely different and the other year it has a new outlook, so you do not have a consistency. (Interviewee 1)

During the interviews it was highlighted several times that the company operates somehow in silos and there is not a high-level coordination between the various departments and professional branches. Therefore, to ensure consistency is delivered, they rely on implementing the same process and following the same guidelines.

“Brand promises are always the same for each brand, in each category.” (Interviewee 1);

“There is not a big orchestration between different categories... But designers are trying to provide it or take care about it, let's say...being consistent in each design.” (Interviewee 1)

The same point was also supported by Interviewee 2 and Interviewee 3, who asserted the importance of having standardized processes to ensure consistent results. This will be discussed in further details in the upcoming section about the process.

Furthermore, in the case of Inofab, being consistent is not only good for the brand image but also it is necessary due to the regulations governing the industry. Interviewee 4 emphasized the significance of being consistent repeatedly and the most interesting observation is that they did not limit it to the physical product, but they kept associating it with all the touchpoints along the customer journey.

The keyword is consistency, you know! If you are consistent with the products and marketing and branding or social media posts or some office furniture, whole things must be consistent. It reflects [on] your product and your services or your support after sales, invoice. whole things about the company. (Interviewee 4)

When asked about how the manifestation process differs between the physical product and the digital ones, Interviewee 4 said that “it must be consistent because and it shouldn't be same”, however, the unique nature of the materials used in both must be considered.

Achieving consistency in a young startup can be quite challenging due to the insufficient resources, although having a small team may help with aligning the grand mindset on the same page.

“It's not easy to explain [how] the physical products or digital products reflecting to your branding strategy” (Interviewee 4);

If the founders or managers believe the consistency between physical [products] or branding, physical product or digital products or marketing strategy should be consistent between them each other, it's the good step to start, but it is whole story depends on the budget, unfortunately. (Interviewee 4);

“We are trying to arrange a whole mindset in the same page.” (Interviewee 4);

“If you are believing to make a product to [become a] game changer in the industry, you need to support that. If you are not doing well... you are not believing exactly, you are maybe lying. Therefore, I am concerning with the consistency starting with the design, the ideation and after-sales operation. I am very obsessive to create a product and after sales operations are the same approach, same philosophy. (Interviewee 4);

“If you are not using the any kind of button or any kind of experience in the products, you need to think about the design system level.” (Interviewee 4)

When discussing consistency, all interviewees tended to look at the bigger picture, which in our case is known as brand experience. This is quite thought-provoking, because in the previous sections we showed that some participants misunderstood the term and, in some cases, misinterpreted it to be part of UX, yet when discussing consistency, they were mostly addressing brand experience albeit without stating so.

Indeed, consistency is vital to the survival of any brand regardless of its size. In both cases, design elements are substantial for achieving consistency. This includes the design elements of the physical and digital products as well as the other various touchpoints that manifest the brand experience. In the case of big companies, it can be difficult to establish communication across various departments, thus there is a dependency on standardized processes and guidelines. On the other hand, achieving consistency in a startup can be hindered by a lack of resources, which may be

compensated for by establishing effective communication between the various departments.

In summary, under this heading the keywords were found to be brand DNA and guidelines.

4.4 Manifestation Process

The manifestation process is disparate in both firms. That was expected as the nature of their respective industries are utterly different. As we mentioned before, in the case of BSH, multi-brand projects are carried out simultaneously due to the prohibitive cost of the platforms used in production. As mentioned earlier, having standardized processes ensures consistent delivery of brand promises because as Interviewee 2 stated “everybody knows what to do. And everybody is targeting the [same] results. So, everybody is result oriented somehow. You are ensuring that”. The most asserted point about the process at BSH is how incremental the process is because introducing ground-breaking modifications may negatively influence the brand perception, as highlighted by Interviewee 3 who stated that “there is generally some smooth improvements, and it is taking some couple years to complete the change, so it is not from one night to another. It is not that radical to break that story.” This point of introducing slight changes was also emphasized by Interviewee 1, who stated:

In all the projects we try many different things. But at the end of the day, it looks like frugal changes, small changes, small evolutions of the products to me. That is also a preference of the company, by the way. I mean, we are using all these tools to make small but perceivable and meaningful changes. (Interviewee 1)

Describing the process mainly revolved around the management activities and the cross-teams communication rather than describing certain design activities. The term ‘manifestation’ was also subject to misinterpretation, as it was misunderstood for ‘manifesto’ by Interviewee 2 when asked about the manifestation process. In another instance, Interviewee 1 gave an example of how the brand Siemens is technology-

oriented, and how they should “underline it in each category, each project”, however, they did not mention any specific procedures or processes for achieving this.

The rooted German engineering heritage of the brand still influences its processes to this day which can be highlighted by the emphasis put on testing. This resulted in associating some brand promises to engineers rather than designers.

Interviewee 2 stated that “Perfect-results is not a design topic; it is an engineering topic. A surprisingly simple solution can be a design topic.” This perspective may tremendously alter the trajectory of the brand experience manifestation process as it divides the main promises or attributes between involved teams instead of rallying their efforts to realize the bigger picture and deliver the brand experience as intended.

Isolating the design activities is fundamental for grasping the bigger picture that the process aims to achieve. As mentioned above, the entire product development process at BSH starts with consumer insights. The design team lays out what each brand’s target group expect, “need,” “prefer,” and “love,”. Based on this, the design team starts to explore various ideas and directions.

Bosch, for example, we'll prepare a design for Bosch oven, we start considering Bosch user groups, target groups' expectations, needs and what they like, and we start this at the beginning. Then we create ideas and there are several innovation and design thinking tools over there we can use. (Interviewee 1)

According to Interviewee 1, the involvement of stakeholders in the design process relies on the nature of the project. For conceptual, futuristic projects, the involvement of stakeholders is not solicited. If the design teams are working on “real projects,” they collaborate with “stakeholders from beginning to end”.

There are some internal processes for fostering innovation and exploring future directions. Interviewee 1 gave an example of how designers follow the automotive industry approach for creating futuristic concepts, which can be used for setting future strategic directions related to design language.

BSH is a German company and the designers' design mindset here, I think, is affected a lot from car and automotive design mindset...

You have an idea, but this is so conceptual to be true, but what they do? They took this as a showoff like it's the 'Pierre' argument. Marketing argument in the fairs, but they take this inspiration behind it, whatever it is, the manifestation behind it then they apply it to this to their next generation of products in a doable way, in a produce-able way.” (Interviewee 1)

Furthermore, some company-wide activities take place annually where employees submit innovative ideas then employees vote for the ideas that they think have potential to be developed and tested further. An idea that is submitted but failed to pass the voting stage can be resubmitted the following year if only it has been significantly improved.

There is an effort to consolidate the efforts across the different departments to create a holistic process as stated by Interviewee 3.

Normally there are different categories that are having their own road maps and own discussions. Now there are also establishments like digital departments who are also transferring those know-how and info across categories... There are different departments who are doing all that consolidation and a holistic perspective, let me say.

Such transformation in the process is critical to solidifying the basics of brand experience manifestation, as departments will not be separate silos anymore but collectively working towards realizing a unified experience. Meanwhile, there was some insinuation about the actual brand manifestation process, however, the interviewees did not provide an in-depth procedure regarding achieving this. For instance, Interviewee 3 mentioned that there are some checkpoints along a stage-gate process where subject matter experts add their inputs regarding how some brand promises such as “simplification” is “reflected into both digital and the physical user interfaces”.

Generally, the process at BSH is a long iterative process that relies heavily on consumer insights as the center pillar, as we will discuss later. Every step of the process needs to be confirmed by consumer testing before moving to the following

stage. That is why BSH has a longer Go-To-Market time than the competition, which is an area Interviewee 2 highlighted for potential improvements.

“We call it consumer driven innovation”: this is how Interviewee 1 described their process. Consumer insights as previously mentioned are the center pillar that the whole innovation process revolves around. All three interviewees from BSH asserted the considerable function of consumer insights along the various stages of the process from start to finish:

“One of the key elements that we start with a for a project is always consumer insight” (Interviewee 1);

“You listen first of all to the consumers, and you take out these very often used words by them” (Interviewee 2);

“We journey over there. We start with consumer insights and consumer pain points” (Interviewee 3)

However, in a few cases the starting point of the project may be initiated either by a technical necessity or as a reaction to some novel trends in the market, especially in local markets. In the former case, the concerned teams work on making the concept look like “brand initiated” despite being “technical initiated”, as Interviewee 1 pointed out:

We have to [make it] look like fitting to brands attributes. So, you start thinking on writing also marketing concepts together with category teams and brand teams. How I make it look like Bosch specific? How I make a story to make, Siemens’ consumers, let's say buy the idea, not the product maybe, but by the idea fitting is their expectation. (Interviewee 1)

In the latter case, Interviewee 1 gave an example of the Russian market which has deep rooted palate and how offering the European brands that do not resemble “Russian tastes” would eventually lead the brand to be expelled. To overcome this, the teams involved try to “create something fitting to market” which in this case was

a “Neoclassic series for Bosch in Russian market.” Additionally, Interviewee 1 stated that “sometimes you start with brand and then we construct or develop your ideas and design on top. Sometimes everything is given. And you have to make it look like brand specific.”

Meanwhile, since connectivity is a subject that is growing in popularity, ensuring that the physical products and their digital applications all provide consistent offering is instrumental for the consistency of the entire brand manifestation. Interviewee 1 stated that UI teams are separate for each product category within each brand, and they work on fitting their UI and UX elements into the product. The industrial design team may handle small elements related to UI, but the rest is left to the UI team. “We are briefing UI design team... UI design team is not briefing us. We are briefing them... they prepare the content accordingly.” However, Interviewee 3, when asked about whether the physical and digital interfaces are designed by separate teams or by the same team, they answered, “at the moment it is the same team” and they added “it [digital interface] also needs to talk with the physical one”, additionally, they mentioned that there is another digital team concerned with the whole applications of Home Connect (BSH’s new digital brand that the company is introducing).

Indeed, these statements highlight that the starting point of the manifestation process may differ from case to case. Understanding how this may influence the process needs to be investigated further.

In the case of Inofab, insights are likewise the foundation of the process. These insights are not constructed exclusively on the end-user's feedback, because in the healthcare sector there is what is known as “key opinion leader” who could be a doctor or caregiver. So due to the complexity of the healthcare sector, these insights reflect the “real problems” which are “coming from the market, patients’ lives” or the “healthcare industry” at large. Consequently, consumers or end-users cannot solely be the source of insights. Interviewee 4 repeatedly emphasized the significance of being “stakeholder oriented” to create “user-centered designs” in this sector to establish a distinguishable brand. Unlike many companies that are not

familiar with “design thinking” and are primarily “focusing on working principles,” the Inofab team realized this gap in the market and capitalized on it because “it’s [medical products] not like a consumer product. It’s [not] like end user products, so our main motivation was to create the impactful products or services into patients’ lives.” Due to the high regulation nature of the healthcare industry, the pace of the design process of physical products, which usually are strict to change, differs from that of the digital products as Interviewee 4 has noted. The difference in pace explains why at Inofab “UX team and marketing team is using the same philosophy” to swiftly adapt to the changes they encounter.

Moreover, Interviewee 4 highlighted that many startups may have innovative ideas for the healthcare industry, however, they fail to implement those ideas in practice. To overcome this, the design process should start “with understanding some relationships between stakeholders, not only the products” And not just the technical problems.

The word consumer(s) was mentioned in total 98 times by Interviewees 1, 2, and 3 while it was mentioned only 5 times by Interviewee 4. Meanwhile, the term stakeholder(s) was mentioned 3 times by Interviewee 1, zero times by Interviewees 2 and 3, while it was mentioned 15 times by Interviewee 4. This highlights one main disparity between the process in both BSH and Inofab. In the former the process is seen as consumer-centered while in the latter the process is seen as stakeholder-centered. Such disparity indicates the overall philosophy towards manifesting the brand experience in both cases. Although the aim of the manifestation process in both companies is delivering a consistent experience to their respective target market, it seems that the young startup is more concerned with manifesting an inclusive brand experience for all its stakeholders not just the end-user. How much influence the nature of their respective industries has on forming this approach is something that needs to be investigated further.

In summary, under this heading the keywords were found to be manifestation processes, guidelines, consistency, and brand DNA.

4.4.1 Brand Guidelines

Brand guidelines are an integral element for a successful manifestation process. The state of disparity between the two firms continues to the guidelines. In the BSH case, the guidelines were described as “clear”, “detailed and very inspiring.” Utilizing guidelines in the case of BSH is not just for efficiency reasons; they are critical for adding the unique character for each brand as they “linked with design and the communication” as Interviewee 3 indicated, as well as distinguishing between them especially that the platform approach is used for production, since according to Interviewee 1: each brand’s guidelines include “design language fitting to each brand specific target group and needs. So, there is a story in the background of this design guidelines fitting to all brand definitions”. The basics of these guidelines can be traced back to the “German design principles” which are inspired from the Bauhaus style. Interviewees 2 and 3 asserted the importance of guidelines for maintaining consistency, however, Interviewee 3 indicated that these guidelines may change if it is believed “that differentiation is needed” to stay relevant or correspond to changing business needs.

On the other hand, in Inofab, at the beginning, the guidelines stemmed from the founder’s vision.

We choose some color palette, mind mapping and also, we choose some personas. A different characterization of the identity, identifications of the companies or brands. We choose some keywords that reflect our approach. But my intention was to explain why it is important because I know all things about our branding strategy because I created them, but I wanted to share my intention and my opinion with the team. It was my main intention... This was a way to share founders’ mind to team. It was not the fine way, it was just sharing my mindset with the team, and they tried to believe the same criteria and they try to understand what I talk about (Interviewee 4)

Additionally, the guidelines are subject to updating according to the quarterly goals which are set during quarterly meetings where the whole company gathers to present what has been achieved and layout the plans for the next quarter.

We are trying to arrange a whole mindset in the same page, but it's the quarterly goals is supporting the whole different departments, design, industrial designers are working the new products or some problems, but digital products designers are working with another kind of products, but they are aware of the importance between a whole kind of product... because quarterly we are arranging whole ideas., whole goals are coming from the vision and strategy. As founder team, we are working on that and what we do that or what the company would be next phase. So, after the strategy we are sharing the vision with the department leads and then we are sharing the specific goals with the whole teams. So, it's the main routine. (Interviewee 4)

The agility of the young startup is extended to its guidelines, however, the impact of such agility on manifesting the brand experience is yet to be seen. Guidelines are utilized primarily to ensure consistency but in this case the guidelines - similarly to the company - are evolving. Understanding how these guidelines ensure consistency while evolving is therefore something worthy of further investigation.

In summary, under this heading the keywords were found to be guidelines and consistency.

4.4.2 Design Elements

Design elements are the messenger that manifests a brand's unique attributes to convey the intended experience to its target audience. This perspective of the significance of the design elements was confirmed by all interviewees.

In the case of BSH, multi-brand projects take place utilizing a brand neutral platform as aforementioned. Therefore, the unique design elements assigned to each brand are the main differentiator. Interviewee 1 gave an example of a refrigerator project that was carried out where the main platform was brand neutral so details such as "printings on top" or "transparent door bin" or "brand specific colors" were utilized to formulate the perception according to each brand's unique identity. This approach is implemented to manage the "complexity in the production system". Interviewee 1 highlighted some brand specific elements such as the logo clip and brand bar that

Bosch has, which mostly is in chrome and there is also “an engraved logo” that is called “anchor icon”, besides that, “a circular UI” or “at least some circular elements” are used in the UI of all Bosch products. Additionally, some “light lines” or emulation of them are used and there will be more “advanced versions in the future of all these elements”, however, currently Bosch has “three elements” mainly. Equivalently, there are some “common elements” among Bosch and Siemens such as the “light lines,” however, for Siemens some “very architectural lines and forms” are used. Meanwhile, there is a group of brands that are known as “local heroes”, which target different markets, in our case, “Profilo is the local hero brand” for the Turkish market. The same designs, design language and specific elements are used for this pool of brands which is also known internally as “carrier” and includes Profilo as well as Balay in Spain, Pitsos in Greece, Constructa in Germany, and Israel. An example of this “carrier design language” is the “line in the handles” which are becoming a signature, “some shadows of handles” and the “carrier form” is “kind of a rectangular frame with very soft radius edges.” All of this is “available for all UIs” as noted by Interviewee 1.

An example of manifesting a certain attribute is illustrated by Interviewee 2 as they mentioned how during a project conducted in Egypt, Egyptian women were having some concerns related to the “safety” of a “glass oven” design.

We did the most to make her feel safety. Not only for herself but also for her beloved ones because they were [consumers] always saying ‘I’m so scared’. If there, happens anything. If flame comes out and my child burns the finger and stuff like that. (Interviewee 3)

The team used various elements to manifest the safety attribute of the product. They made sure that to make the design have “a very cold surface,” the gas nozzles were separated to minimize the contact to the oven. The design of the pan support was changed to be made of cast iron to enhance stability, the design of the hob was changed to accommodate the cast iron design to make it more stable and not shaky, and heavy metal sheets were used to sustain the minimum amount of damage if any heavy pots were accidentally dropped.

Another example was about manifesting the attribute of “perfect results” in the dishwasher which has “various speeds” that can save “up to 66% shorter time”, the team utilized various design elements while designing communication material to ensure to the consumers that using the short program cycle will not compromise getting perfect results. In addition, to manifest the attribute of “surprisingly simple”, one button was used to control this multi-speed feature not only from the physical control panel, but also from the HomeConnect app.

Meanwhile, Interviewee 3 highlighted that being a global market leader within the dish-care division is used as “communication element” to manifest the combination of brand and category heritage and disseminate it to all value segments in order to “strengthen the image in the eyes of the consumer”. Moreover, the dish care category offers two types of products: either freestanding or built-in. There are some common elements which are used for both types as well as distinguished design elements used in each case to properly manifest the brand according to the product nature.

The common elements contain a linear fascia panel that helps with recognition of the Bosch brand and where the consumer uses buttons to control the programs, options, and power. As the appliance in this case is mostly placed under the kitchen counter, Interviewee 2 added that it is this “fascia panel where we are mostly talking to the consumer”. Also, there are some brand printings which have some common fonts and can be inox or white and Bosch anchor is used in the logo printings. To manifest quality and reliability some “robust elements” are used for the appliance itself and its components such as the baskets and wheels so when the consumer take out these baskets or turn the wheels, they can “really feel the quality and reliability” within the appliance.

We want to create this experience to our consumers where they are not like, for instance, if you can go to a shop floor anywhere, where you can have other brands’ products as well, we want to create that experience for our consumers that when they open a dishwasher door and when they take the basket in and out several times, they [baskets] are not going to be feeling shake. But they are going to

really feel an experience which is giving them the quality feeling.
(Interviewee 2)

Besides that, the red color which is part of Bosch's brand DNA is used to differentiate the brand from other brands such as Siemens and Profilo and it is used in the handles and baskets albeit not in all value segments, just in premium and added-value segments and not entry and value segments.

Meanwhile, built-in products contain "an info light at the very bottom of the appliance" - this light is reflecting on the floor to inform the consumer if the cleaning cycle ended and to convey other information. Again, in case of Bosch the color is red, and it is used as a "differentiation point and a brand indication as well". Other "communication materials" are used on the shop floor to provide the brand experience and highlight this built-in appliance which are covered with furniture. "We are trying to differentiate our appliances, not with product design itself, but even with more additional communication materials to be highlighting", said Interviewee 3.

In the case of Inofab, as mentioned before regarding the gap in the market for companies that offer user friendly products, Inofab utilized some design elements to manifest the attribute of "trustfulness". To reflect this, the starting point was choosing good color. In this case it was "Inofab blue". Also important was choosing suitable fonts such as Futura font which is used in the product and logo. The color black was added to the logo in order to reflect the company's R&D capabilities. Some black and gray colors were incorporated into the "branding strategy" for creating social media content. The main criterion for selecting new colors was being "a good match with the blue" color and to improve the readability of the content. "We have a color library, typography [library]" said Interviewee 4. The company also started to focus on the element of UX writing that is instrumental for consistently manifesting the brand experience across the digital platforms.

In summary, under this heading the keywords were found to be product identity, design library and brand identity.

4.5 Evaluation of Brand/Design Relation

The evaluation aspect of the manifestation process reflects the disparities between the two firms. On one hand, BSH once again places consumer insights as the main criteria for evaluating. They conduct rigorous consumer tests where a plethora of qualitative and quantitative methods are implemented.

We evaluate in every case, every single minute. Sure, at the end we... deliver something to our internal customers. We always evaluate in each step, but there are several different methods in each step according to the needs of the steps. So, if you start from beginning a design, we evaluate first internally... then in region designers... then we share it with the internal customers... Then we share it with the specific brand design teams if that is fitting to their design understanding of this brand. So, we create several loops of, let's say, critics.... but I mean, in critical points we always ask to the consumer. Before launching or for example, we have a concept that we are aligned with brand design teams, and we are aligned with marketing. But this is still a concept for us. Then everyone is aligned and convinced. But this is not enough. We have to ask the consumer if consumer wants to use it. If they really liked it... You again test once more. If this is fitting with this real set up, real product, real value class.... We make it and it is in this design acceptance test we sometimes also question if it is fitting to the Brand even and then in these outcomes of these testings, there may be some interim testings as well, or some may be qualitative resource, not a very big quantitative testing, but a qualitative research, even some other ways are available. Several different methods are available and how we collect the data from. (Interviewee 1)

Interviewee 2 mentioned some other tests that they conduct such as retailer tests and brand awareness tests. As well as brand tracking tests in all countries where “brand profiling characters like competency, reliability, trustworthy” and “product related characters like having high quality, delivering high performance, having aesthetic design which is timeless” are tracked and measured. They use tools such as consumer diaries and focus groups to test the various concepts that the team has written marketing concepts for. For example, they carried out focus groups in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and India for a range cooker project where they tested concepts that were

formulated based on consumer insights. Surprisingly, the theme which is about woman empowerment, safety, performance, and quality was the winning theme in all three countries.

For Interviewee 3, in addition to conducting rigorous consumer testing, they highlighted the role of future brand strategy for evaluating. As the teams involved (design, development, brand, product, and production) discuss, for instance, “where dishwasher user interface” is heading in 10 years and conduct evaluations accordingly. Mainly, the process is following a stage gate model where at each stage a subject matter expert will take part in the process to ensure that the concept is aligned with brand values according to the brand guidelines and existing needs.

In the case of Inofab, the evaluation process is quite different. Regulations play an instrumental role in the evaluation process, then they evaluate the product in comparison to the competing products in the market. After launching the product, they utilize feedback from the stakeholders concerned for evaluation purposes. Additionally, Interviewee 4 as a co-founder plays a leading role in evaluating and matching the elements of “physical product with digital products as well as some business elements”. The evaluation of products or experiences are done at “design system level” to fully grasp the impact on other assorted products.

In summary, under this heading the keywords were found to be concept evaluation, consistency and guidelines.

4.5.1 Tools

In the evaluation section some general evaluation tools were mentioned, this trend continues here as well. All interviewees tended to give very generic themes for tools that are used along the process such as “design thinking” or “innovation” tools. Interviewee 1 interestingly stated that “there are so many tools, but still not enough”. They believe that there is still a room for more tools for driving inspirations because according to them “these corporate tools are so techniques” and they “don't think

they [tools] are really helping a lot” Meanwhile, Interviewee 2 described some “fixed tools” that are used across various categories which aim to deliver consistent results. Else, they highlighted an internal tool called “Inner Scanner” which is used mainly for scouting ideas from across the firm. Besides that, Interviewee 3 pointed out that some point scoring tools are used by teams while some evaluation processes.

Meanwhile, Interviewee 4 also interestingly stated that they “didn't use any kind of methodology” as they followed “some different approach”, that inspired them such as “TED talks” and then mentioned the use of some design thinking approach, branding pyramids and some strategies for matching colors with the company's identity.

In summary, under this heading the keywords were found to be design thinking, voting and internal innovation.

4.5.2 Prioritization

Prioritizing brand attributes during the manifestation process emerged as the trickiest aspect of the process. When asked about it, Interviewee 1 found the question interesting and said “I need to think on it. Actually, there is not a single way of doing that”. Sometimes the team do it by considering the portfolio of products they have and work on improving the offerings according to the consumers' needs. In other words, ideas are created and then fitted to the needs of the brand's target group. On other occasions, prioritization is done according to some technical changes as well as some market shifts.

Meanwhile, for Interviewee 2, there is no ranking amongst attributes as they are all “equally important for us [the company].” Prioritization may happen while communicating some features to the consumer to drive their attention to some new features or improvements.

On the other hand, Interviewee 3 pointed out that prioritization occurs for resource allocation based on benefits they want to deliver to their consumers. They added that

consumer insights are essential for carrying out prioritization. “Our consumers need those features. Need those innovations. There is a pain point over there. Go find an idea for us” said Interviewee 3. Internally, point scoring tools are used by the team members to prioritize ideas according to the Interviewee 3.

In the case of Inofab, Interviewee 4 describes prioritization as “the secret sauce” which is not “analytical” from their point of view. It is dependent on having good “product and market sense.” The theme of being stakeholder oriented is also highlighted in this phase. The interviewee stated that “[the team] prioritize... requirements according to... different needs coming from the different stakeholders.” Being stakeholder oriented is extremely vital here as most designers follow “user centered approach”, notwithstanding, “there is no user” at this point. Additionally, they stated some various prioritization techniques like evaluating market risks or other feasibility studies can be implemented, it is heavily dependent on passion as “90% of the process is based on analytical thinking, but the secret sauce is coming from the 10%” said Interviewee 4.

In summary, under this heading the keywords were found to be product-market fit, guidelines and market nature.

4.6 Company Factors

The nature of both organizations emerged as a hidden factor that influences the brand manifestation process. In case of BSH, having a rooted German engineering heritage is reflected in the very systematic approach that is described in the three interviews. Despite planning futuristic visions for the products internally, for BSH change is evolution not revolution because maintaining the story behind its brand is tremendously vital. Besides that, being a truly global firm makes things harder to manage, which explains why departments are operating in silos. The drawback of this organizational nature is the lack of a well-defined and holistic brand experience.

On the other hand, the organizational nature of a young startup like Inofab, has advantages and disadvantages regarding brand manifestation. The company seems more agile and open to change. This enables them to be more responsive to evolving market needs. The drawback of this is the lack of resources that would enable them to manifest their brands properly.

Market nature also emerged during the interviews as an interesting element during the manifestation process. For BSH, the company, as aforementioned, is placing consumer insights front and center. They seem not interested in considering the experiences offered by other brands' products while manifesting their brand. In contrast at Inofab, the company considers their competition as well as other players in the healthcare sector such as pharmaceutical manufacturers or insurance companies as a source of inspiration and understanding not only for the patients' routines but also other involved actors such as doctors, nurses, caregivers, etc., making the company stakeholder oriented which is essential for success in the healthcare sector.

In summary, under this heading the keywords were found to be stakeholder, consumers' insights, product lifecycle.

4.6.1 Teams

BSH has very well-established departments with highly qualified teams, however, it seems that there is a lack of orchestration between them which influences the manifestation of the overall brand experience. None of the Interviewees from BSH mentioned any statement about interdisciplinary teams. In fact, this point is highlighted by Interviewee 1 as something they would like to change in the organization. Also, Interviewee 3 mentioned that there is an introduction of some new "establishments" such as "digital departments" that are responsible for transferring the know-how across the various categories, besides some new

departments that are “doing all that consolidation and a holistic perspective”, Interviewee 3 added.

For Inofab, having an interdisciplinary team was a pillar for success as few of their competitors had such teams. Additionally, having a small team who can seamlessly communicate with all team members to grasp what other departments are working on assists the mutual alignment of their understanding of the brand experience and attributes they aim to deliver.

In summary, under this heading the keywords were found to be team communication and organization nature.

CHAPTER 5

BRAND MANIFESTATION TOOL

5.1 Introduction

As this study's co-aim is designing a tool for concept evaluation to be used during the manifestation process, this chapter comprehensively presents the process of designing such tool which corresponds to the main insights that were driven from the first round of data collection namely defining brand experience and its goals, defining the touchpoint through which brand experience will be communicated and prioritizing brand attributes for evaluation. A swift review of other tools/ frameworks is carried out to drive inspiration and to highlight potential aspects for improvement. Primarily, the proposed tool aims to facilitate the brand manifestation process by offering a way to overcome the challenges teams face based on the insights of the data analysis in the previous chapter. The proposed tool is foremost based on the essence of multi-attribute decision making methodology (MADM) as design teams usually work on manifesting various brand attributes.

5.2 Brand Attributes Taxonomy

According to Coleman (2018) balanced brand values are comprised of four subcategories which are “core values”, “peripheral values”, “functional values”, and “emotional values”.

- Core values are stable. These values are the deep rooted pillar of the brand. The core values should be at the heart of everything a brand embodies.
- Peripheral values refer to values that can be altered according to circumstances to maintain brand relevancy.
- Functional values refer to a brand's practical aspects.

- Emotional values refer to the connections which a brand intends to establish with its target users by triggering certain emotions.

Balancing these values is imperative for any brand to be successful. As Coleman (2018) indicates that if all values are core values, then the brand will lose its relevance as the market moves forward. If all values are peripheral values, the brand is going to be volatile to the point where stakeholders will not be able to relate to it. Meanwhile, if all values are functional values, the brand will not be emotionally relevant to the stakeholders. Also, if all values are emotional values, the brand is risking delivering its fundamental promises. Thus, balancing these values to correspond to stakeholders' needs is substantial for brand success and growth.

5.3 Company-Wide Brand Experience Goals

Defining company-wide brand experience goals is pivotal for ensuring consistent brand manifestation across the different divisions. Figure 5.1 demonstrates the process which is used to define company-wide brand experience goals based on Roto et al. (2015). The definition of these brand experience goals is constituted by the alignment of the user experience that products offer and the general brand promise. While defining company-wide brand experience goals, they should be delicately balanced in terms of how specific or broad they are. According to Roto et al. (2015), these goals ought to be specific enough to assist companies to stand out in the market, however, they ought to be broad enough to give the design teams room to act. In addition to that, any product-specific experience goals ought to be branched from the defined company-wide experience goals.

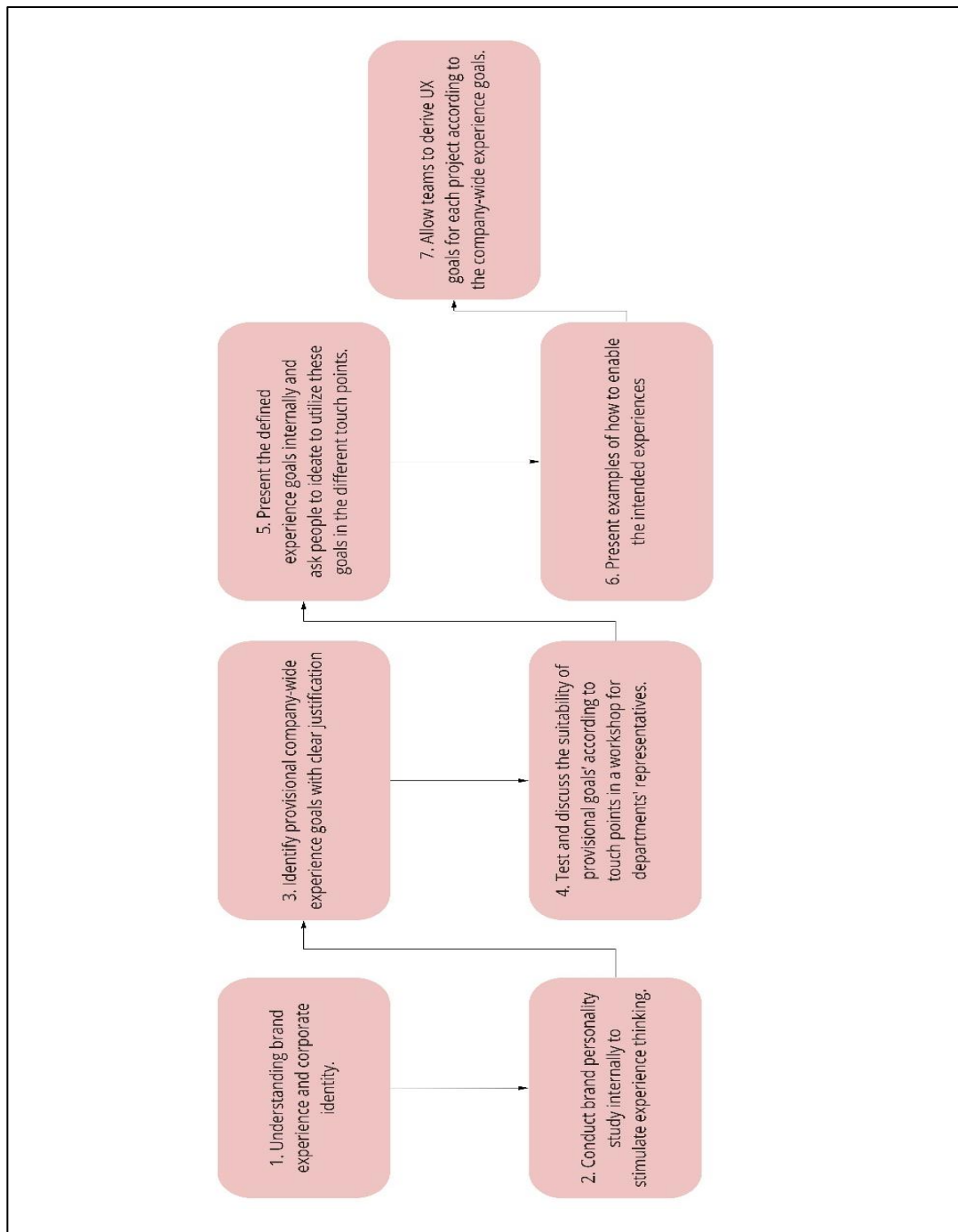


Figure 5.1. Defining company-wide experience goals based on (Roto et al. 2015)

5.4 Examples of Evaluation Tools

5.4.1 The Decision Matrix


Design teams usually deal with a confined set of design options manifesting multiple attributes which reflect the desired technical and financial criteria of a certain design (Sen et. al, 1994). Evaluation for “a design selection problem” can be depicted by various structures, the simplest of which is the decision matrix where each of the proposed designs is defined explicitly and is evaluated numerically according to attributes. Figure 5.2 is an example of the decision matrix that demonstrates the evaluation of m design proposal in relation to n attributes “where y_j is the j^{th} attribute,” a_i is the i^{th} “alternative design, and y_{ij} stands for the numerical value of attribute j for evaluating design i ($i = 1, \dots, m; j = 1, \dots, n$).” This matrix lays the foundation for various Multi Attribute Decision Making (MADM) methods to be utilized (Sen et. al, 1994).

Alternative designs	Attributes			
	y_1	y_2	...	y_n
a_1	y_{11}	y_{12}	...	y_{1n}
a_2	y_{21}	y_{22}	...	y_{2n}
...
a_m	y_{m1}	y_{m2}	...	y_{mn}

Figure 5.2. The decision matrix (from Sen et al., 1994, P. 109)

5.4.2 Idea Evaluation Tool

Kudrowitz et al. (2013) presents a unique way of evaluating ideas, especially at preliminary stages where ideas are evaluated in terms of multiple attributes. Evaluating a concept is done in two steps. Firstly, the teams concerned should determine the attributes for evaluation. Secondly, the emulation is done on a Likert scale where each attribute is rated out of three points (yes = 2, somewhat = 1, no = 0). Figure 5.3 is an example of the online rating form given by Kudrowitz et al. (2013). The results can then be visualized using a spider plot as indicated in Figures (5.4., 5.5. & 5.6.) by Kudrowitz et al. (2013).



See-thru

The concept is Creative
 Yes Somewhat No

The concept is Novel (uncommon and original)
 Yes Somewhat No

The concept is Useful (practical applications in the theme)
 Yes Somewhat No

The concept is Product Worthy (feasible and marketable)
 Yes Somewhat No

The concept is Clear (well communicated)
 Yes Somewhat No

Figure 5.3. Example of an online product rating form (from Kudrowitz et al., 2013, P129)

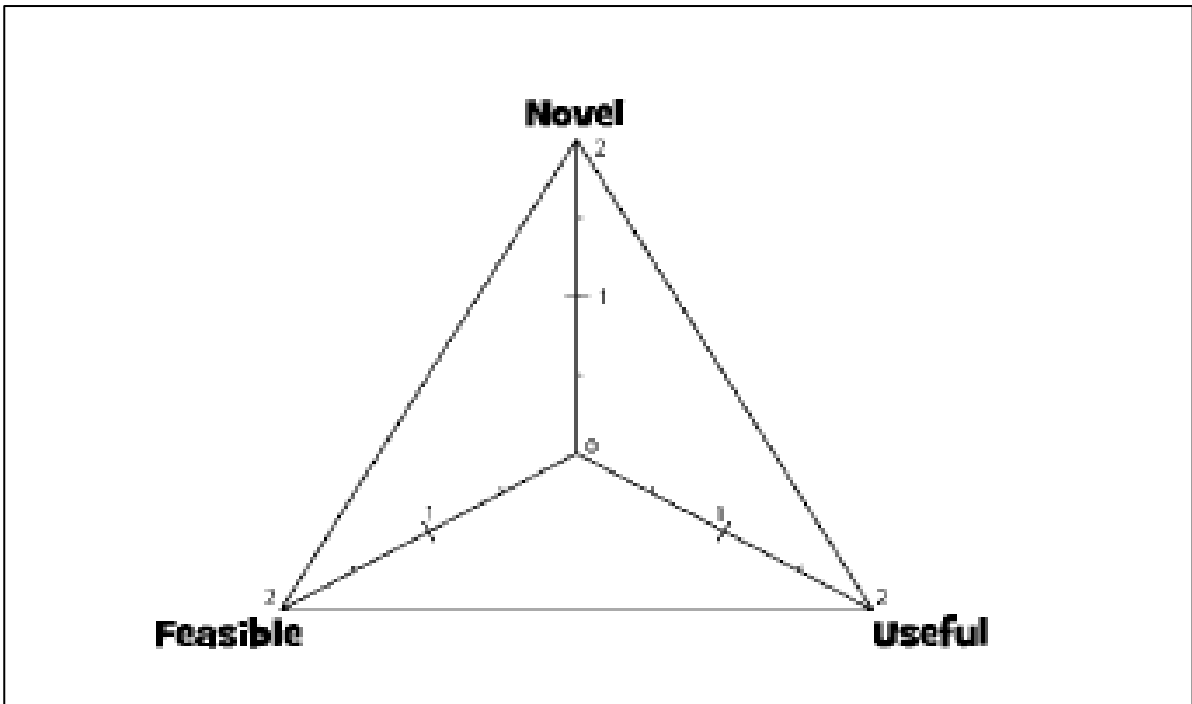


Figure 5.4. Map of product innovation as a spider plot (from Kudrowitz et al., 2013, P. 135)

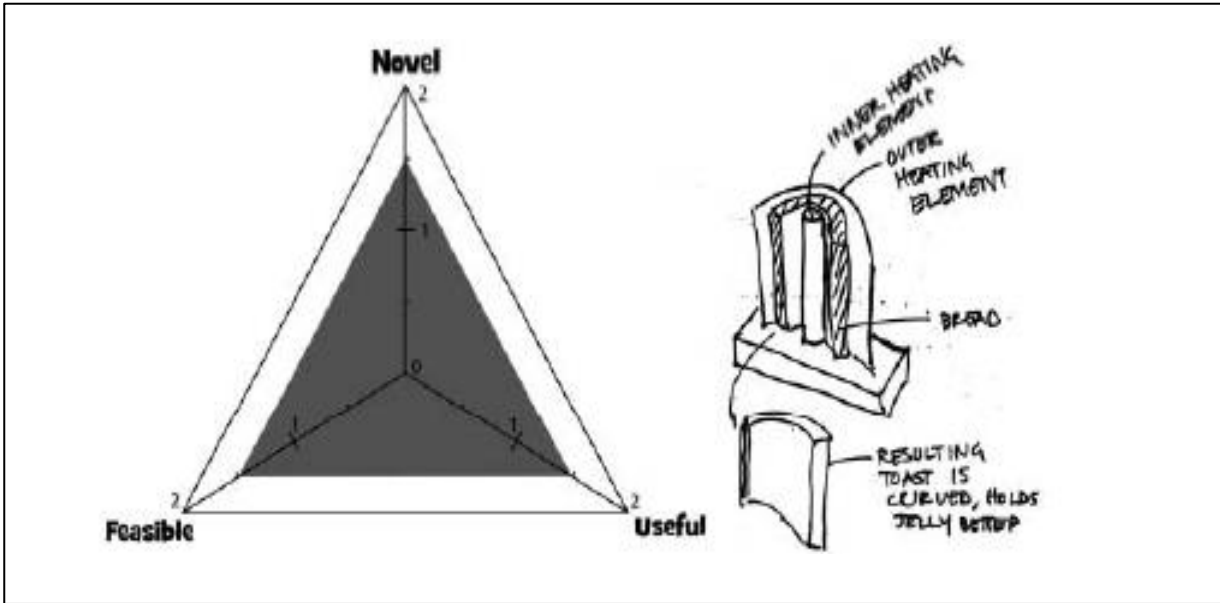


Figure 5.5. Example of idea evaluation plot 1 (from Kudrowitz et al., 2013, P.135)

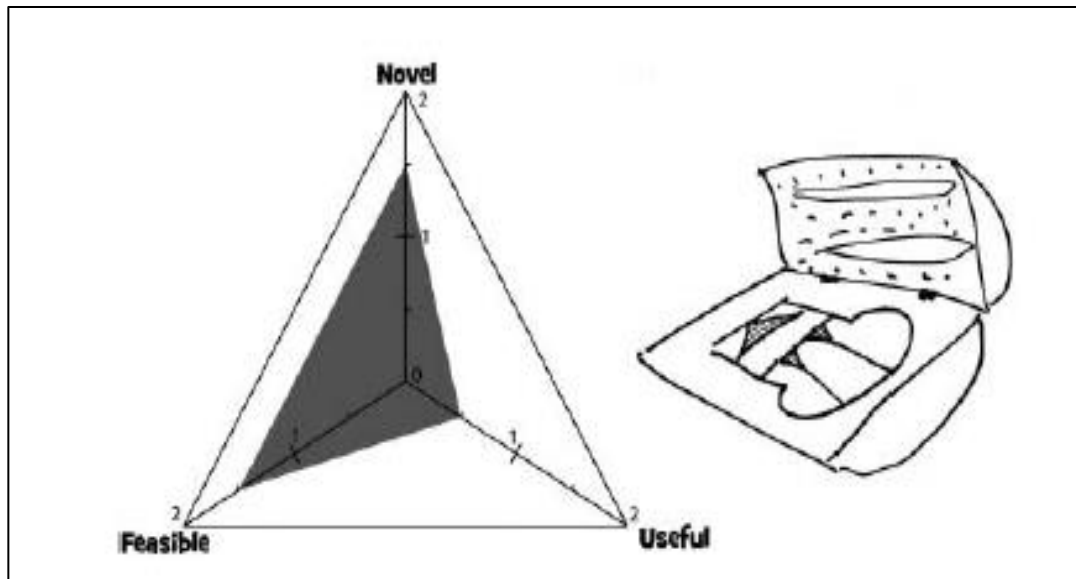


Figure 5.6. Example of idea evaluation plot 2 (from Kudrowitz et al., 2013, P. 136)

5.5 Design of Brand Manifestation Tool

Each of the previous sections highlighted some critical aspects that ought to be considered to enhance the concept evaluation process. The proposed brand manifestation tool comprises two parts. It has a worksheet (Figure 5.7.) for data collection and a Spider plot sheet (Figure 5.8.) for plotting and visualizing the results of the evaluation. This tool aims to address issues that were revealed from the first round of data collection, which were: (i) consistency, (ii) prioritizing attributes, and (iii) adding objectivity to the evaluation processes, each of which were perceived as highly subjective. To respond to these issues, the tool purposefully utilizes attribute categorization, elements of the decision matrix, a Likert scale and a spider plot.

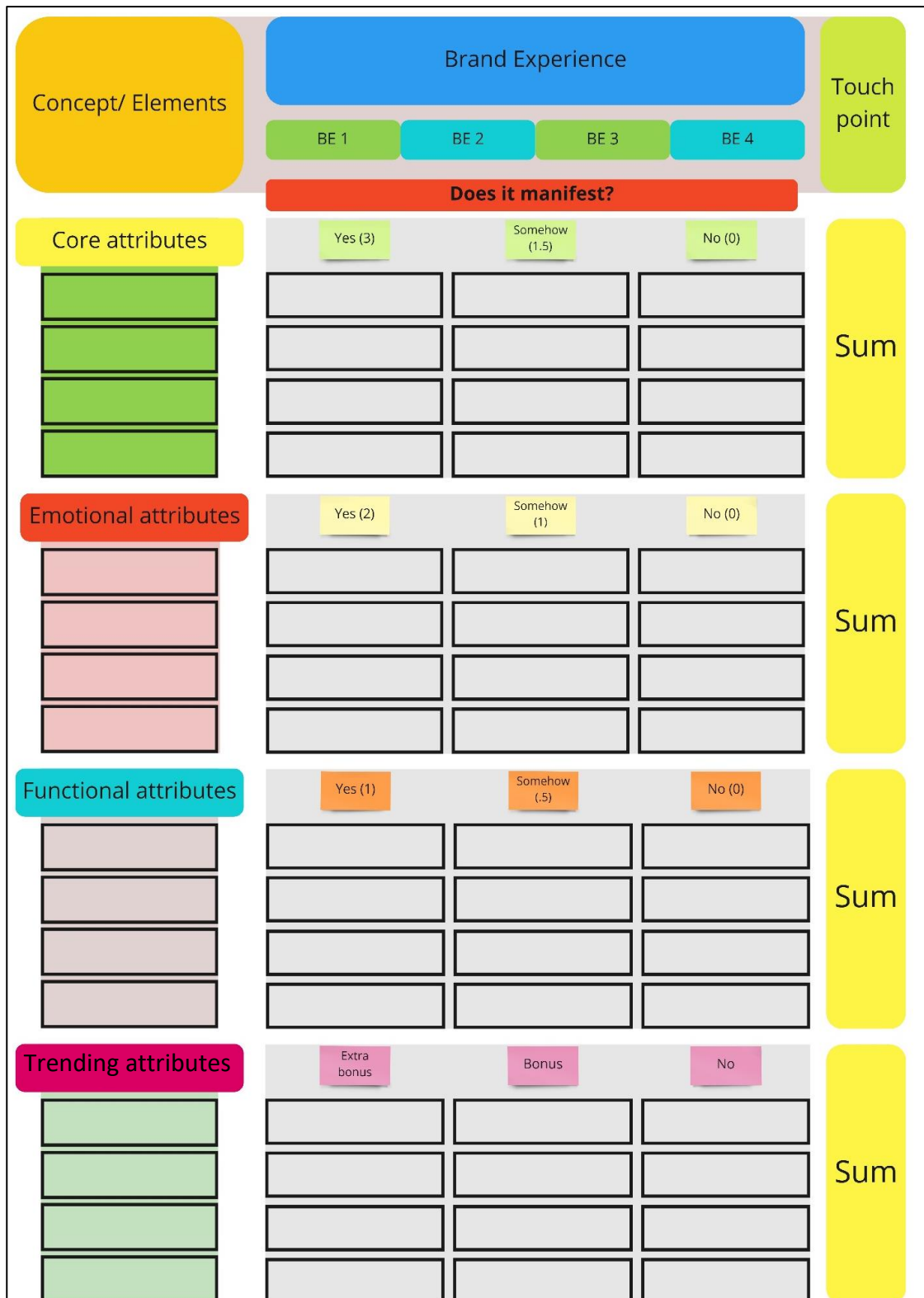


Figure 5.7. Overview of the evaluation tool

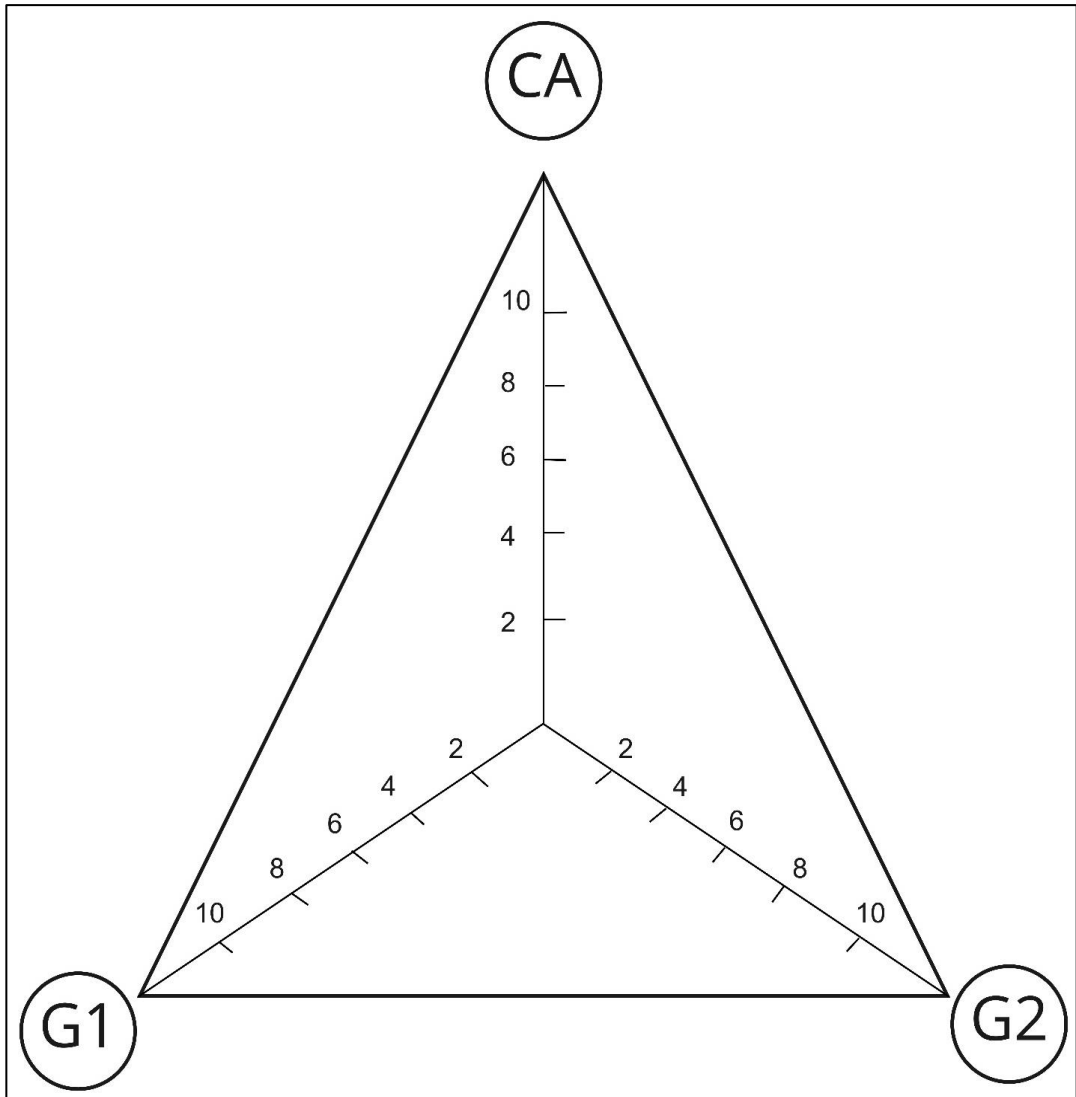


Figure 5.8. Spider Plot from Brand Manifestation Evaluation Tool

Consistency is ensured through defining company-wide goals. Maximum four brand experience (BE) goals (BE 1, BE 2, BE 3, BE 4) should be defined, and these goals would be constant across the various departments and product categories (Figure 5.9.).

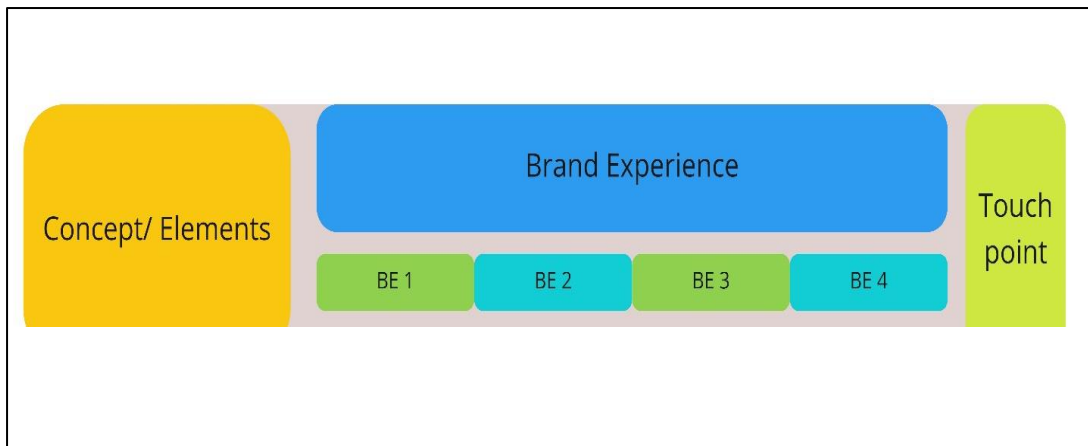


Figure 5.9. Brand experience goals

Brand attributes are categorized as Core Attributes (CA), Functional Attributes (FA), Emotional Attributes (EA) and Trending Attributes (TA). Core, functional, and emotional attributes are defined as in section 5.2.1, however, Trending Attributes are defined as the attributes that emerge due to technology, market, or industry trends which companies can include to stay relevant. For each attribute category, a maximum of four attributes should be defined.

Confining the number of defined brand experience goals and the number of attributes in each category to four is to enforce teams to prioritize and not to complicate the process.

After defining the brand experience goals and brand attributes, the concept that needs to be evaluated as well as the touchpoint should be placed in their respective cells as in Figure 5.9.

On the left section of Figure 5.10, attributes categories should be placed according to how important they are within the scope of a particular project and in relation to the touchpoint through which the brand experience will be conveyed. There are three slots in this section for placing the categories of functional, emotional, and trending attributes since core attributes are always placed on top. The placement order is critical as each slot has a different weight on the Likert scale.

In the middle section of Figure 5.10 the teams ought to use Likert scale and answer the question “Does it [the concept] manifest?” Then they answer by either “yes,” “somehow,” or “no”. Each answer weighs differently depending on the placement of the corresponding attribute category. For instance, as core attributes are placed on top, “yes” equals 3 points, “somehow” equals 1.5 points and “no” equals zero points. For attributes that are placed in the second slot, “yes” equals 2 points, “somehow” equals 1 point and “no” equals zero points. For attributes that are placed in the 3rd slot, “yes” equals 1 point, “somehow” equals .5 points and “no” equals zero points. The 4th slot in this tool aims to differentiate between concepts whose weight is equal or close enough. Thus, the answers on the scale are “extra bonus,” “bonus” and “no.”

On the right section of Figure 5.10, the sum of the points given to each category is going to be indicated.

Core attributes				Yes (3)	Somehow (1.5)	No (0)	Sum
Emotional attributes				Yes (2)	Somehow (1)	No (0)	Sum
Functional attributes				Yes (1)	Somehow (.5)	No (0)	Sum
Trending attributes				Extra bonus	Bonus	No	Sum

Figure 5.10. Evaluation section

On the spider plot (Figure 5.8.), G1 and G2 will be replaced by the second and 3rd categories, respectively. Core attributes (CA) are placed on top of the triangle and that should not be changed. A threshold for each category can be set on the corresponding axis to represent the best-case scenario of what a concept should be. Visualizing the results as such aims to assist with comparing concepts to one another. Figures (5.11. & 5.12.) demonstrate some configuration possibilities of the tool to highlight versatility and adaptability according to requirements. Table 5.1 shows the detailed sequence of steps to use the tool and the description of each step.

Table 5.1 Steps For Using The Evaluation Tool

Step No.	<i>Title</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	Brand Experience	Fill-in the brand experience goals at the top of the tool. The design, brand and product team should define maximum 4 goals.
2	Touchpoint Type	In the provided space, state whether the touchpoint that the design corresponds to is a physical product, mobile app, etc.
3	Design Concept	In the provided space, add information on the name of the design that will be evaluated, some key features of the design, and a product image/sketch.
4	Attribute Order	The tool provides a hierarchy of attributes: 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd and 4 th . Core attributes are stable and always 1st priority. The remaining attributes (emotional attributes, functional attributes, trending attributes) can be ordered 2 nd , 3 rd or 4 th by the team according to the project brief. But the 4 th level is always treated qualitatively and is used for evaluation

		purposes only if two competing concepts receive identical scores/plots.
5	Attribute Headings	Decide on up to 4 items for each attribute type. To do so, The team can use brand manuals, in case such manuals are not available, they can use project brief and consumer insights to decide these attributes.
6	Evaluation Weight	Decide on weight of attribute types for evaluation, responding to the question “does it manifest?” Is it always: 1 st /Core (3, 1.5, 0), 2 nd (2, 1, 0), 3 rd (1, 0.5, 0), 4 th (extra bonus, bonus, no). These values cannot be increased to simplify the calculation process.
7	Benchmark Data	Decide on benchmark/threshold performance for each heading. This benchmark/threshold is done by the design, brand, and product team according to the consumer/ stakeholder studies they have done.
8	Design Evaluation	Evaluate the design/concept by considering whether the concept mannerist the intended attributes. Calculate sum for the data and record on tool worksheet.
9	Plot Benchmark Data	On the spider graph, plot the data for the benchmark.
10	Plot Evaluated Design Data	On the spider graph, plot the data for the evaluated design on top of the benchmark plot.
11	Results	Identify areas of under/over performance by comparing concept plot with benchmark plot.

Core attributes	Yes (3)	Somehow (1.5)	No (0)	Sum
Functional attributes	Yes (2)	Somehow (1)	No (0)	Sum
Trending attributes	Yes (1)	Somehow (.5)	No (0)	Sum
Emotional attributes	Extra bonus	Bonus	No	Sum

Figure 5.11. Example 1 of categories configuration

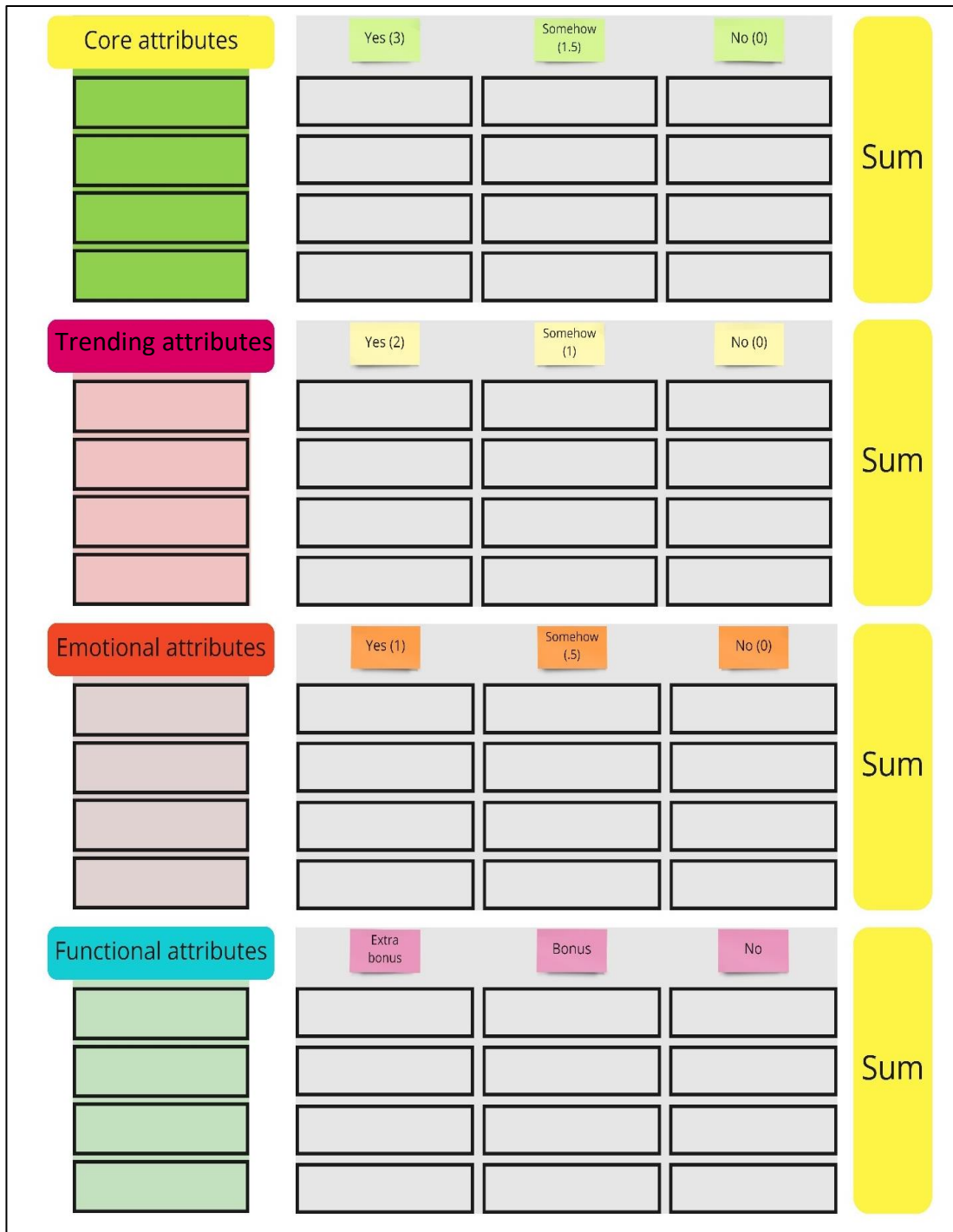


Figure 5.12. Example 2 of categories configuration

5.6 Worked Example for Brand Manifestation Evaluation Tool

For this example, we assume that design team at brand ABC is working on designing a new home oven. A self-cleaning concept needs to be evaluated. Company-wide brand experience goals are defined as “invented for life” and “surprisingly simple”. The touchpoint is the physical product. Core attributes are defined as “trust,” “innovative,” and “sedate”. Functional attributes are defined as “efficiency,” “reliable,” and “practical”. Emotional attributes are defined as “empowering,” “convenient,” and “helpful”. Meanwhile, Trending attributes are defined as “sustainable” and “smart”.

We assumed that the team have insightful data regarding the market and target user group which are used to define the attribute categories as in Figure 5.14. Prior to evaluating the concept, a threshold for what a successful concept should score was plotted (Figure 5.15.). Upon evaluating the concept, points are summed (Figure 5.16.) and plotted (Figure 5.17.). The team can see where the concept stands in relation to the pre-determined threshold and understand whereabouts the manifestation of the brand is currently strong or in need of strengthening. It is worth noting here that brand experience goals are not the evaluation criteria but rather the starting point for defining the attributes that resembles the overall brand experience. Therefore, evaluating the concept according to separate individual brand experience goals does not seem practical since these goals supposedly constitute a coherent experience.



Figure 5.13. Listing brand experience goals and attributes prior to evaluation

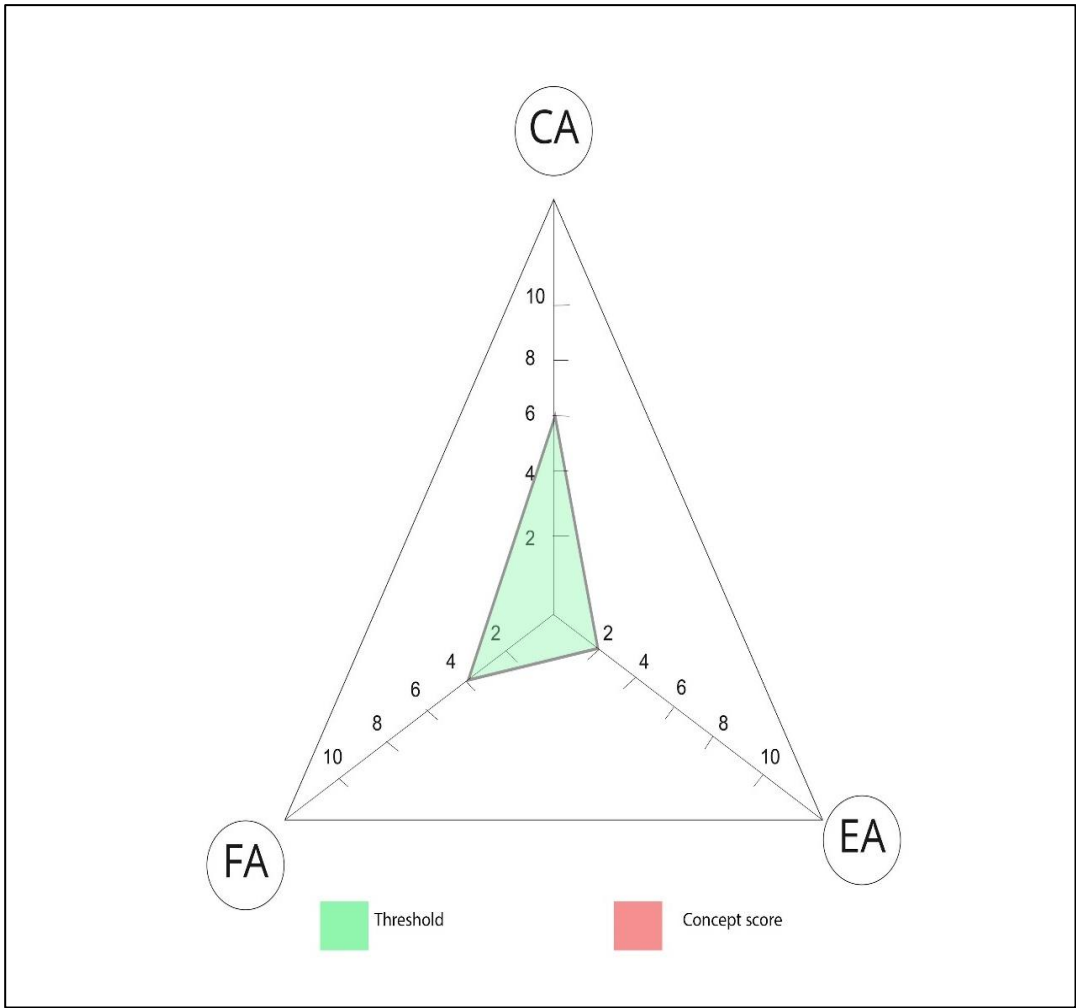


Figure 5.14. Demonstration of evaluation threshold



Figure 5.15. Evaluation and scoring

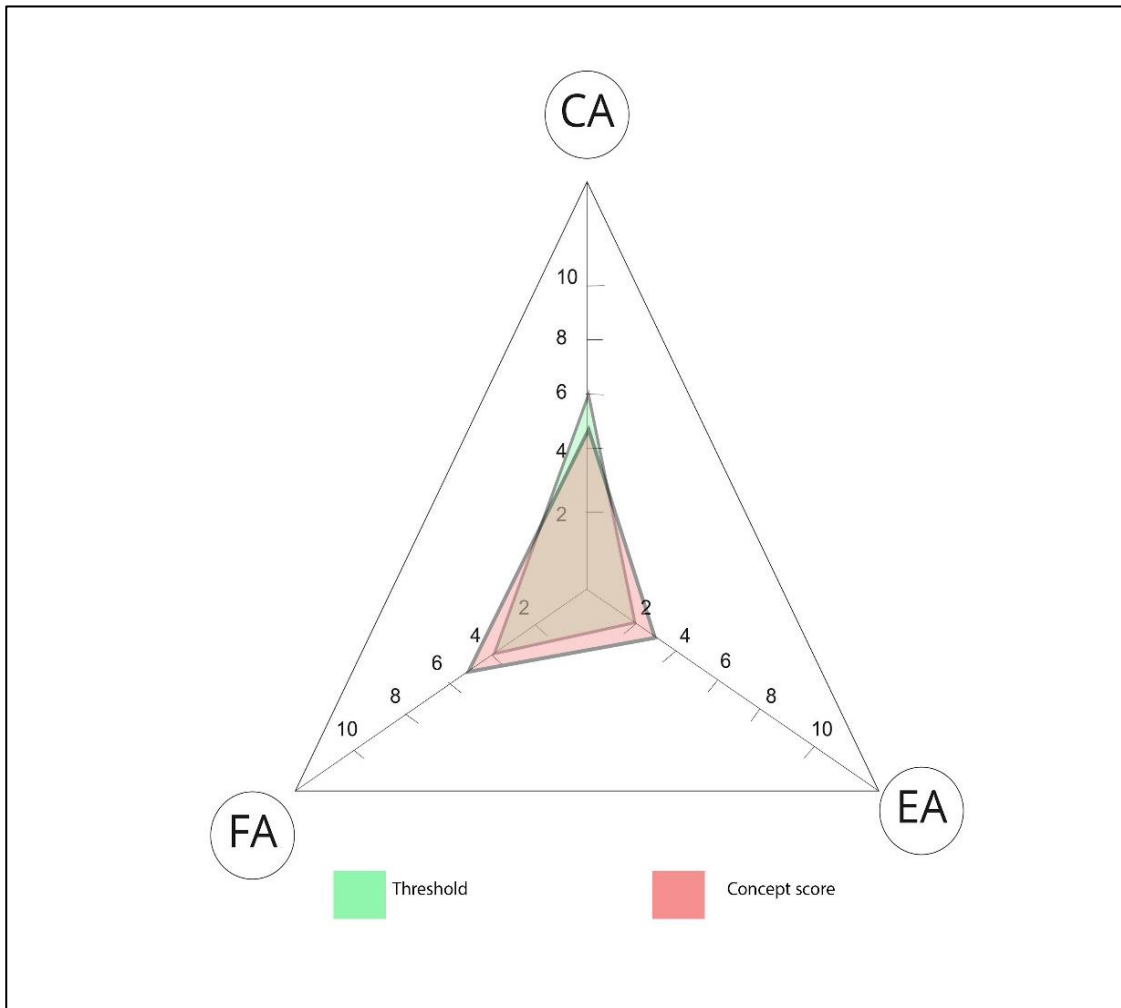


Figure 5.16. Plotting concept score

5.7 Follow-Up Session (Tool Appraisal)

A second round of data collection was conducted where two follow-up sessions with participants from the same two firms, as in the first round of data collection, were held online through Zoon and Miro was used to thoroughly present the tool (Figure 5.18, can be seen in more details in Appendix C). The first follow-up session was with a participant from Inofab who is a UX team member, and the second follow-up session was with 3 participants from BSH who represented design, product

management and brand management departments (Table 5.2). Following that presentation, discussions were held where participants raised questions and suggestions about the tool.

Table 5.2 Participants' Reference Names

Role	Reference Name	Firm	Duration in minutes	Date
UX team member	Participant A	Inofab	45	October, 2021
Product manager	Participant B	BSH	60	November, 2021
Brand manager	Participant C	BSH		
Designer	Participant D	BSH		

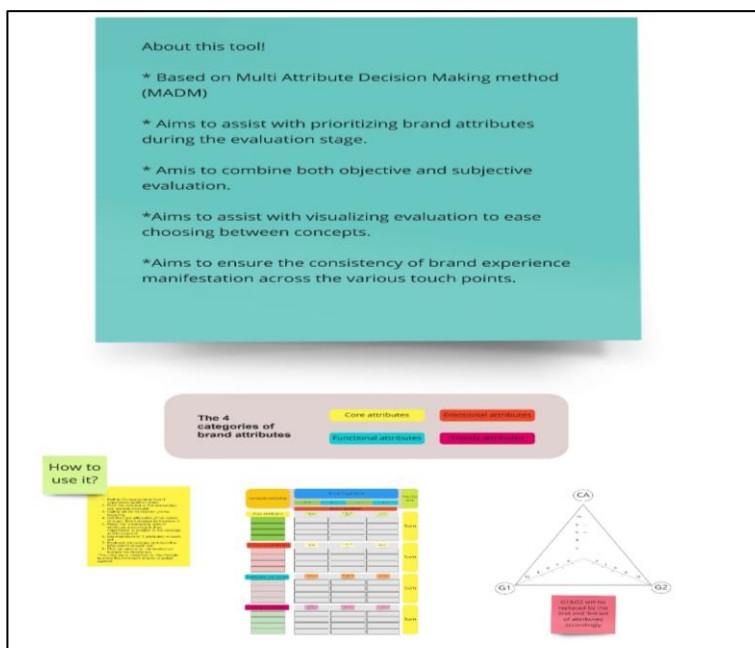


Figure 5.17. Screenshot of Miro board

5.7.1 General Feedback

Participant A considered the tool a clever way to align the vision of the entire company towards achieving the predefined goals if used at the early stage of the project. In addition, participant A suggested that this tool can be used as an exercise that can be conducted internally which teams can refer to whenever they need to evaluate something to track progress. It was also suggested that a team member may take the lead similar to the role of scrum-master while conducting this exercise in order to guide the rest of the team. Thus, participant A suggested that detailed guidelines ought to be prepared to explain the tool's objectives and how it works and any other valuable information.

When asked about whether the tool may assist with maintaining consistency of brand experience manifestation across digital and physical products, participant A mentioned that it definitely would be of value since the tool clearly states the main brand experience goals and core attributes, this would keep the different teams (i.e., UX team, industrial design team, content team) focused on manifesting the overall goals.

On the other hand, participant C mentioned that such evaluation should be done by users not internal teams because users are the vital source for validation. Meanwhile, at first glance, participant B and participant D considered the tool complicated due to the attribute categorization. Besides that, participants B and D suggested that tool has potential in practice, however, it still needs to be tested by teams in mockup sessions or exercises in order to observe how team members communicate and interact with the tool which may lead to highlighting more areas for improvements.

5.7.2 Defining Brand Experience Goals and Attributes

From both follow-up sessions, categorizing attributes as suggested in the tool was regarded as complicated. Participant C even mentioned that from brand management perspective, all attributes are equally important and cannot be separated as core,

functional and emotional attributes, however, trending attributes are something that they may need to look at as a brand and they stated that:

I'm not a brand of trendy attributes but [it] would be nice how people perceive me. If there are some new trends on the market, I'm not aware of it. I don't check it so maybe We should check it and see how the people define us in that terms. (Participant C)

Participant B as well mentioned that defining functional and emotional attributes separately would be difficult to do unlike trending attributes such as “sustainability” or “connectivity.”

Meanwhile, participant D suggested that defining brand experience goals and categorizing brand attributes should be done by brand management and product management teams then handed to the design team because those teams have thorough insights about the scope of the project and also suggested that some consumer feedback can be incorporated based on the nature of the project.

It's also important to get some contribution from the brand and product teams for this evaluation, I mean as a designer, yeah, I can align all these attributes and... can choose which one is more important, but I think we got briefs from the marketing teams and product management team. So, I think, uh, they can decide which one is more important and give us as a brief and then we can evaluate this table regarding this information. (Participant D)

Regarding defining brand experience goals, participant A highlighted that due to the startup nature of the company, these goals may evolve or change from quarter to quarter based on the dynamic shifts in the market. Additionally, attributes may differ according to each internal team purview and project nature.

Meanwhile, participant A suggested that a poll should be conducted company-wide to define the brand experience goals and survey the core attributes, additionally, each team internally should state the most important attributes and the list the touchpoints they work on based on the data they have.

5.7.3 Visualizing Evaluation

Visualizing the evaluation was found to be interesting and useful by participants A, B and D, especially the spider plot part. However, Participant D questioned using a triangle instead of a square so that a concept can be evaluated according to the four categories. The answer for that question is using only three categories for evaluation will enforce teams to prioritize attributes and the purpose of the fourth category is to differentiate amongst concepts whose scores are close or equal.

Meanwhile, participant A thought that visualizing the evaluation should assist with tracking progress and with decision making as the tool can be printed and hung on a wall so teams can use it as a reference.

5.7.4 Concerns

The main concern that was emphasized during the two follow-up sessions was the mechanism for voting. Participant A thought that the voting process is not clear enough and in its current format would be chaotic because many team members would be involved.

The same point was highlighted by participant D, who wondered about whether the points will be calculated collectively as a team or individually or whether the average of all points will be used as the total sum. Moreover, participant D went further to ask if all votes weigh equally, or the votes may weigh differently based on the voter's role within the company or the team and if the tool can be used either online and offline or both as this may impact the team's inner communication dynamics. Elaborations of the tool could be made in response to these comments, especially if the tool was somehow automated and presented on a fully digital platform.

5.8 Review of Tool and Suggested Improvements

Based on the insights from the follow-up sessions and thesis jury members some modifications were made to the tool (Figure 5.19) to address some of the raised concerns. In new the revised version of the tool, two columns were added to the tool. When listing brand attributes, evaluators should only use adjectives or nouns but a mix of both, hence the addition of the “Story” column which aims to assist the evaluators to write few sentences to elaborate on the listed attributes to create some sort of common background to link these attributes to the intent of the brand and/or design. This should ensure that all evaluators are having common foundation to base the evaluation on. Meanwhile, the “Threshold” column was added so that the evaluators may write down the benchmark/threshold for each attribute category on the same worksheet. Having all the information on the worksheet aims to ease the flow of using the tool during evaluation.

Further suggested improvements include:

- Designing a detailed manual for using the tool.
- Indicating how threshold is calculating as this part of the process seems to be ambiguous.
- Having the attributes pre-defined by brand management and product management teams so designers can use it as a brief.



Figure 5.19. Revised Version of The Brand Manifestation Tool

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Research Overview

This study sought to investigate how abstract brand attributes are being manifested in practice to convey the intended brand experience across different touchpoints in firms of assorted sizes and industries. A body of research questions was structured to cover various related aspects to form a coherent perspective. To answer these questions, a literature review was conducted to highlight the main gaps in the literature related to this topic (Chapter 2). Afterwards, a field study was conducted to understand how practitioners approach this topic. One of the main findings of these two avenues of research is how some terms are misinterpreted by practitioners which impacts their approach towards the entire manifestation process. Another finding that was highlighted first by the literature review and supported by the field work was how the evaluation process is subjective and the need for more objective tools (Chapter 3 & 4). Therefore, a tool that combines both subjective and objective evaluation approaches was designed to assist with prioritizing attributes and evaluating concepts accordingly. Consistency is fundamental for successful manifestation; therefore, the tool includes a section where company-wide brand experience goals are predefined (Chapter 5). Getting feedback, through follow-up sessions, from practitioners regarding the proposed tool is vital for validating its potential and highlighting areas for further development. This chapter concludes the study by revisiting the research questions, addressing the limitations faced during this study, and highlighting areas for future research.

6.2 Revisiting Research Questions

The previous chapters provide detailed answers to the research questions, however, concise answers based on the literature review and the field work are presented here.

What is the process of utilizing brand as a source of inspiration for design elements for brand manifestation?

This depends on the legacy of the brand. In case a brand has well-rooted legacy, it is considered the main manifesto for brand-related activities as it offers a library of elements that can be revived to meet the needs of the current market. On the other hand, in case of new brands, founders' visions and stakeholders' input are what shapes the process as the brand is still evolving.

How do designers / brand managers manifest brands' identity using different design elements (tangible/ intangible)?

Utilizing libraries of design elements (i.e., materials, typography, design language, etc.) that are accumulated over the years based on the brand's DNA is the main source. Teams refer to these libraries and select design elements that correspond to certain brand attributes and stakeholders' needs.

What practices are followed to maintain the consistency of brand experience and attributes across multiple product lines and services (i.e., physical product+ app)?

In case of legacy brands, detailed guidelines are foremost used to achieve this. Implementing unified guidelines and processes across different departments and product categories ensures that the various teams are on the same page, as on some occasions effective communications between departments may not be easy to achieve due to the size of the organization. Meanwhile, in young brands, this is done by the founders who mainly operate as a guide for the rest of the team.

What tools are used to evaluate design elements (tangible/ intangible) during brand manifestation?

Despite having several voting tools, teams still rely heavily on their experience for evaluation. In case of legacy brands, conducting users' tests are the key for evaluating everything, however, in young brands evaluation seems to be more subjective based on the vision of the founders and the nature of the market. In either case, the need for more tools that assist with making the evaluation more objective and with an ability to prioritize arose.

How do designers/ brand managers define references to evaluate design elements (brand-specific/ product-specific)?

In case of legacy brands, this is done using brand guidelines and insights from user tests. Meanwhile, in young brands it is done based on the founders' visions, stakeholders' insights and in some cases industry benchmarks and competitors.

How do designers/ brand managers evaluate brand manifestation in accordance with touchpoints to deliver brand identity / product identity?

Misinterpreting what a touchpoint is and the difference between brand identity and product identity impacts this process. Some practitioners may not recognize physical products as touchpoints, nor may they recognize that products have their own unique identity. Additionally, in some cases, practitioners may not be aware of the term brand experience in general. Therefore, the evaluation is done on a project-level basis not as a holistic process that considers the various aspects that constitute brand experience. There is not a singular approach for achieving this and it heavily depends on the circumstances.

6.3 Limitations of The Study

The Covid-19 pandemic altered the course that the research was supposed to follow at the beginning. Originally, face to face interviews and design exercises were planned for conducting the field work phases of this study, however, that was not applicable under the circumstances. Therefore, online tools were utilized for interviewing participants for data collection. This of course did not allow for fully

investigating how the manifestation process is done in practice and restrained the ability to explore the potential of the proposed tool as originally planned through as a generative focus group with the company personnel owing to limitations of time and COVID-19 restrictions.

6.4 Future Research

Future research should investigate the issues raised beyond the two cases, further cases can be examined (for example, other product development teams within BSH Turkey or BSH Germany; or cross-comparison with other white goods manufacturers such as Electrolux or Arcelik).

Additionally, future research should investigate how brand knowledge and brand manifestation knowledge is passed between senior and junior staff members or retained within a company when key personnel leave (especially considering the high level of tacit knowledge used for brand manifestation decisions).

The proposed tool should be tested in design exercises that include designing corresponding physical and digital products and testing how that would impact the manifestation consistency through various touchpoints and test its limitations in this regard.

Moreover, the proposed tool should be experimented with to explore its potential and overcome some of the concerns that were highlighted during the follow-up sessions especially those related to scoring votes and how the tool will perform if it is used individually or collectively. Additionally, some activities related to how company-wide brand experience goals are defined should be examined especially in the context of large legacy brands that offer a plethora of products and services. Furthermore, the categorization of attributes as suggested in this study should be examined to see how teams would be able to define them and how teams would perceive their level of complexity and practicality.

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APPENDICES

A. Informed Consent Form (Interview)

This study is conducted by Middle East Technical University Industrial Design Department Graduate Studies student Ibrahim ElShamy for MSc thesis. This form intends to inform you about this study and ask for your consent.

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to understand how brand attributes are transformed into design elements that are utilized for designing products (goods, services, etc) and how these design elements transfer the brand experience through various touch points. This study also aims to understand how this process is done within different product lines of the same brand.

Voluntary Participation

If you accept to participate the study, you will be expected to participate an interview. This session may take between 60-75 minutes. Your participation in this study is voluntary, as you can refuse to take part at any time without giving a reason. Please do not hesitate to ask any question at any time.

Information to be Collected

During the interview, you will be expected to explain your experience regarding brand driven product development processes. The interview session will be recorded as in video and audio formats. Before recording starts and after recording ends, you will be notified.

Your Consent

The researcher and the researcher's supervisor may watch the recordings of your interviews for the research aims. No-one else will see the records. A thesis will be published containing your contributions. The data used in this thesis will remain

anonymous, meaning that you will not be identifiable, and your comments and actions will be confidential in this research.

We would like to thank you in advance for your participation in this study. For further information about the study, you can contact;

Ibrahim ElShamy

Phone: +90 555 895 60 33

E-Mail: ibrahim.elshamy@metu.edu.tr

I am participating in this study totally on my own will and am aware that I can quit participating at any time I want. I give my consent for the use of the information I provide for scientific purposes. (Please return this form to the data collector after you have filled it in and signed it).

Name Surname

Date

Signature

...../...../.....

APPENDIX B

B. Empirical Study: First Phase (Semi-Structured Interviews) Protocol

1. Professional information

The demographic information will be asked about their professional occupation.

2. Utilize brand as a source of inspiration for design elements for brand manifestation

2.1. Understanding personal perspective

- How do you define brand identity?
- How do you define brand experience?
- How do you define brand manifestation?
- How do you define product experience?
- How can you define product identity?
- How do you define the brand you are designing for?

2.2. Process breakdown

- What is your approach for breaking down the brand into inspiration sources?
- Do you keep a repository of past design elements? How do you use it for new designs?
- What is unique about your brand compared to the competitors?
- How can you define competence associations of your brand and product?

3. The role of design elements (tangible/ intangible) in brand manifestation

3.1. General understanding

- How do you make your brand identity live up to the brand image?

3.2. perspective of brand managers

- How brand's (identity, DNA, etc.,) are conveyed to designers? (for brand managers)

- What is the role of segmentation in brand manifestation? (for brand managers)

3.3. Perspective of designers

- How does segmentation affect brand manifestation? (for designers)
- What tools/ methods do you use for brand manifestation?
- Can you describe the process you use to manifest brand identity?
- How does brand DNA and strategy affect the manifestation process?
- Do you have a design policy? Or do you follow the upcoming trends in design?
- How important is storytelling in manifesting brands?
- How do design constraints affect brand manifestation?
- How do you prioritize which brand attributes to focus on during the manifestation phase?
- How do you transform abstract attributes to design elements?
- How does the manifestation process differ based on the nature of the product (i.e., physical, digital, service, etc.)?

3.4. Understanding the bigger picture

- Who are the stakeholders?
- How do designers collaborate with other stakeholders?
- How do brand managers collaborate with other stakeholders?

4. Maintaining the consistency of brand experience and attributes across multiple product lines and services (i.e., physical product + app)

- How many product lines does your brand offer?
- If the product you are offering has a digital application, does the same team design both the physical and digital product?
- How do you communicate with other teams who are working on other product lines that contribute to the same experience you are trying to deliver?
- How do you match design elements with the most appropriate touch point to deliver brand experience?

5. Evaluating design elements (tangible/ intangible) during brand manifestation

5.1. Evaluation framework

- What are the general brand guidelines that are following for transforming brand attributes to an actual product?
- What are the benefits and/or the drawbacks of such guidelines?

5.2. Evaluation process

- When do you usually carry out the evaluation process?
- How do you evaluate the design elements according to the brand attribute they manifest? Tools and methods!
- How do you define experience-specific references for evaluating design elements?
- How do you evaluate the design elements according to the touchpoint?
- How do you evaluate the overall compatibility of tangible and intangible design elements according to brand experience?

6. Evaluating brand manifestation in accordance with touchpoints to deliver brand identity/product identity.

6.1. Validation process

- How do you evaluate the suggested design according to touchpoints and the experience and values it should deliver?
- How do you validate the relation between the design elements and touchpoints?
- How do you validate the manifested product experience and the intended brand experience?
- How do you validate the relation between brand experience and touchpoints?
- How does the relation between the various touchpoints affect the validation and evaluation of brand manifestation?
- Do you consider other products' experiences while evaluating yours?
- How does the evaluation process differ based on the product nature (physical, digital, service, etc.?)

FOCUS GROUP

Based on the findings from literature review and interviews, a proposal for 'brand manifestation transformation and evaluation' will be designed by the researcher. A

generative focus group session will be conducted with 6-8 participants. The participant group will be brand managers, product managers and designers who are currently working on different product lines for the same brand. Using the design proposal as a cue, a participatory session will be conducted to gather feedback and suggest iteration

C. Miro Presentation for Follow-up Sessions

About this tool!

- * Based on Multi Attribute Decision Making method (MADM)

- * Aims to assist with prioritizing brand attributes during the evaluation stage.

- * Aims to combine both objective and subjective evaluation.

- * Aims to assist with visualizing evaluation to ease choosing between concepts.

- * Aims to ensure the consistency of brand experience manifestation across the various touch points.

The 4 categories of brand attributes

Core attributes

Emotional attributes

Functional attributes

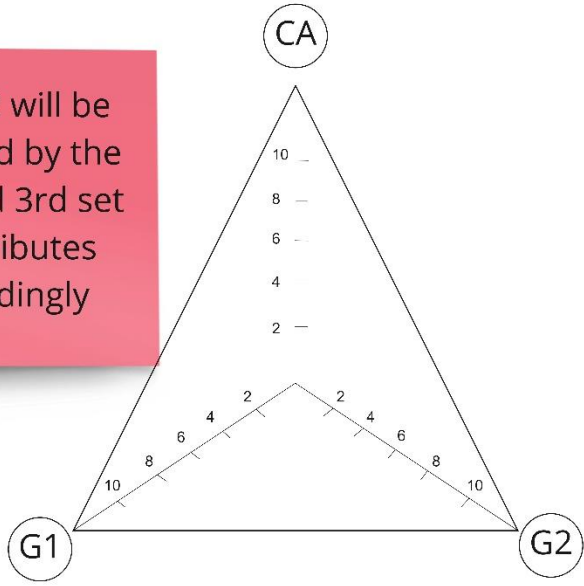
Trending attributes

How to use it?

1. Define Company-wide brand experience goals (4 max)
 2. Post the concept or the element(s) you want to evaluate
 3. Define which touchpoint you're targeting
 4. List the core attributes of the brand (4 max)- Don't change its location :)
 5. Place the 3 remaining sets of attributes according to their importance in relation to the concept and touchpoint
 6. List maximum of 4 attributes in each set.
 7. Evaluate the concept and sum the total points of each set
 8. Plot the results on the evaluation triangle for illustration.
- *You may set a threshold on the triangle to show the minimum criteria to judge against

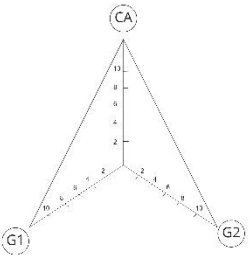
Concept/ Elements	Brand Experience				Touchpoint
	BE 1	BE 2	BE 3	BE 4	
	Does it manifest?				
Core attributes	Yes (3)	Somewhat (2)	No (1)		Sum
Emotional attributes	Yes (3)	Somewhat (2)	No (1)		Sum
Functional attributes	Yes (3)	Somewhat (2)	No (1)		Sum
Trendy attributes	Like bonus	Dislike	No		Sum

G1&G2 will be replaced by the 2nd and 3rd set of attributes accordingly



The tool can be duplicated and used to evaluate various concepts or elements for better understanding.

Concept Element	Final Score	Final Grade	Final Mark
Concept Element			Sum
Concept Element			Sum
Concept Element			Sum
Concept Element			Sum



Concept Element	Final Score	Final Grade	Final Mark
Concept Element			Sum
Concept Element			Sum
Concept Element			Sum
Concept Element			Sum

