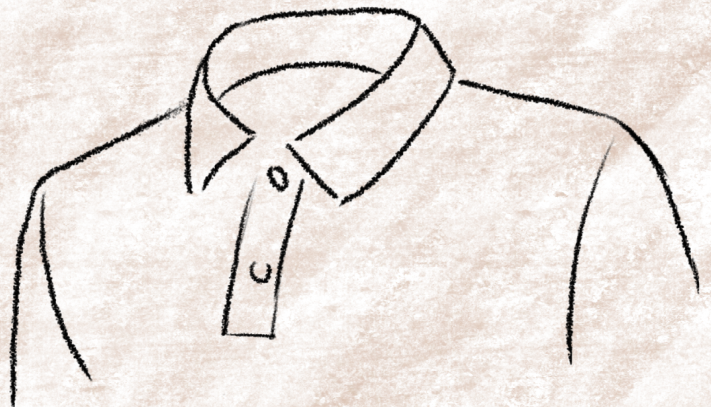
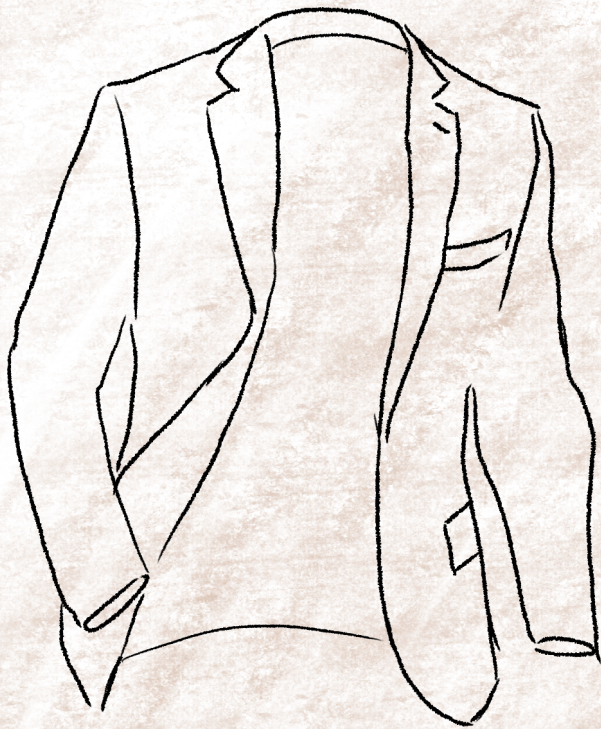


Revitalizing a traditional menswear brand

Introducing a two-brand strategy for Van Gils



**MASTER THESIS BY
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Preface

Dear reader,

In front of you lies my thesis that finalises my master's degree in Strategic Product Design at the faculty of Industrial Design Engineering at Delft University of Technology. I am grateful for Van Gils providing me the opportunity to conduct my graduation project within an industry and with a subject of my interest, namely brand strategy within the fashion industry. I am proud to present my finalized results of extensive research and design, but before moving on I would like to express my gratitude towards the people that guided me throughout this process.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisory team, Erik-Jan Hultink and Pinar Cankurtaran, for their encouragement and coaching during my graduation project. Erik-Jan, thank you for your honest judgment as well as the engaging and compelling conversations that we had. Pinar, thank you for your constant enthusiasm and always providing valuable constructive feedback.

Both of you always challenged me, provided me with a push to make decisions and made sure that I always tapped into my confidence and potential as a strategic designer. Besides that, you were always genuinely interested in my project as well as how I was doing personally.

A special thanks to my company mentors, Laurens Blok and Michael Heijhoff. Laurens, thank you for providing me with this opportunity and giving the utmost freedom to do my project. Michael, thank you for joining the project unexpectedly, at the end, on such short notice and providing me with much-needed constructive feedback.

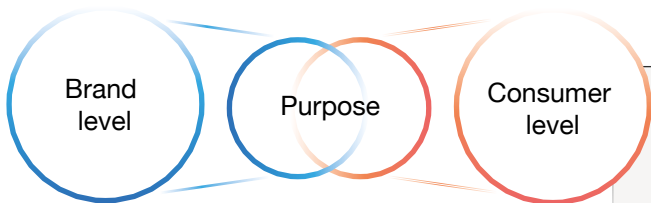
Furthermore, I would like to thank the people that participated in my interviews and sessions.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends. Specifically, I want to thank Judith en Maud, you were always there to have interesting discussions and brainstorm sessions when I needed it most, and my family, my parents and brother who were always there with their endless support during this project.

In sum, I thank you all for your help and support during my graduation project. Enjoy this read!

Yours sincerely,

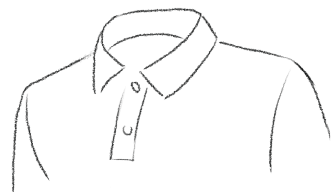
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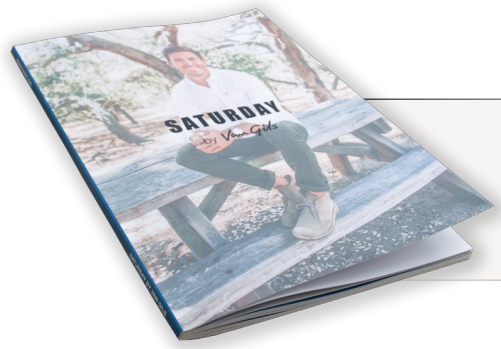
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



STRATEGIC DIRECTION



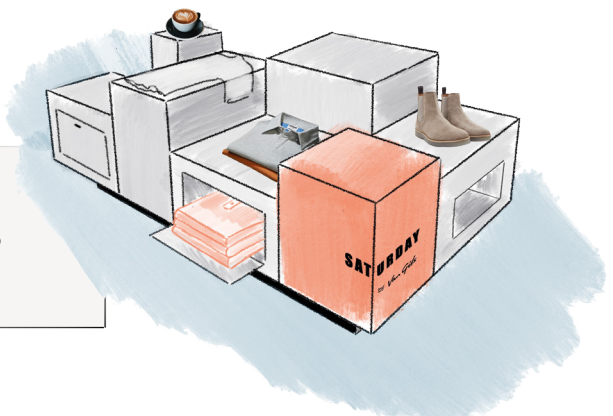
SATURDAY
by Van Gilt



BRAND BOOK



BRAND TOUCHPOINTS



Executive summary

This thesis proposes a two-brand strategy for Van Gils to reach out to a younger audience, men in the age group of 25-35 years old. This strategy for brand revitalization has been developed through extensive research and analysis of the internal environment of the company, trends and industry developments, activities of competitors and, finally, the needs and values of consumers.

Van Gils, the main stakeholder of this project is, or at least known as, a traditional menswear brand that focuses on formal wear. Due to changes in the fashion industry and an on-going casualization trend, the brand is in need of a change.

Several developments can be seen. Firstly, an increased desire for comfort has arisen and as such reflects how work and life nowadays are getting increasingly more intertwined (Jenkins, 2018). Secondly, there has been an enhanced focus on environmental impact due to fast fashion (Russell, 2019). Finally, and most importantly for a brand focussing on formal attire, increasingly more companies are changing their dress codes and changing nature of workplaces generally in favour of a more casual environment. Therefore, an explicit need for formal wear is becoming less existent (Kollewe, 2019).

Additionally, purpose has become the lens and language often used nowadays to work on changes in business (Montgomery, 2019). Especially, due to consumers currently making carefully considered choices regarding their purchasing decisions (Fromm, 2019). Purpose is introduced during this thesis to create internal alignment.

Conducted analyses propose an opportunity for Van Gils to introduce another brand. For instance, the company wants to stay true to loyal customers while also reaching out to a new and, most importantly, younger audience. Additionally, based on the consumer research an explicit need has been found that fits the need of the company. It has been found that participants have two ways of expressing oneself. Either having the need to express oneself as ambitious and professional by wearing formal attire when, for instance, having an important business meeting or expressing oneself as easy-going and approachable, and therefore, wearing smart casual attire, when for example enjoying recreational time.

This thesis has several outcomes:

- A **theoretical framework** providing a thorough understanding of brand revitalization and related subject matter.
- A **strategic direction** introducing a two-brand strategy for Van Gils.
- A **brand book** showcasing the new brand, SATURDAY.
- Several **brand touchpoint designs** visualizing the translation from brand book to design examples.

In conclusion, a two-brand strategy has been introduced in which the new brand SATURDAY and Van Gils as brands exist simultaneously next to one another. This ensures that Van Gils as a brand stays true to loyal customers by providing what the brand is known for, its formal attire, and additionally, reaching out to another consumer by introducing smart casual attire. Naturally, with the possibility to mix and match both brands, and therefore, becoming entities that offer garments that suit every occasion.

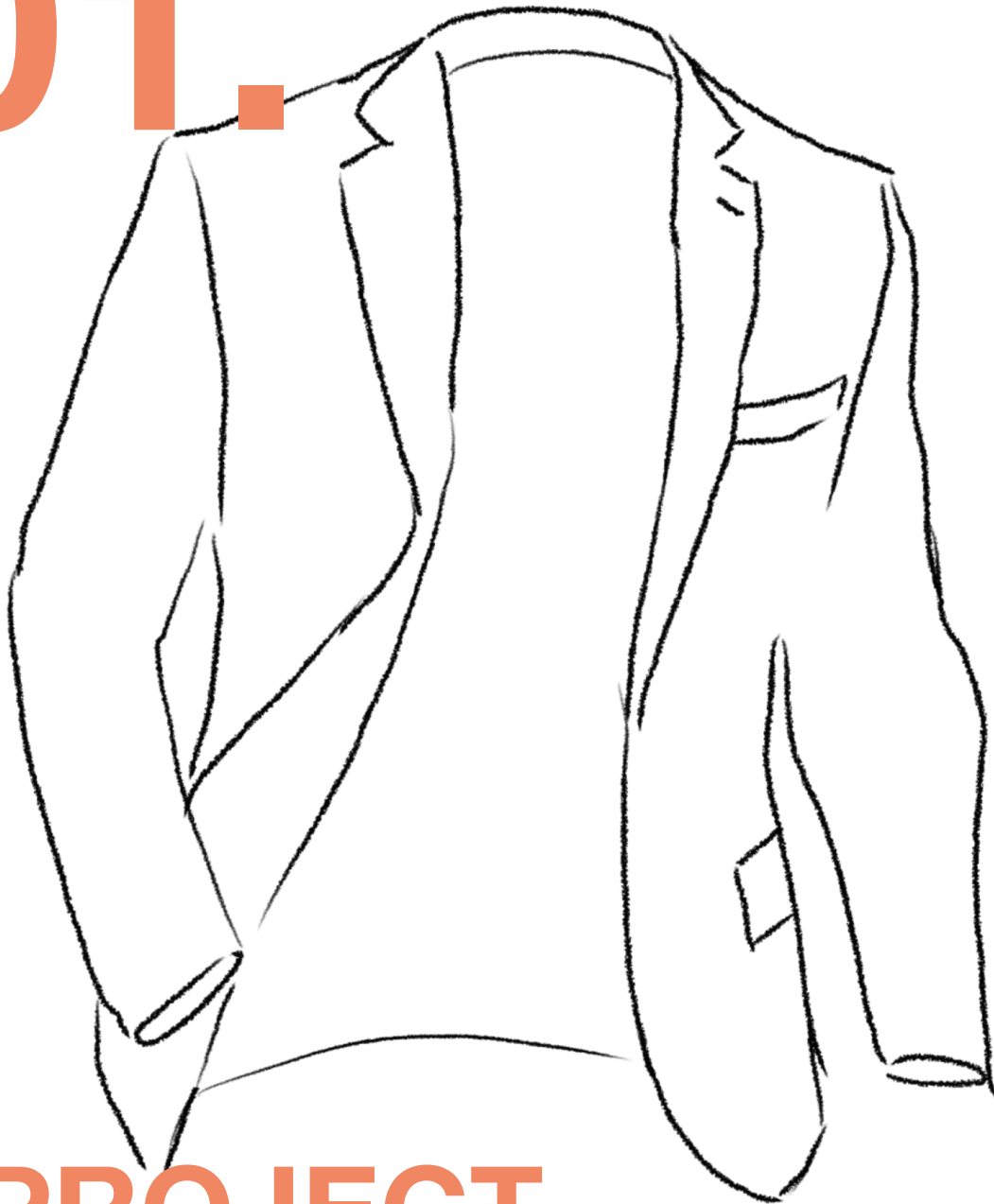
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01.



PROJECT

*Introducing the topic and approach of this master thesis.
This chapter describes the context and introduces the main stakeholder of this project. Additionally, initial problems and research questions are formulated.*

IN THIS CHAPTER

1.1. Introduction

1.2. Van Gils

1.3. Project challenge and goals

1.4. Project approach

1.1. Introduction

Van Gils, the main stakeholder of this project (see Chapter 1.2. Van Gils), is, or at least known as, a traditional menswear brand that focuses on formal wear. Due to changes in the fashion industry, an enhanced focus on purpose-driven brands and an on-going casualization trend, for instance, more workplaces embracing smart casual dress codes, the brand is in need of a change. Before introducing the stakeholder, the developments within the fashion industry are elaborated on below.

1.1.1. Changes in the fashion industry

The fashion industry has significantly evolved over the last decades and, as a consequence this development redefined fashion as solely fulfilling a need to the desire of consumers to be defined by their attire (Wilson, n.d.). A number of developments have taken place. Firstly, fashion has evolved from pure design to a new rapidly changing dynamic landscape consisting of, among other things, a shift from brick-and-mortar retail shopping to an omnichannel retail experience (Shamir, 2018). Secondly, an increased desire for comfort has arisen and as such reflects how work and life nowadays are getting increasingly more intertwined (Jenkins, 2018). Thirdly, the rise of social media has given others a voice as well, like the consumer (Ingram, 2016). Lastly, there has been an enhanced focus on environmental impact due to fast fashion (Russell, 2019).



An increased desire for comfort has arisen.

JENKINS, 2018

The main driver behind these significant developments, and as such creating a dynamic landscape, is the competitiveness of that fashion industry. The speed to market has been identified as one of the driving forces of this competitiveness (Sinha, 2012).

Changes in workplaces

With increasingly more companies changing their dress codes and changing nature of workplaces generally in favour of a more casual environment an explicit need for formal wear is becoming less existent (Kollewe, 2019). Up until recently, three industries have largely resisted the tides of casual dress: legal, banking and government (Green, 2016). In 2019 Wall Street titan Goldman Sachs announced it is relaxing its dress code (Bhojwani, 2019). The same can be seen in the Zuidas financial and business district of Amsterdam where mainly the young cohort of men dress more casually (Hoeks, 2019).

Purpose

Currently, consumers are making carefully considered choices regarding their purchasing decisions. They are choosing brands and organisations that they personally identify with and reflect their values and beliefs. Consequently, they are no longer investing their time and money in brands or organisations that are exclusively selling quality products at fair prices (Fromm, 2019).

According to Montgomery (2019), a recalibration of business priorities can be seen to meet the realities of the twenty-first century. 'Purpose' has become the lens and language used to work on this change in business. **Purpose is the reason for a brand's existence.**

It is most commonly framed as an organization's belief about the value it creates, beyond its bottom line.

It is about the direction the organization wants to go in by creating both economic

and social prosperity, and in doing so positively impacting people's lives.

Additionally, purpose can help provide internal alignment, inspire employees, serve as a so-called 'north star' by providing direction (Carlisi et al., 2017), and forge stronger customer relationships which translates into greater customer loyalty and give companies a competitive advantage (Castrillon, 2019).

Purpose is broad in the sense that people could identify with principles like personal happiness, health and wellbeing or broader societal issues such as environmental sustainability (Fromm, 2019).



Purpose provides as a 'north star', providing direction and steering various transformation efforts in a way that is logical and accessible to everyone.

CARLISI ET AL., 2017

As consumers have become more socially conscious about their purchasing decisions, an example of purpose is the increased awareness of the environmental impact of fast fashion.

Fast fashion

Retailers like H&M and Zara introduced fast fashion in the late 1990s by taking the looks and design elements from the top fashion houses and reproduce them quickly and cheaply, making it possible for everyone to shop for on-trend clothes whenever they wanted (Rauturier, 2018). Even though fast fashion as a process has much to go for, it relies on early identification of customers wants and a quick turnaround process to get these products into the market, thus it is also synonymous with disposable low-cost fashion and its environmental impact (Russell, 2019). The pressure to reduce costs and increase production time means

that environmental corners are more likely to be cut (Rauturier, 2018).

The environmental effects are due to making clothes typically requires using a lot of water and chemicals and emitting a significant amount of greenhouse gases as well as factory workers being underpaid and exposed to unsafe workplace conditions (Remy et al., 2016).

As customers become more eco-conscious, fashion companies have increased the use of environment-related terms (Arnett, 2019). However, a paradox remains at the heart of this green business where only a few consumers report positive attitudes toward eco-friendly products and services follow through with their wallets (White et al., 2019). This does not mean that companies are waiting for consumers, they already have begun to remedy the largely unseen impact of the fast-fashion business (Remy et al., 2016).

The aforementioned developments resulted in the contemporary focus of fashion on individual characteristics and preferences. Delivering a differentiated and individualized experience to each shopper is the competitive and strategic differentiator that every fashion and apparel retailer needs to have (Zaczekiewicz, 2019). Consequently, regardless of size and segment, companies need to take an active stance on social issues, satisfy consumer demands for ultra-transparency and sustainability, and, most importantly, have the courage to "self-disrupt" their own identity and the resources of their old success in order to realise these changes and win new generations of customers (Amed et al., 2019).

Considering the aforementioned developments, **the main goal of this project** is to find a solution for how a traditional menswear brand like Van Gils can remain relevant in these rapidly changing times in the fashion industry and adapt towards subjects that are considered important nowadays, such as sustainability, changes in workplaces and a shift in consumer behavior.

1.2. Van Gils

In this segment the main stakeholder of this thesis will be introduced, Van Gils. Van Gils is a fashion brand that is targeting the more style conscious man and is mostly known for its suits and formal wear. The brand is in need of a change due to influences from other industries and changes in appearance of what Van Gils is calling a casualization trend.

In Appendix A., a brief history is given of how menswear came to be as is known today.

Background

Since founded in 1948 by H.C. Van Gils, the brand has been known for its tailored clothing and distinctive style within menswear. Its tailored clothing is characterised by quality and unique details. Stemming from the conviction that every man feels confident in a stylish suit (Van Gils Fashion B.V., n.d.). In 1980, the company is handed over to the next generation within the family. Since then, the brand Van Gils expanded and achieved international success. Unfortunately, the company went bankrupt in 1992. Ever since the relaunch, the company is not a family business anymore. However, the family name is still being used nowadays. It proves that the brand wants to stay close to its roots and characteristics.

Van Gils became a part of Waalwear Group in 2004 and was rebranded in 2010 as 'Van Gils Fashion' (hereafter "Van Gils"). Van Gils is currently part of fashion conglomerate Logo International, which also has WE Fashion and O'Neill in their portfolio.

Company structure

Van Gils is currently operating in 13 different countries in 3 continents, North-America, Europe and Asia. The company's workforce in the Benelux consists of 40 employees working at the headquarters and 75 sellers working in the stores.

The 40 employees are divided over several departments, including Product Development, Design, Marketing & E-commerce, HR, Sales and Finance.

Van Gils has several points of sale (see Figure 1):

- Outlets: Bataviastad, Rosada and Maasmechelen
- Brandstores: Amsterdam, Amstelveen, Rotterdam, Breda and Antwerp
- Online webshop
- Traveling tailor: tailor visits the chosen location of the customer, for example at home or at the office, which also includes B2B clients.
- Shop-in-shop concepts in Galeria INNO Belgium and Bijenkorf the Netherlands
- Independent retailers

Product groups

Nowadays, Van Gils is considered a full-brand. This means that it is possible for a customer to walk into a store and obtain a full wardrobe, attaining pieces of apparel ranging from shoes and socks to polos and suits. Its portfolio consists of the following:

- Suits: made-to-measure and ready-to-wear
- Jackets
- Shirts
- Trousers
- Jerseys / polo shirts
- Knitwear
- Coats
- Shoes
- Accessories: belts, bags, scarfs, ties, pouches, socks, jewelry

In the Autumn-Winter collection of 2019, the product groups that were sold predominantly are long sleeve shirts, trousers and suits (based on highest sales quantity, not profit, and within own brandstores).

Collection

Internally the organization is working with three different collections, divided by a six month season over the upcoming year and a half. There is always one collection in stores for the consumer market, one is in production for the upcoming season, whereas the design department is working on the collection that will be introduced to the public in about a year and a half.

The collection consists of the following:

- Brand statements: pieces that show the brand's aspiration and capabilities in tailoring.
- Fashion needs: pieces that fit the right products to the right time, which is about presenting the newest innovation in style and fabrics.
- Seasonal essentials: pieces that are considered essential, products that every man should have.
- NOOS (Never Out Of Stock): pieces that are always available, like a white shirt or blue suit.

OWN DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

EXTERNAL DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

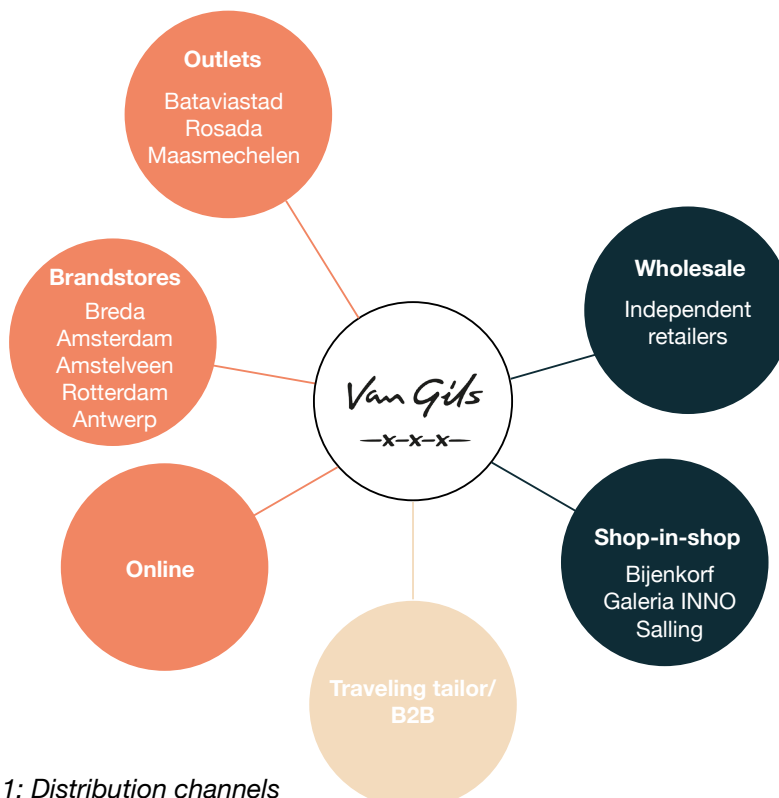
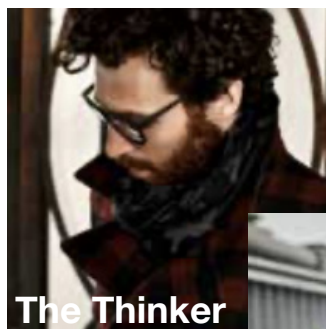


Figure 1: Distribution channels

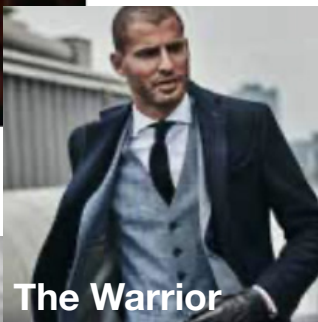
The collection can be divided into different segments: blue line, main line or ivory line and premium line, which differ in price level and materials being used (as can be seen in figure 2).

During the design process, four different archetypes or themes are being used to distinguish different men and provide different offerings for diverse needs. Considering these archetypes, the designed collections range from classic suits to trendy business-casual wear. For Autumn-Winter 19, archetypes used are:

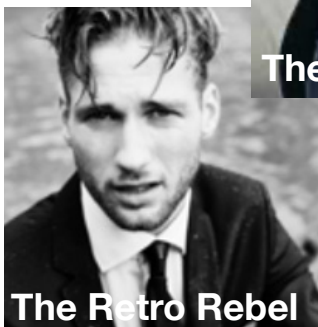
- The Thinker: a man who analyses different aspects in life, a mix of an intellectual and a dreamer.
- The Warrior: a man who is working hard to make deadlines and reach targets, wants to impress.
- The Retro Rebel: a man who tries to be a bit different and rebellious.
- The Sartorialist: timeless classy, a man who knows fashion.



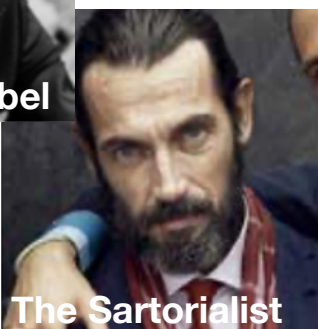
The Thinker



The Warrior



The Retro Rebel



The Sartorialist

Additionally, the garments mostly have fun and hidden elements, as can be seen below.



Marketing age

“Forever35”

The brand uses a marketing communication age of 35. The older men will look at it with a feeling of wanting to see themselves as 35 years old again and perhaps gravitate towards a more casual look to feel younger. The younger men will perceive the depicted 35 year old as an inspiration and perhaps wanting to wear tailored pieces to feel and look sophisticated.

Target group

Van Gils has a very broad target group, since the brand basically wants to serve all working men that might have a little bit more to spend. However, the brand currently mostly sells to men within the age group of 40 years and older as younger men, within the age group 25 - 35 years, associate the brand with being traditional or old-fashioned. In addition, Van Gils' brand awareness amongst young men is not very high.

BLUE LINE

Value for money on entry price level, business basics.



Formal in a classic or modern way



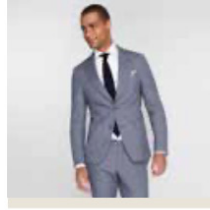
Informal in a classic or modern way



Smart Casual in a modern way

IVORY LINE

The core or the brand values of Van Gils. A total Lifestyle collection.



PREMIUM LINE

We also offer a premium collection from luxurious Italian fabrics.

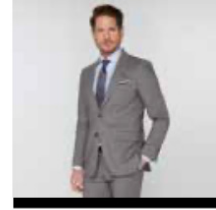


Figure 2: Collection Van Gils

Conclusion

With the brand already using different archetypes in their design process and dividing the collection, portrays the willingness and possibilities to reach out to different target groups and thus, different types of men.

Additionally, the 'fun' twists incorporated in garments might be a unique characteristic of the brand that distinguishes Van Gils, for instance, from competitors.

In order to address a younger target group, Van Gils needs to revitalize their brand, gain an understanding of this group of men and find a positioning that relates to them. The challenge lies in knowing that the brand heritage is very strong, which can be considered both as an advantage and disadvantage. Loyal customers have known the brand for many years and come back to the brand because of its qualities. Potential (younger) customers consider the brand as old-fashioned and traditional. The challenge lies in staying true to loyal customers as well as addressing a new, younger, target group.

Problems

- Van Gils does not have a clearly defined purpose and focus.
- Low brand awareness amongst younger men.
- Brand image of old-fashioned and traditional (amongst younger men).

ASSIGNMENT

Revitalize a traditional menswear brand in order to embrace the on-going casualization trend and reach out to a younger audience.

Purpose is introduced to this assignment to provide direction and clarification for Van Gils.

1.3. Project challenge and goals

Based on the aforementioned developments and problem, a research question and sub-questions have been formulated. The research questions and deliverables will be elaborated on below.

The challenge addressed in this thesis is formulated in the following research question:

“How to revitalize a traditional menswear brand in order to attract a new younger target group while also staying true to loyal customers?”

To answer this research question and gain an understanding of the current situation, the following sub-questions have been formulated:

- 1. What are the needs and values of a younger target group?**
- 2. What do loyal and potential customers associate Van Gils with?**
- 3. How can Van Gils gain a competitive advantage in the highly saturated and competitive landscape of menswear?**

The insights gathered from these sub-questions will be used to give shape to the aforementioned research question. An answer to the initial research question will be provided by the deliverables mentioned below.

Deliverables

Theoretical framework

A framework that brings brand and consumer together and visualizes the important aspects of brand revitalization that will be taken into consideration during this project.

Strategic direction

A new brand strategy for Van Gils.

Brand book

The result of this thesis will be a brand book. This will be used as a means of communication as well as a means to create unity and clarity internally. It illustrates what the brand stands for, its intended purpose as well as depicting a well-defined target group. It illustrates how these aspects should be translated into different touchpoints and ensure these are strategically aligned with the brand.

The initial setup of this project can be found in Appendix B. Project Brief.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How to revitalize a traditional menswear brand in order to attract a new younger target group while also staying true to loyal customers?

1.4. Project approach

This subchapter describes the project approach. This project is divided into four phases according to the Design Council's Double Diamond (2015), see figure 3. These phases provide guidance and structure throughout the graduation project.

Phase 1: Discover

The first phase of the project is focused on literature research, internal and external analysis and case studies. Literature research will be used to create a theoretical framework that consists of the subjects taken into account during this project. Related topics like purpose and aspects of branding will be explored. Internal analysis will create an understanding of the purpose, vision and mission of Van Gils as well as strengths and weaknesses. External analysis will help gain an understanding of loyal and potential customers, competitors and trends. Design research will consist of interviews. Interviews will be conducted with employees of Van Gils as well as experts in the fashion industry.

Phase 2: Define

The first steps towards a new brand strategy are made. The insights gathered from the internal analysis will help develop purpose, vision and mission statements.

The synthesis from the research and analyses, during the 'Discover'-phase, lead to initial opportunities for the newly defined strategic direction.

Phase 3: Develop

The opportunity for the final direction has been defined and developed. The insights and direction lead to the design of the brand book. Additionally, initial steps towards several brand touchpoints are made.

Phase 4: Deliver

The last stage presents the final design, a brand book. In order to help creatives in creating a consistent brand experience, examples are developed that portray the translation from brand book to brand touchpoint designs. The overall project will be evaluated and concluded.

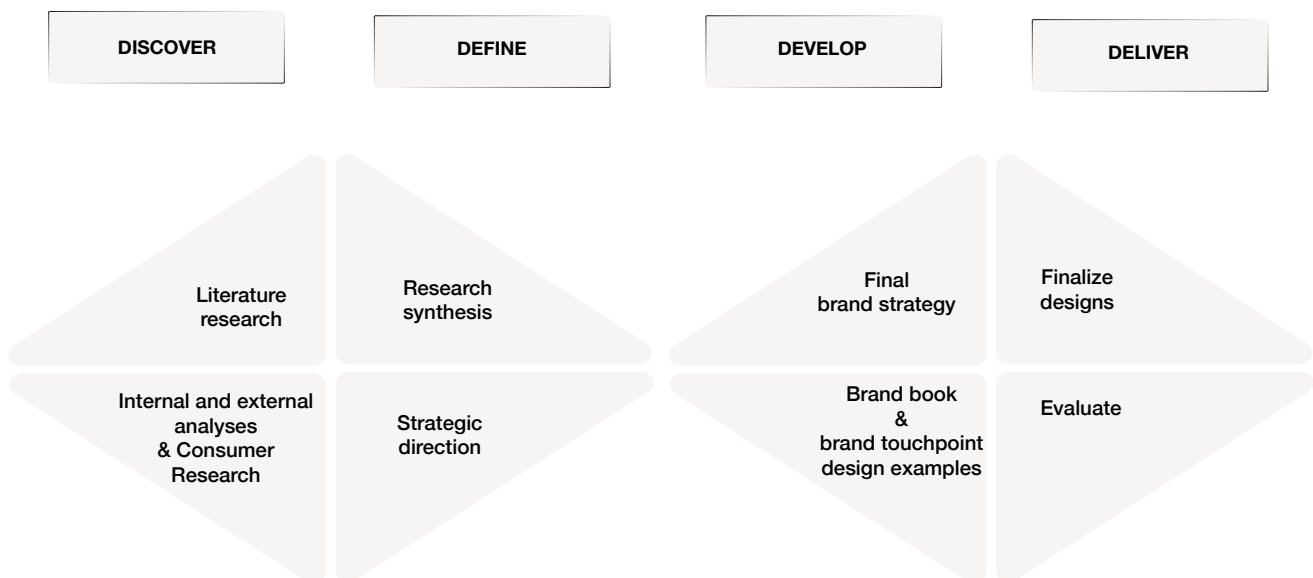
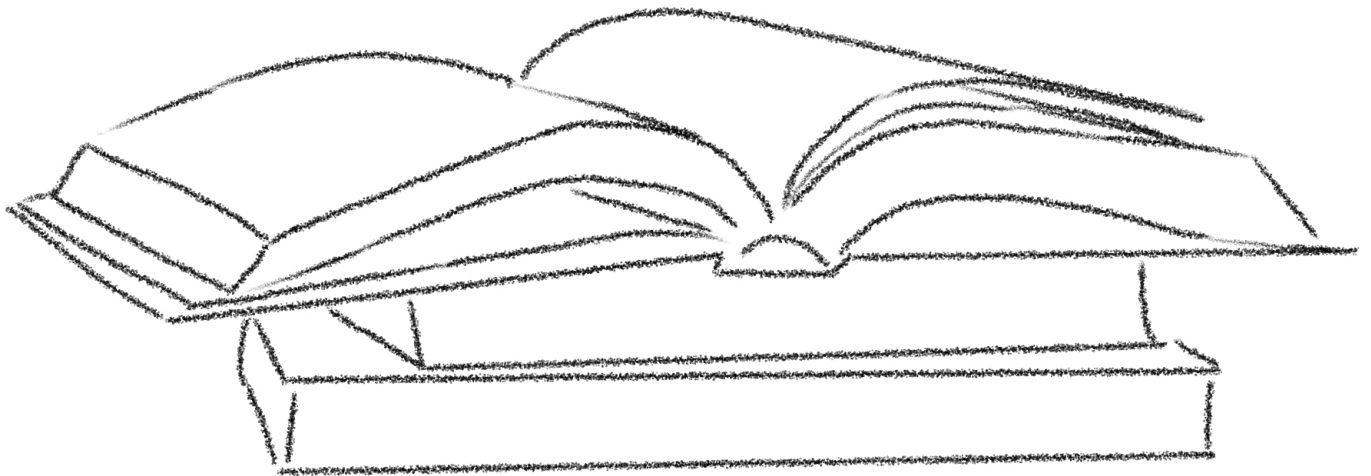


Figure 3: Double Diamond

02.



THEORETICAL GROUNDING

This chapter aims to create an understanding of branding and brand revitalization. Finally, a theoretical framework is developed to visualize interactions of important aspects of brand revitalization and which will be taken into consideration during this project.

IN THIS CHAPTER

2.1. Brand and branding

2.2. Brand revitalization

2.3. Brand revitalization framework

2.4. Conclusion

2.1. Brand and branding

This subchapter addresses the main notion of branding and its development over recent years.

The word “brand” is derived from the German “brandr”, which literally means to “burn your mark into or stigmatize” and usually referred to the practice of marking ownership of captured people or animals. Nowadays, it is about the emotional intensity of consumer-brand relationships, the ways in which consumers construct their identity through brands, the ways in which particular brands mark people out from others or the ways in which employees are required to “live the brand” (Beverland, 2018).

Brands or branding is frequently defined as a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers (American Marketing Association, n.d.). However, this definition emphasizes functional aspects and does not mention, for example, emotional attachment or end-users. According to Holt (2004), a brand is a set of emotional, distinctive and relevant associations in customers’ minds. The aforementioned shortly reflects the complexity with defining “brand”. This is mainly due to the fact that brands mean different things to different people at different times, brands are about feelings and feelings are hard to pin down (Lloyd, 2019).

In addition, a new dynamic has been established between companies and consumers, which is very different from the traditional model where companies used to control their brand narrative through media channels, and consistency was valued as the most important principle of branding (Ingram, 2016).

Nowadays, companies are not solely in control. The ever-increasing importance of the societal role of social media has given

other stakeholders a voice as well, like the consumer (Ingram, 2016). Essentially, these days, the stories are told by four primary types of authors. These are the users, such as consumers, the organization itself, social media influencers, and the brand’s role in popular culture, such as movies, shape the meaning of the brand over time (Holt, 2004).

Users being active in creating meaning for companies or brands means that consumers choose brands to reflect their desired identity, both individually and socially defined (Beverland, 2018). Consequently, branding became more holistic implementing both tangible aspects like logo, symbol and name as well as intangible aspects like functional, emotional values and means of self-expression to reflect a desired identity (see Figure 4).

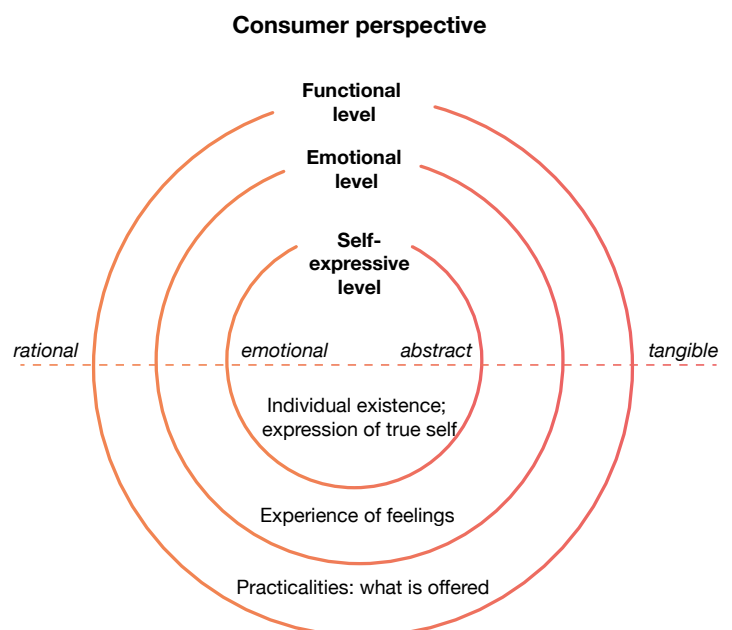


Figure 4: Consumer perspective

2.2. Brand revitalization

This subchapter describes the main notion of brand revitalization and three steps have been identified that are vital in the revitalization process.

The concept of brand revitalization in professional literature differs greatly from author to author (Kolbl et al., 2015). Beverland (2018) refers to it as brands that have declined but are still in the marketplace. Babu (2006) equates brand revitalization with brand rejuvenation and considers it a revamping of a brand, a process which also encompasses the regeneration of the brand's identity. According to Kapferer (2012) brand revitalization is about putting the brand back to life, when the brand is made up of many products, it consists of maintaining a well-known product globally in its original design and form and reinventing it for new and younger consumers, asking the question what would this product be today if we had to invent it from scratch for the needs of modern consumers?

Every brand risks the possibility that it will lose its vitality, no matter how powerful and successful a brand is. Consequently, the world's longest lasting successful brands all need to revitalize their concept and message from time to time to adapt to changing trends, meet the needs and desires of consumers, and deal with new

competitive threats (Dev & Keller, 2014). The first place to look in turning around the fortunes of a brand is to return to their roots. Of particular importance is the extent to which key brand associations are still adequately functioning as points-of-difference to properly position the brand, are positive associations losing their strength or uniqueness or have negative associations become linked to the brand (Keller, 2013).

For brand revitalization, it is important to note that consumers play a key role in determining the success or failure of a brand and as such should be given due consideration as stakeholders (Närvänen & Goulding, 2016), since consumers construct meanings around brands that may differ from those intended by the organization and as such have an important role to play in the co-construction of brand meaning (Kates, 2004).

Thus, the interaction between the brand and consumer (see Figure 5) is vital when it comes to brand revitalization.

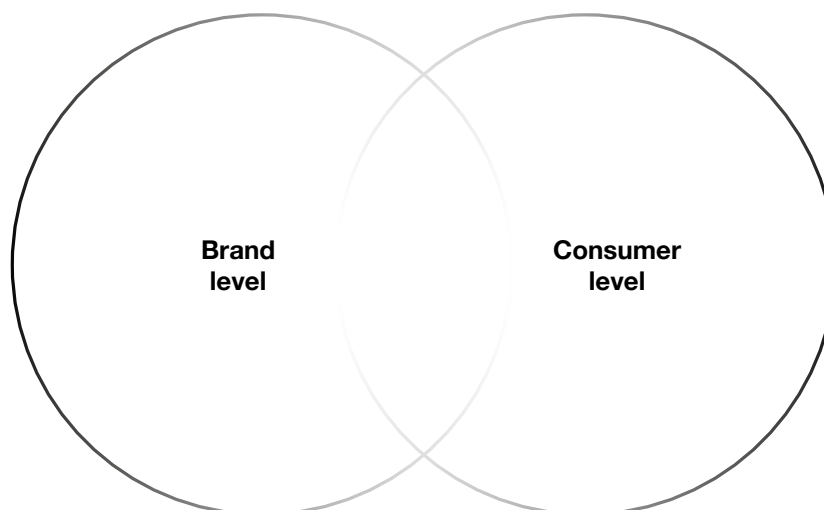


Figure 5: interaction brand level and consumer level

Based on Beverland (2018) and Dev & Keller (2014) several steps of brand revitalization can be identified:

A. Purpose: returning to the roots. Preparing the organization to “live the brand” by creating a purpose, vision and mission and define brand values.

B. Brand-level: doing a brand scan to create a thorough understanding of where the brand has been, where it is now and where it wants to go.

C. Consumer-level: gaining knowledge about brand associations and brand image from a consumer’s point of view as well as what they value in life.

A. Purpose

As mentioned in *Chapter 1.1.1.*, purpose is the reason for a brand’s existence and has been used increasingly more often to guide changes in business to meet the desires of the twenty-first century. It is the underlying essence that makes the brand relevant and necessary to its customers (Fromm, 2019). It is often used due to purpose-led brands having the potential to forge stronger customer relationships which translates into greater customer loyalty (Castrillon, 2019), as consumers make carefully considered purchasing choices.

With sources of disruption multiplying, for instance, new market opportunities, new business models and new customer needs and desires, purpose becomes more important by providing much needed alignment, clarity and guidance.

Purpose serves as a so-called ‘north star’, providing direction and steering various transformation efforts in a way

that is logical and accessible to everyone. Purpose can propel a thriving organization to new heights as well as helping an organization emerge from crisis (Carlisi, et al., 2017).

As mentioned previously, a vital step in brand revitalization is returning to the roots. Every company was founded with a core purpose, however, many have neglected their origins along the way due to, for instance, the fear of polarizing customers (Fromm, 2019). A visual (see Figure 6) has been created to gain an understanding of the difference between a purpose, vision and mission as well as how they are connected, as many companies often conflate these terms. Purpose is about who you are and what you believe in (Carlise, et al., 2017). The vision is about the future, it defines where an organization is going, and thus how it envisions the future. The mission is more tangible, it is about how to build this future and what it needs to get there (Sinek, 2019).

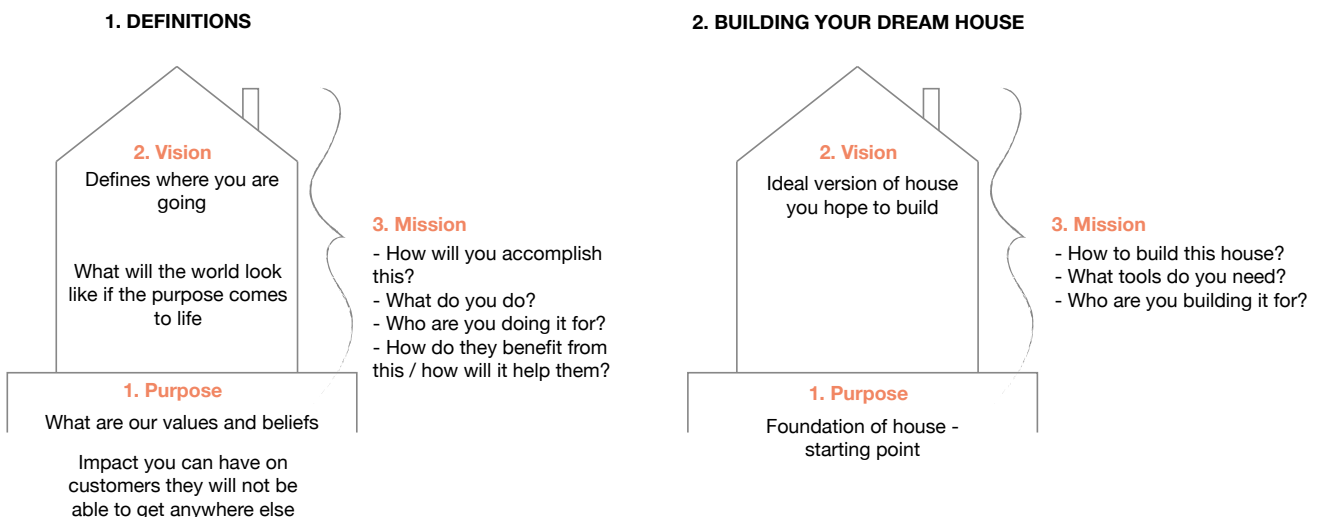


Figure 6: Explanation purpose, vision and mission

The figure explains the differences between the terms by using a metaphor of building a house. The purpose is the foundation of the house and thus its starting point. Without a proper foundation, the house will not hold its own and might even collapse. The vision is the ideal version of the imagined house. The mission portrays what is necessary to actually build this house, for instance, the tools that are necessary during the building process.

B. Brand-level (see Figure 7)

The brand level is meant to create a thorough understanding of the brand. The differences between the purpose, vision and mission is explained before in A. Purpose and will be used to understand the brand, provide direction and create internal consistency.

Another visual (see Figure 8) is created to portray these terms from a brand perspective. As can be seen, these terms also range from emotional to rational and abstract to tangible.

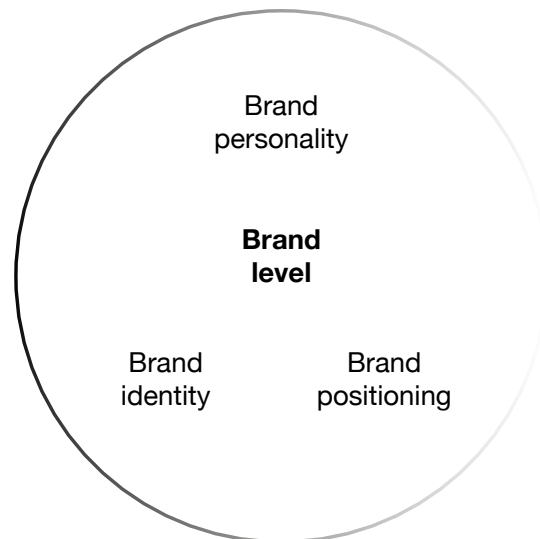


Figure 7: Brand level

Brand identity

Brand identity is a unique set of associations that represents what the brand stands for, imply certain promises to consumers and depicts who you are as a brand (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2013). To be effective, a brand identity needs to resonate with customers, differentiate the brand from competitors, and represent what the organisation can and will do over time (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

Brand personality

Brand personality plays a crucial role in developing and maintaining a strong brand, it is a set of human characteristics attributed to a brand, and thus, creates a connection with consumers on a personal level (Dvornechuck, 2019).

Brand positioning

According to Keller (2013) brand positioning is the act of designing the company’s offer and image in such a way that it occupies a distinct and valued place in the target customer’s minds. As the name implies, positioning means finding the proper location in the minds of a certain target group so that they think about a product in the desired way. Brand positioning provides clarification on the value the brand offers its customers.



Figure 8: Brand perspective

C. Consumer-level (see Figure 9).

The consumer level is meant to gain knowledge about the meaning of brands from a consumer's point of view. This consists of brand awareness, brand recognition and to what extent consumers are able to connect with a brand, ranging from practicalities to identifying with the brand, as is portrayed in Figure 4.



Figure 9: Consumer level

Brand awareness

According to Beverland (2018) brand awareness consists of brand recognition, brand recall and top of mind awareness, which is a function of brand recall. Brand recall is the consumers' ability to retrieve the brand from memory when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the category, or a purchase or usage situation as a cue (Keller, 2013). In other words, consumers' recall of Van Gils will depend on their ability to retrieve the brand when they think, for example, of the suits category or what to wear to work. Top of mind awareness is the brand that comes to mind first when thinking about a certain product category (Beverland, 2018).

Brand recognition is consumers' ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue. In other words, when they go to the store, will they be able to recognize the brand as one to which they have already been exposed? (Keller, 2013)

There are several benefits of creating a high level of brand awareness; it influences the strength of the associations that make up the brand image and it increases the likelihood that the brand will be a member of the consideration set, these are the set of a handful of brands that receive serious consideration for purchase. Consumers must consider the brand whenever they are making a purchase for which it could be acceptable or fulfilling a need it could satisfy (Keller, 2013).

Brand image and associations

Brand image is consumers' perceptions about a brand, as reflected by the brand associations held in consumers memory (Keller, 2013). As mentioned previously, a brand emerges as four primary types of authors, such as consumers, the organization, social media influencers, and the brand's role in popular culture, tell stories that involve the brand (Holt, 2004). Brands are co-created by these authors and therefore portrays the user as having an active role in brand-meaning development (Beverland, 2018).

propositions that provide consumers a compelling reason to buy the brand (Keller, 2013). Brand associations consist of brand attributes, the descriptive features that characterize a product or service, and brand benefits, the personal value and meaning that consumers attach to the product or service attributes (Keller, 2013).

Associations that consumers currently have with Van Gils are for example "old-fashioned" or "traditional" (Brand research Van Gils, 2018).

Brand image consists of brand associations (Beverland, 2018). To create a positive brand image, it is important for the brand to maintain strong, favorable and unique brand associations, which depend on personal relevance and consistency over time as well as unique selling

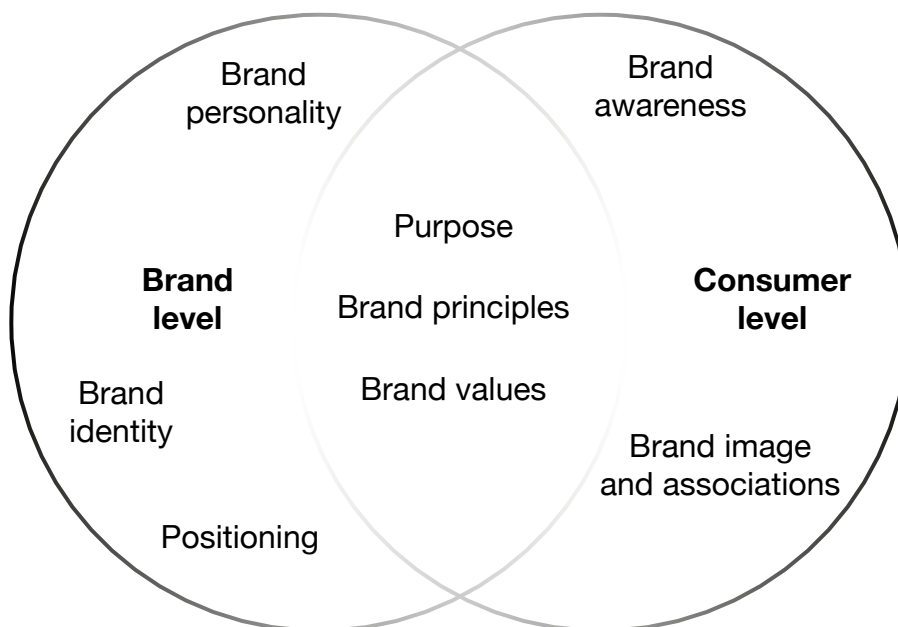


Figure 10: Interaction between different levels

Figure 10 provides an overview of the interaction of the different levels.

2.3. Brand revitalization framework

Based on the literature review, a theoretical framework for brand revitalization has been created. The framework clarifies the interaction between the brand and consumer level (as portrayed in figure 10) and visualizes the important aspects of brand revitalization that will be taken into consideration during this project (see figure 11 for framework).

Purpose is at the core, both from a brand perspective and consumer perspective. With the distinction being made between 'purpose', 'vision' and 'mission', it is possible to range them from emotional and abstract to rational and tangible. The same can be seen at the consumer level in which the distinction is made between self-expressive level (the ability to communicate the admired self-image (Aaker, 1996)), the emotional level (the experience of certain feelings when

in touch with a brand (Aaker, 1996)) and the functional level (what does the brand offer). These aspects will be taken into account when developing a new brand strategy.

Since Van Gils is not a multi brand organisation, the organisation level and brand level are considered as the same, thus culture and way of working will definitely be taken into account during further research.

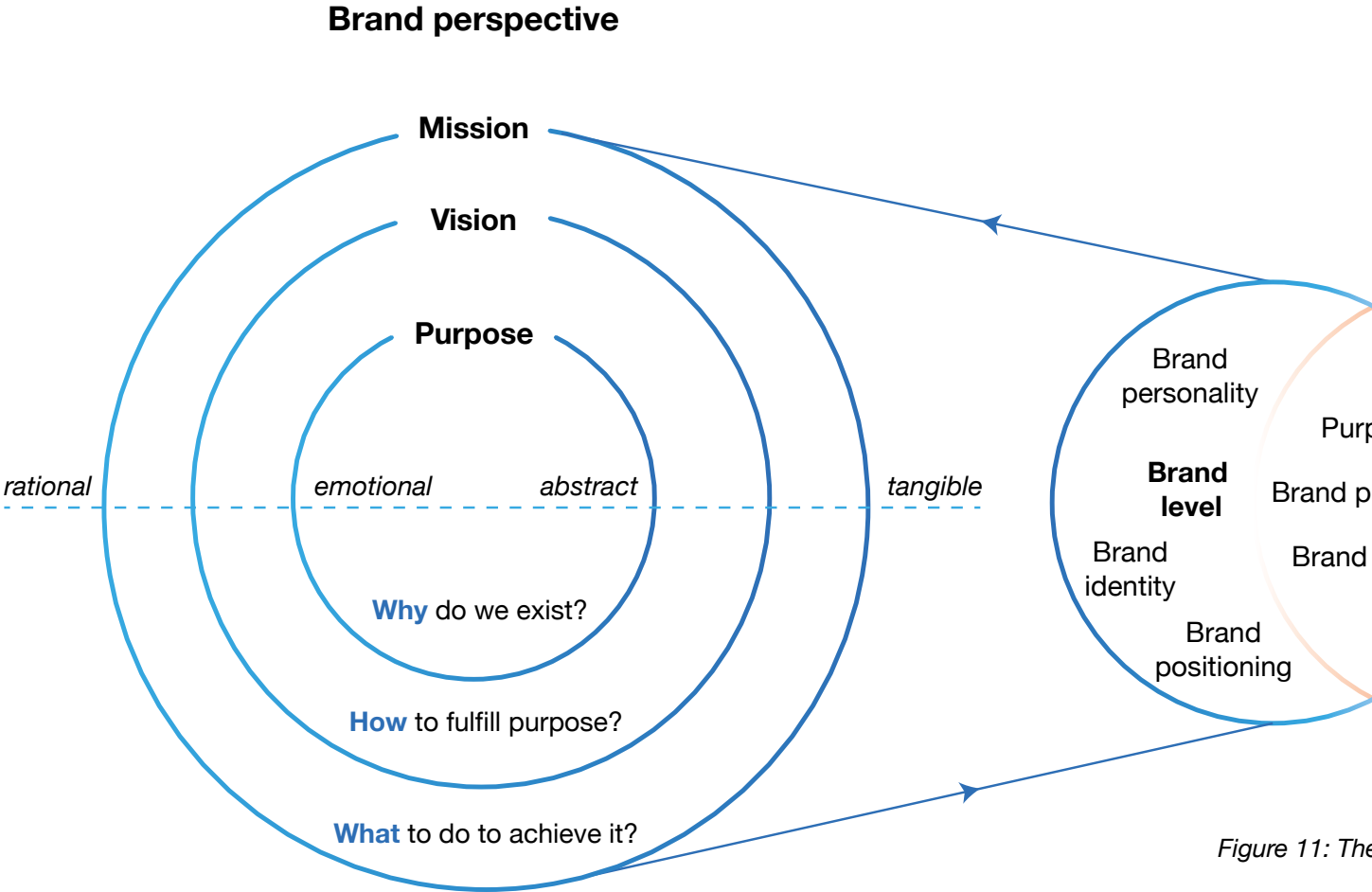


Figure 11: The

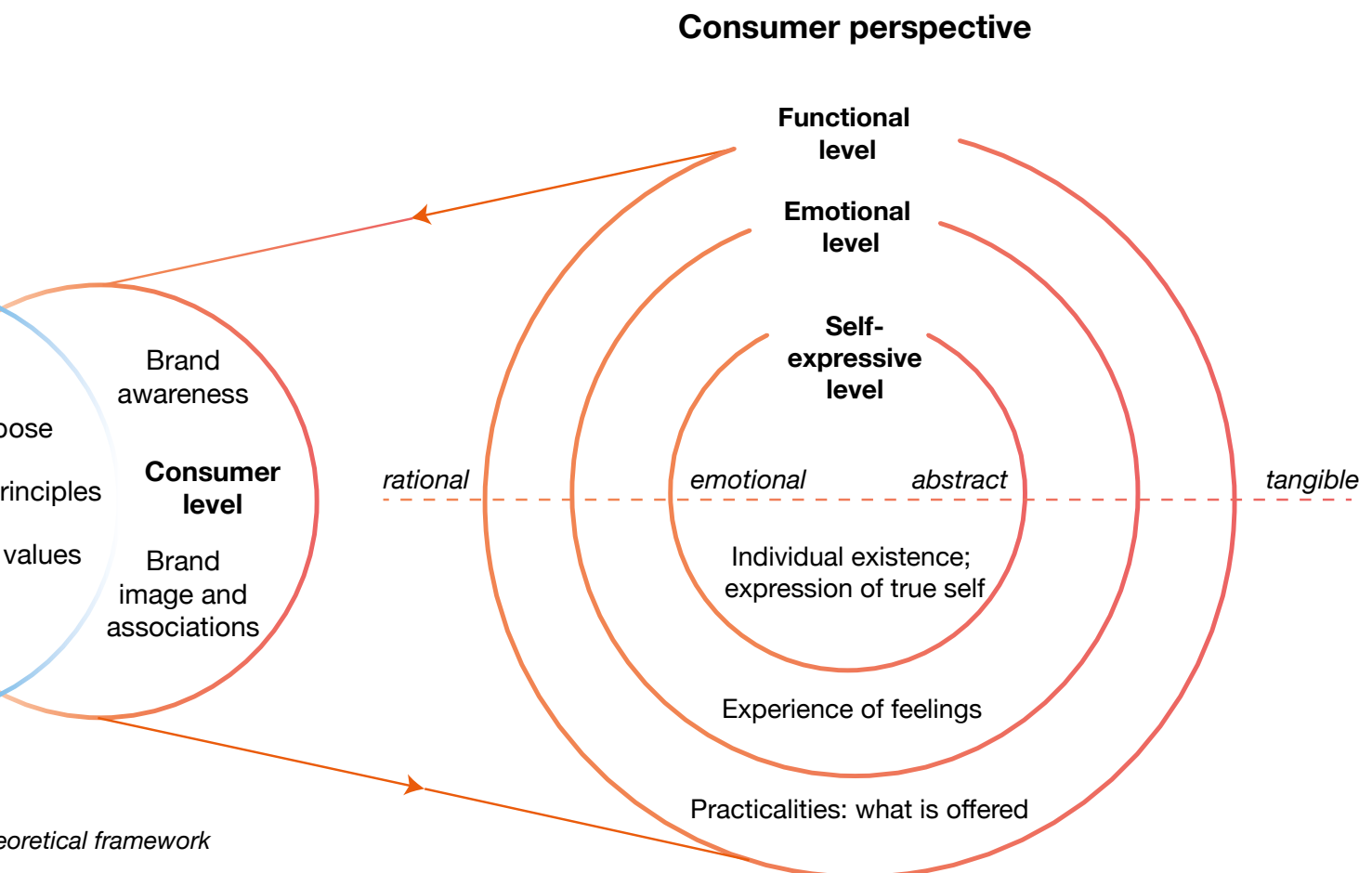
2.4. Conclusion

The literature review made it possible to create a theoretical framework. Important differences between relevant aspects for brand revitalization have been established and described below.

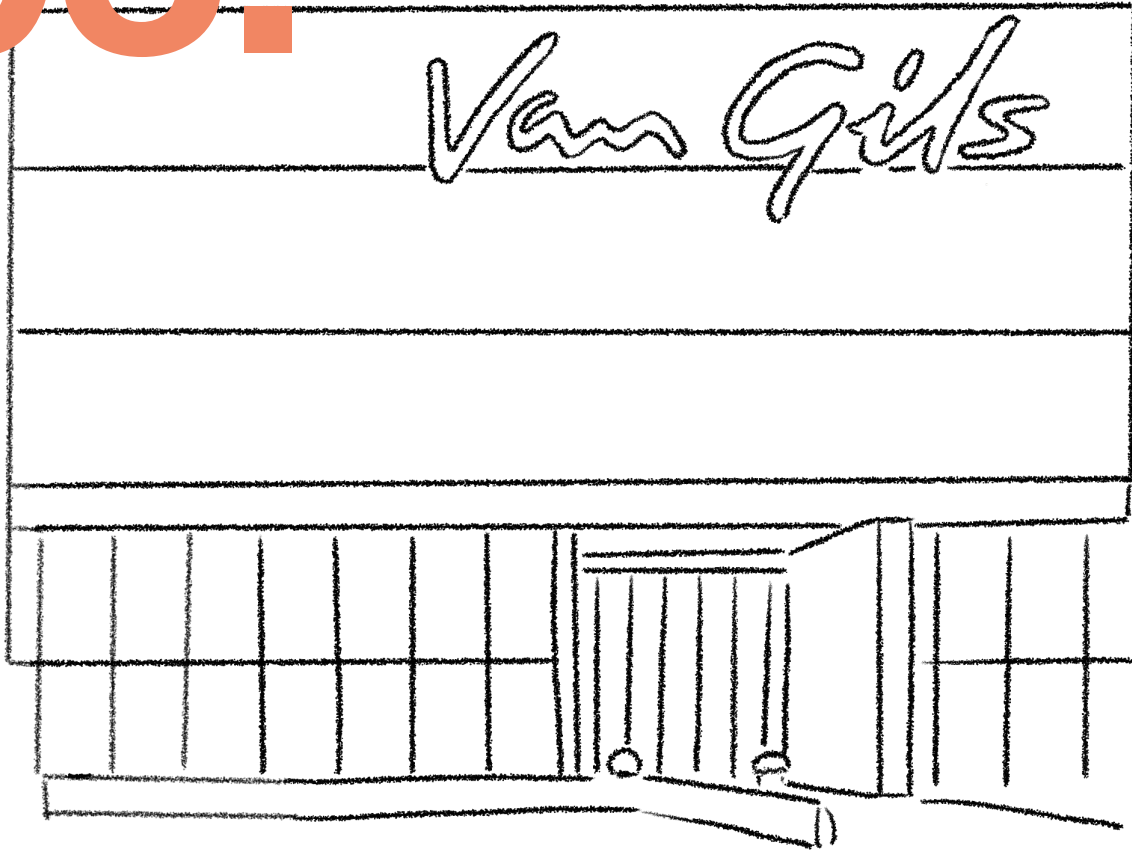
A difference is made between brand principles and brand values. Brand principles are considered as values that the brand or organization needs to have. Brand values can be seen as means of distinguishing the brand from others.

The distinctions made within the consumer level might be incredibly important for Van Gils, since fashion or clothing is considered a means of self-expression. This will be taken into account when doing consumer research, since it will be relevant to find the difference between emotional and functional needs.

As mentioned previously, it is important for brand revitalization to gain an understanding of the current situation of the brand as well as creating a new purpose that provides direction for Van Gils in order to reach out to a different target group. Aspects that will be taken into account are the image and associations that loyal and potential customers have of Van Gils, how to position the brand in the future that leads to an increase in top-of-mind awareness for the new target group and the brand personality.



03.



INTERNAL ANALYSIS

This chapter contains the internal analysis of the company. The aim of the analysis is twofold: on the one hand, to gain a thorough understanding of the company. On the other hand, to provide possibilities to define the brand principles and brand values as well as the purpose, vision and mission statements.

IN THIS CHAPTER

**3.1. Insights from interviews, desk research
and brandstore visits**

3.2. Insights from creative session

3.3. Conclusion

3.1. Insights from interviews, desk research and brandstore visits

This subchapter presents the insights gathered from different types of research. The internal analysis consists of several types of research: desk research, in-depth interviews, a visit to the brandstores in Amstelveen and Amsterdam and a creative session. In order to define brand principles, values and the purpose, vision and mission statements, a creative session has taken place.

Aim

The goal of the interviews, desk research and brandstore visits is to gain a thorough understanding of the organization.

Method

Initial research is done through desk research and in-depth interviews. These have been conducted with seven people internally from different departments (see Appendix C. for interview guide).

3.1.1. Results from interviews and desk research

Way of working

Traditional menswear brands are used to producing and offering collections twice a year. A small shift can be seen with brands like Van Gils introducing small capsule collections throughout the year. However, the traditional way of working means that, due to the current market and demand changing so rapidly, Van Gils cannot react accordingly. There is a lead time of six months, which makes it impossible for a menswear brand to adapt to changes quickly. Compared to womenswear brands, who are offering collections 12 times a year, response time is low.

“

Honestly? The passion is not there. At my previous job everybody lived for their work, here people work to live.

VAN GILS EMPLOYEE

Culture

Van Gils is striving to be an organization that works towards the same goal together and acts with passion. As of right now, these values are not at the desired level throughout the organization. People are working too much in silos and focusing on their own goals. The cohesion is missing and people are not reaching out to each other. Some have been in their current position for quite a while and are comfortable with what they are used to, which is of course difficult to change.

“

I have not been able to find the culture yet.

VAN GILS EMPLOYEE

USPs

To gain a better understanding of how Van Gils distinguishes itself from others, interviewees have been asked about qualities and unique selling points of the brand. Several aspects that have been mentioned include quality, price-quality ratio, size consistency, image and the fact that Van Gils does not have unique selling points.

“

I have not been able to find a unique selling point yet.

VAN GILS EMPLOYEE



Quality always comes first. It is something we can be proud of.

VAN GILS EMPLOYEE

Brand scan

The brand identity model by Kapferer (2012) has been used to gain an understanding of the current and desired situation of the brand (see Figure 12). The model has been used to interpret the insights gathered from interviews and observations and, thus, provide an overview of the differences between situations. The model could be used to provide initial direction for the creation of a new brand identity.

The model describes the following aspects:

Physique

The first element contains the basic attributes of the products of the brand.

Personality

The second element embraces the personality traits of the brand from a consumer's point of view.

Culture

The third element is the culture of the brand, for instance, culture within the company or country of origin.

Relationship

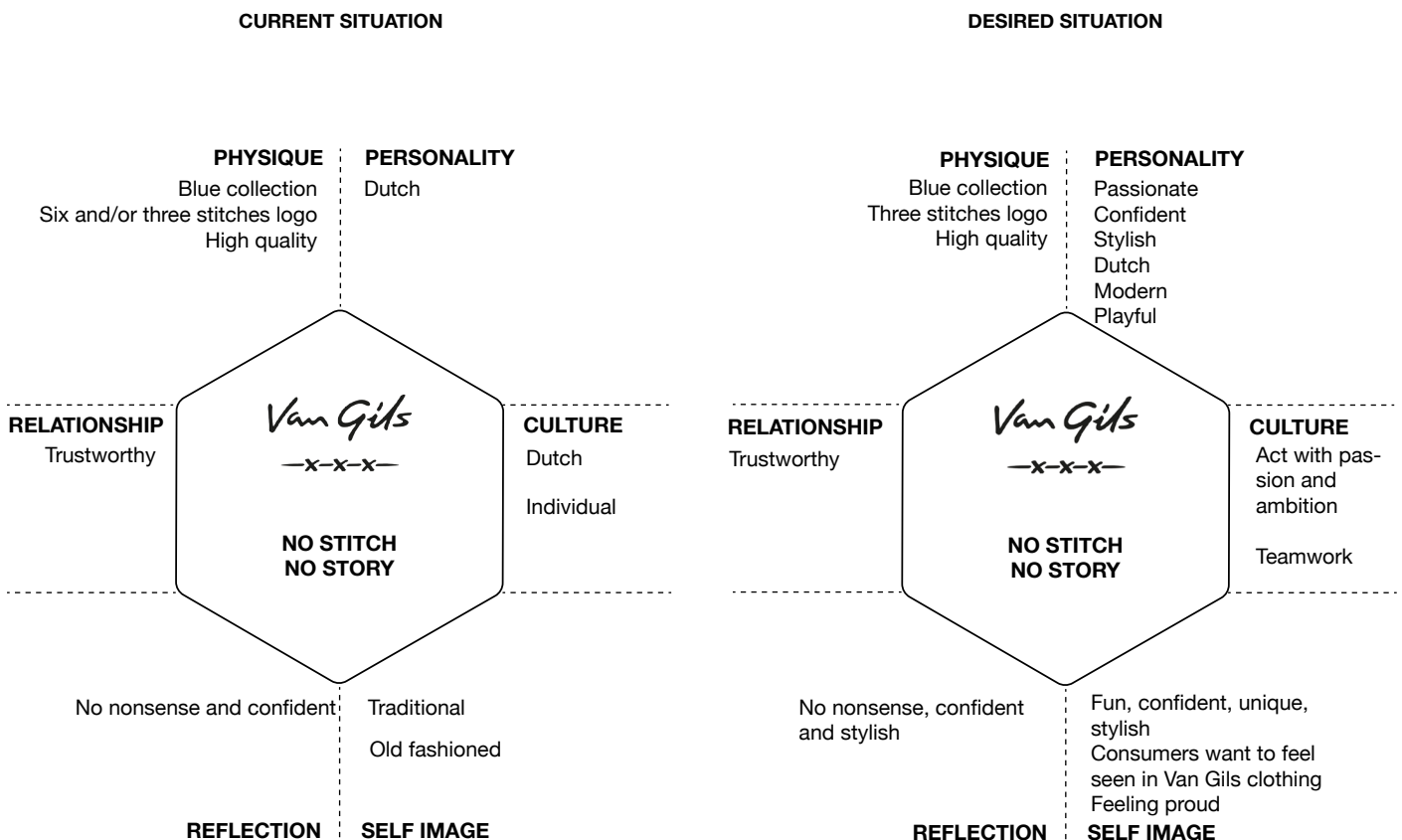
The fourth element is the development of establishing a certain relationship between brand and consumer.

Reflection

The fifth element entails that the brand should reflect the personality and identity of the target group.

Self-image

The sixth element describes the perception of consumers of themselves when in touch with the brand.



Kapferer (2012)

Figure 12: Brand identity model



'NO STITCH NO STORY' is a statement often used in different means of communication. It has a double meaning to it. In literal sense it is about the stitches of a tailor. On an emotional level it is about living your life and collecting stitches along the way, since life does not always go according to plan. It is about celebrating both good and disappointing moments in life, on both personal and professional level.

As can be seen in Figure 12, the biggest changes are visible in the personality, culture and self-image. The desired personality is confident, modern and playful. It is about not taking life too seriously, yet also being passionate and confident in ways of working. A change in the prevailing individual culture is needed towards a culture in which people act with passion and ambition as well as working together. The self-image is mostly about potential customers seeing a shift in perceiving the brand as 'traditional' and 'old-fashioned' as one that is fun and stylish and makes them proud to be wearing Van Gils, appreciating the quality and the playful twist that is consistently present in the collections.

3.1.2. Results from brandstore visits

A part of the internal analysis consists of visiting the brand stores to get in touch with both the brandstore manager, who is the bridge between consumers and HQ, and consumers who are visiting the store. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances (COVID-19), it was not possible to visit the four different brandstores in the Netherlands and talk to consumers. There were no visitors during my visits to the brandstores in Amstelveen and Amsterdam.

It has been mentioned multiple times, during the interviews, that each and every store has a different look and feel. During the visits to the stores in Amstelveen and Amsterdam, those differences could not be more emphasized. The store in Amstelveen comes across as 'traditional' and 'old-fashioned' due to, for example, using light wood (see pictures below). Whereas the store in Amsterdam comes across as modern by using different kinds of materials and creating an industrial 'look and feel' (see pictures below).



3.2. Insights from creative session

This subchapter presents the results gathered from a creative session held with the management team of Van Gils.

Aim

The aim of the creative session is twofold: on the one hand it is used to define brand principles and brand values. On the other hand, the initial steps towards defining purpose, vision and mission statements are taken. Four people, employees of Van Gils, participated in the session.

Method

Before this session, the participants have been asked to fill in a sensitizing booklet (see Appendix D.) to prepare for this session. The first part of the booklet consists of brainwriting exercises. The participants were required to answer different questions by the use of keywords. The goal is to find keywords that appeal to the individual that might be considered a competence of Van Gils. By collecting the answers of the participants, clusters of these words (see Appendix E.) have been created and brand principles and brand values were identified.

The second part of the booklet consists of exercises that help establish keywords that will be used in a later stage when defining purpose, vision and mission statements. The IDEO Purpose Tool (IDEO, n.d.) has been used to get into a 'purpose-mindset' and challenges participants to think about future goals, and ultimately create a foundation that the brand can align on.

3.2.1. Results from the brainwriting exercises

The brand principles and brand values have been defined as a result of the brainwriting exercise.

Brand principles

Be transparent

Van Gils wants to be open about materials being used in collections and honest about operations. Instead of offering 30 different jackets, it might be interesting to offer 10 and tell the stories behind them, like where it is made, how it is made and by whom it is made.

Be sustainable

As it is becoming increasingly apparent that the fashion industry has a tremendous impact on the environment, sustainability is not a unique selling point, it is demanded. Van Gils can inspire other brands, especially formal brands, to create sustainable formal collections and be an influential force.

Quality first

Van Gils wants to stay true to its roots of craftsmanship and always offer quality products. The brand always wants to be known for its value for money or, in other words, price-quality ratio.

Brand values

Enable potential

Van Gils wants to challenge people to reach their own potential.

Enable confidence and desirability

Van Gils offers products in which men feel comfortable, elegant and stylish to provide a feeling of confidence and desirability.

Don't take life too seriously

Van Gils wants to be a brand that is associated with fun and no-nonsense. It always implements an aspect of playfulness.

Be consistent

Van Gils stays true to the roots of the brand and provides the ability for men to be true to themselves. It wants to be considered as trustworthy as to know what to expect from the brand. The brand constantly aims for the size-fit consistency.

Details matter

Van Gils cares greatly about details. Focusing on the small things in life and always implementing playful details in the products.

Dare to be different

Van Gils always tries to be different and a little bit out there.

3.2.2. Results from purpose exercises

The keywords that will be used during the creation of purpose, vision and mission statement have been defined as a result of the purpose exercises.

Interestingly, participants filled it in differently (see figure 13).

A: focus lies on enabling potential, be the best version of yourself, yet also celebrating life and making those fun moments count.

B: focus lies on freedom and being comfortable in your own skin.

C: focus lies on joy, especially due to the circumstances that we are currently living in (COVID-19, elaborated on in limitations),

it becomes clear that apparel is not considered as one of the necessities in life, at least not the segment that Van Gils is operating in. This results in wanting to have the ability to spark joy and kindle happiness.

After a discussion it became clear that the common thread throughout this exercise is that being comfortable in your own skin, having a feeling of freedom and feeling happy leads to enabling potential, feeling confident and getting the most out of yourself.

Therefore, the keywords that have been defined can be described as follows:

Enabling potential

Enabling potential embraces a 'winning or learning' mentality.

NO STITCH NO STORY grasps the essence and honesty of life being about gathering stitches and learning from these so you can be the best version of yourself.

Confidence

To enable potential, it is important to feel confident and comfortable in your own skin. The way you dress can help empower these feelings.

Fun

Incorporating a characteristic that is unique for the brand. Embracing that life is also about fun and not taking it too seriously all the time.

Lifestyle

Van Gils wants to become a lifestyle brand by offering both formal and (smart) casual wear that suits every occasion.

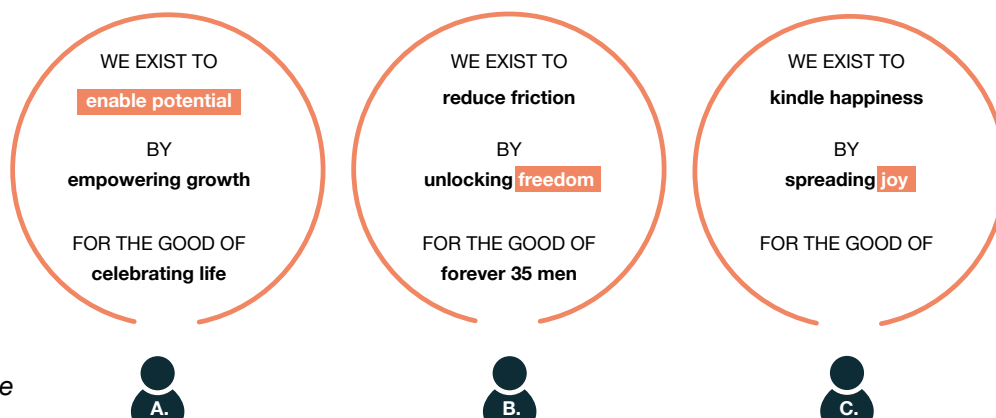


Figure 13:
Results exercise

3.3. Conclusion

The most important conclusions are drawn based on the conducted internal research and analysis. Additionally, a summary is provided of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (see figure 14).

There are multiple opportunities for Van Gils to improve the organization internally and create a desirable brand. With 40 people working at the headquarters, there are definitely possibilities for the organization to be more personal and reach the desired level of passion and devotion.

For consumers to be able to recognize the brand it is extremely important that one of the most common brand experiences, like a brandstore, have a similar look and feel, due to consistency over time being crucial for creating desirable brand associations, as mentioned in 2.2. Brand revitalization. Currently, it feels like the brandstores are for completely different brands. Additionally, the current look and feel might also not necessarily fit the desired brand identity, and thus makes it incredibly

difficult for consumers to identify with the brand. Due to the flagship store in Amsterdam being in a high-profile location, it makes sense to have a desire to stand out, however, it is still necessary to incorporate design elements in the brick-and-mortar store that fits the identity. Finally, keywords have been decided on to create purpose, vision and mission statements that will help provide direction for both the brand and organization.

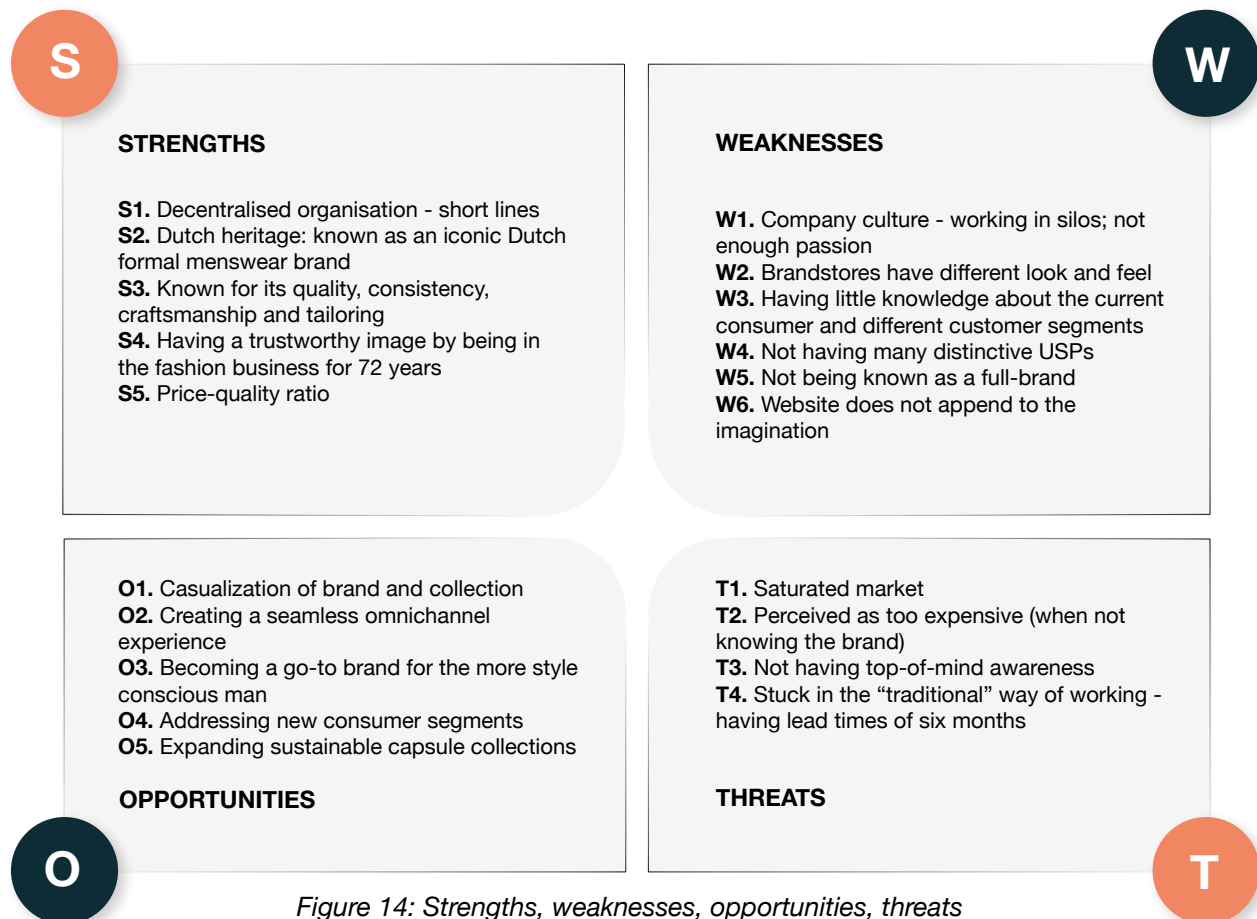
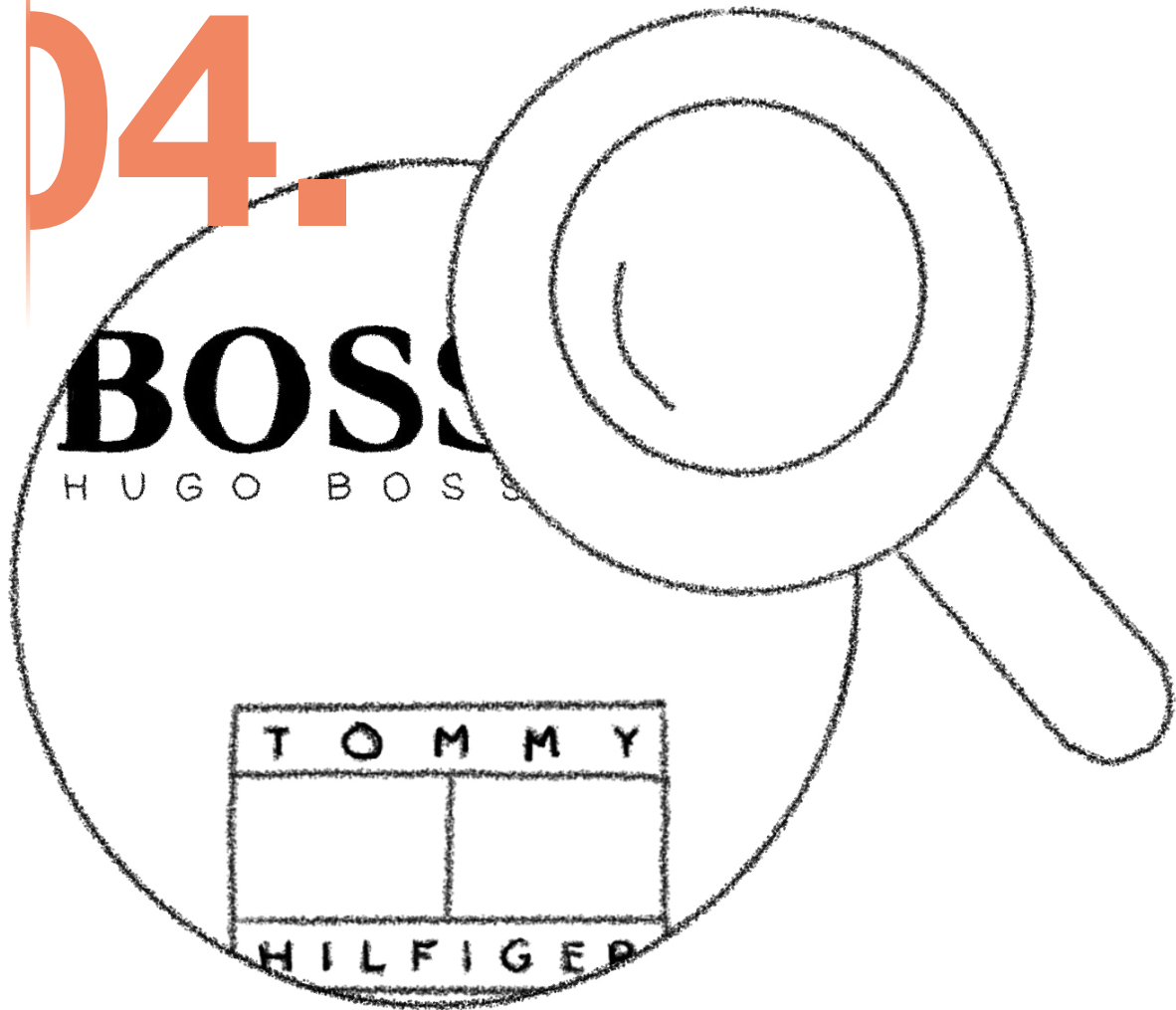


Figure 14: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats

04.



EXTERNAL ANALYSIS

The chapter contains the external analysis in order to gain an understanding of the fashion industry, like certain trends and what competitors are doing. Two case studies have been conducted to examine by what means other brands have revitalized or rejuvenated their brand.

IN THIS CHAPTER

4.1. Trend analysis

4.2. Competitor analysis

4.3. Case studies

4.4. Conclusion

4.1. Trend analysis

This subchapter presents a trendsmap and most relevant trends for Van Gils.

The trend analysis is based on desk research and expert interviews (see Appendix F. for interview guide). Insights are gathered from industry trend reports like ‘State of Fashion’, ‘Retail richting 2030’, and individual articles. These reports have been chosen based on their relevance towards the industry and are considered important as of this moment.

Expert interviews
 Topic: developments in the fashion industry

- Participants*
- Fashion agent womenswear
 - Branch specialist fashion INretail
 - Global brand strategist Tommy Hilfiger

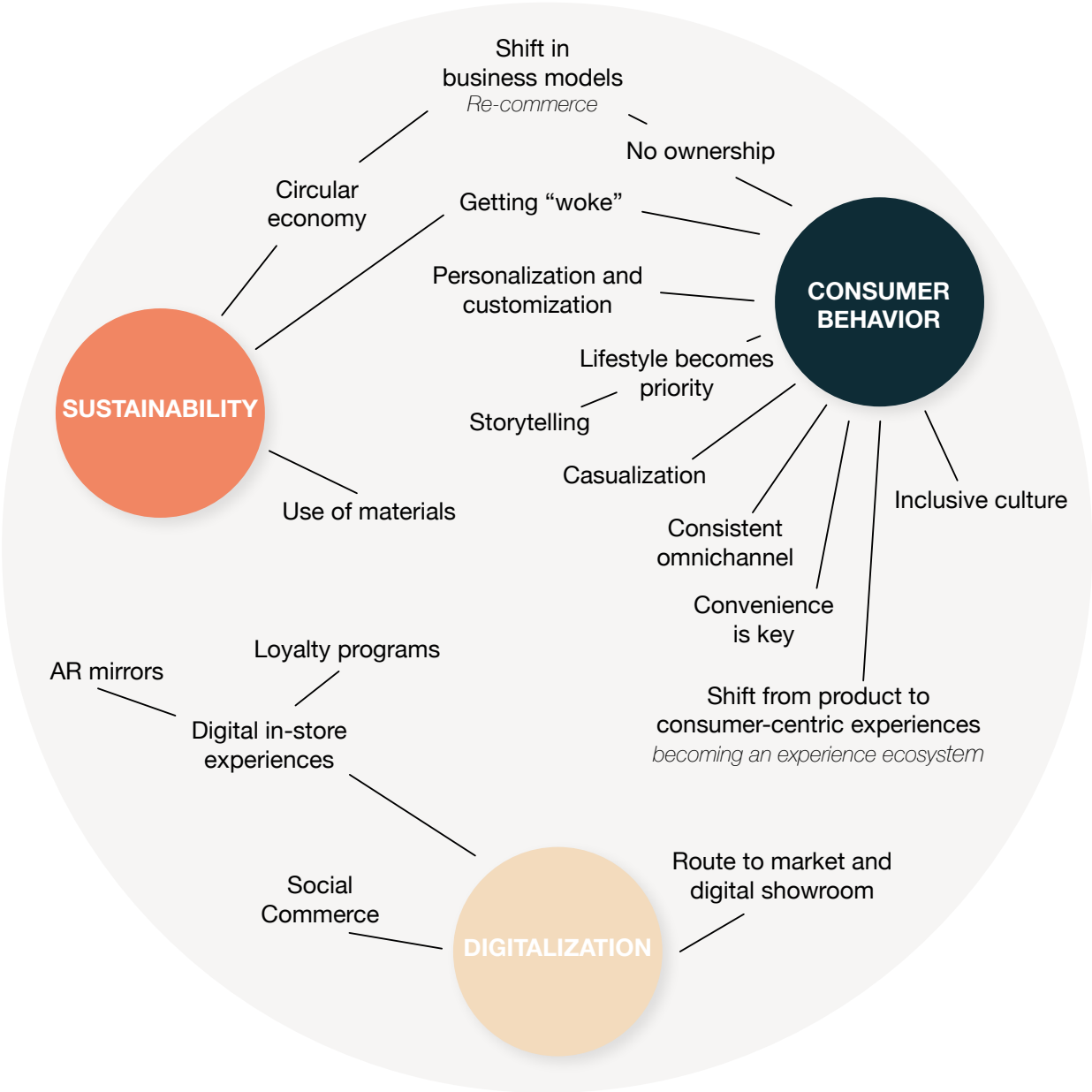


Figure 15: Trendsmap

To ensure a complete overview of trends, the DEPEST-method is used (see Appendix G.1.). Subsequently, overarching themes have been created, which are sustainability, consumer behavior and digitalization. A trendsmap has been created to portray the themes and shows how different trends might be connected to each other (see Figure 15). Explanations of the trends can be found in Appendix G.2.

Sustainability

With the fashion industry being one of the most polluting industries in the world, with producing 10% of all humanity's carbon emissions, being the second-largest consumer of the world's water supply and polluting the ocean with microplastics (McFall-Johnson, 2019), a demand in change can be seen (Amed et al., 2019).

Fast fashion is still thriving, but also opened the eyes of people in terms of the extent of which fashion companies really produce. Fashion companies are actually facilitating this always consuming mentality. The same can be said for the concept of "See Now, Buy Now" by Tommy Hilfiger, since it is about satisfying the consumers and their desire for new things. Thus, fashion companies have a responsibility of what they are putting out in the world (Tommy Hilfiger, interview 2020).

Consumer behavior

Consumer mentality, behavior and values have changed over the last couple of years, not only in the fashion industry. For instance, the shift towards no ownership and the always consuming mentality can also be seen in other industries. A difference can also be seen in defining different consumer segments in which it is not about age anymore.

According to INretail (interview, 2020) the interest in re-use, resale, recycle and rental is especially visible amongst a younger audience. This younger generation has a desirability for new outfits, however, these do not necessarily have to be newly bought. With the rise of so-called "fashion libraries", like Lena and Bij Priester in the Netherlands, it is much more about using and having access to multiple items instead of actually owning them, as what people have been used to.

Additionally, the role of consumers has shifted from one of passive observance to enabled dominance. They are no longer content with simply buying fashion products; exponential growth in the use of digital technologies has empowered them. They want to interact, belong, influence and be the brands from which they buy (Lay, 2018).



Fashion companies have a responsibility of what they are putting out there in the world.

**BRAND STRATEGIST
TOMMY HILFIGER**

Digitalization

Becoming a digitally-savvy brand can no longer be considered a separate business. It will increasingly be fundamental to organisations and the entire consumer-brand relationships (Lay, 2018). Digitization also introduces a new norm of selling, operations and insight generation (Amed et al., 2019).

Conclusion

Relevant trends for Van Gils have been selected (see Figure 16), based on necessity, for instance, sustainability, and trends that might become threats when not addressed accordingly, for example, casualization. These trends can be identified as follows:

Sustainability

Even though sustainable collections are still in the minority, apparel produced responsibly and sustainably will be the new normal in the fashion industry. Since the fashion industry is one of the most polluting industries in the world, there is a responsibility for fashion players to be aware of what they are putting out there.

Route to market and digital showroom

The fashion industry has changed customer expectations due to fast fashion retailers as well as high fashion womenswear brands. Menswear brands that uphold traditional operations that entails six months of lead time, need to find solutions that support efficiency in order to satisfy customer needs.

Transparency and getting woke

There is a desire for fashion to create more transparency in the supply chain in terms of where products are being fabricated, by whom they are fabricated and for who they are intended. Consumers connect to certain brands that are aligned with their values.

Lifestyle becomes priority

Currently, it is more important to look at people's attitudes towards fashion instead of it being age-related. Older people, for instance, are wearing sneakers and a comfortable sweater, whereas younger people might have the desire to look sophisticated and want to wear a suit. Additionally, people value experiences nowadays instead of prioritizing fashion.

Casualization

Increasingly more companies are abandoning their formal dress codes, which leads to consumers creating a desire for a relatively more casual appearance. It is especially relevant for a brand like Van Gils that is mostly perceived as a formal brand.

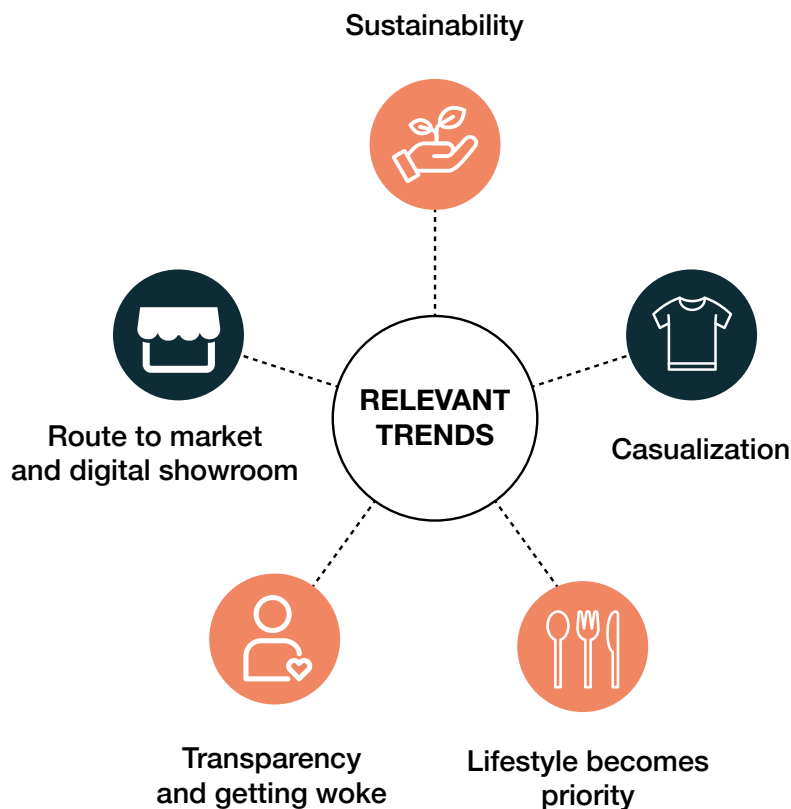


Figure 16: Relevant trends Van Gils

4.2. Competitor analysis

This subchapter showcases an overview of the competitive landscape of Van Gils and presents an opportunity to distinguish the brand from a brand image perspective.

To understand the competitive landscape of Van Gils, an overview of several different competitors is created in order to find out what others are doing in the market. Three levels of competitors are created (see Figure 17): direct competitors, secondary competitors, and indirect competitors (Intercom, 2017).

Competitors that have been considered as direct competitors are menswear brands focused on formal and smart-casual apparel, offering related products within the same price range. These are also brands that have been mentioned frequently during company interviews and consumer interviews (see Chapter 5).

Additionally, a distinction is made between brands who are considered full brands and those who are specialists. Being a full brand means offering a complete wardrobe ranging from socks and shoes to shirts and jackets. Specialists are brands that focus mostly on one product category, like MR MARVIS's core business is shorts, whereas Olymp's core business is shirts.

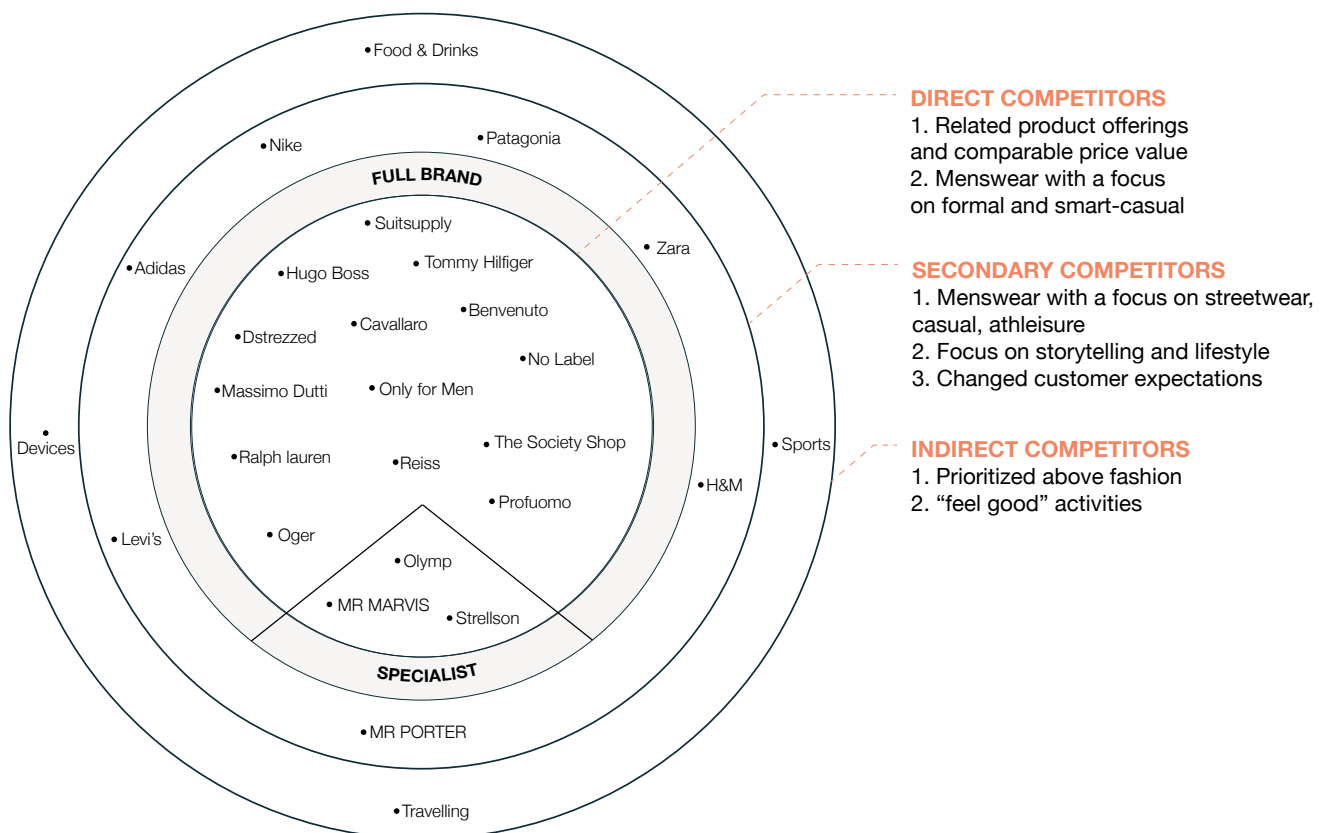


Figure 17: Competitor levels

The secondary competitors are brands that also offer menswear, but have a different focus, for example, streetwear, sports or athleisure. These brands also find storytelling important in which they communicate very clearly what they, for instance, stand for. Another aspect also taken into account is changes in customer expectations. A brand like Zara created a globalized need of having new apparel quite often with immediate access.

The indirect competitors reach out to the same audience, yet is about activities that people might prioritize over fashion, which consists of “feel-good” experiences like travelling.

Another distinction can be made between brands that have a core business of formal wear, like Oger and Suitsupply and brands with a focus on lifestyle apparel for different occasions, like Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger and Hugo Boss. Oger and Suitsupply are both Dutch brands, however, their positioning is immensely different from one another.

On the one hand, Suitsupply focuses on young urban professionals that are in need of their first suit, thus offering formal wear for an affordable price while still upholding certain quality standards. Additionally, the brand is very recognizable due to their bold and on-the-edge marketing. People either love it or hate it.

On the other hand, Oger, focuses on exclusivity and offering luxurious apparel. However, there is not a Dutch suit brand available in between, for those who cannot identify with the image of Suitsupply, might find Oger too expensive or need a suit for a special occasion. Van Gils, as a formal brand, could position itself in between, for those who bought their first suit as Suitsupply, but want their second suit to be a little bit different as well as high-quality, and also for a lower price than Oger (see Figure 18).

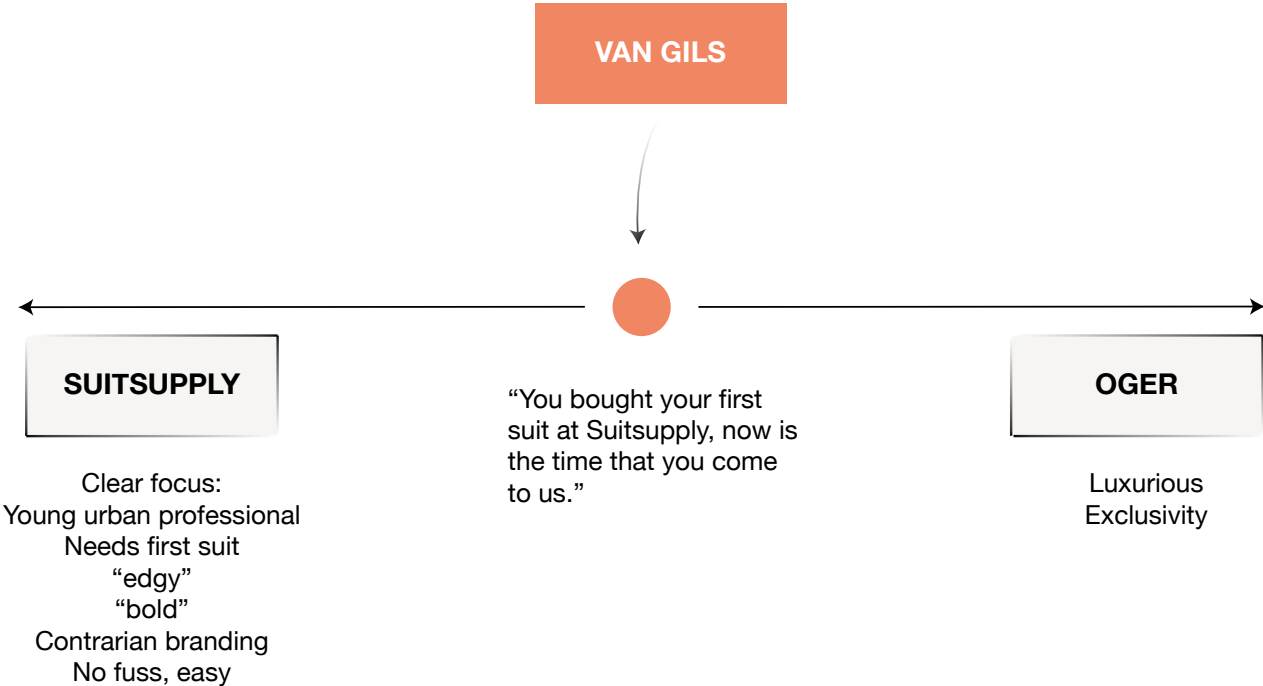


Figure 18: Distinction Dutch formal brands

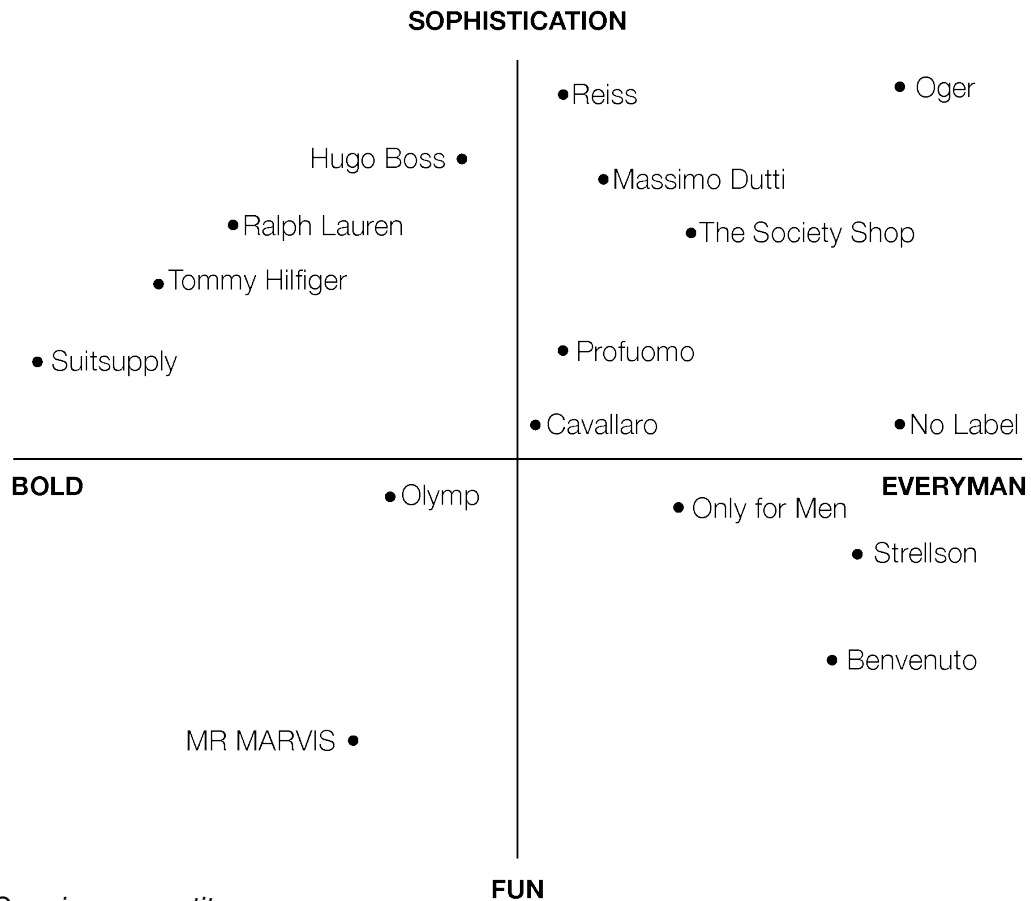


Figure 19: Overview competitor brand images

Due to the fashion industry being saturated or even overly saturated, the opportunity for Van Gils to distinguish the brand from competitors will most likely not be in product offering. Although the brand is well known for its high-quality, other brands will acclaim to achieve this as well. Therefore, a point of difference will be brand image. The brand archetypes by Mark and Pearson (2001) have been used to gain a better understanding of how competitors position themselves (see Appendix H).

Figure 19 presents an overview of the perception of brands' images as these pose an opportunity for Van Gils to present the brand differently. As can be seen brands mostly represent themselves as sophisticated. Brands like Reiss or Hugo Boss have a significant focus on portraying success and seriousness. On the other hand, there are a couple of brands who focus on having a fun image or at least not necessarily being too serious, like MR MARVIS. Furthermore, most brands fall in the 'everyman'-category. This means brands mostly want to be discreet, blend in and make sure there is a feeling of belonging (Mark & Pearson, 2001). On the other hand, there are brands who are very confident like Suitsupply and Tommy Hilfiger who have a unique and recognizable image and are very much paving their own way.

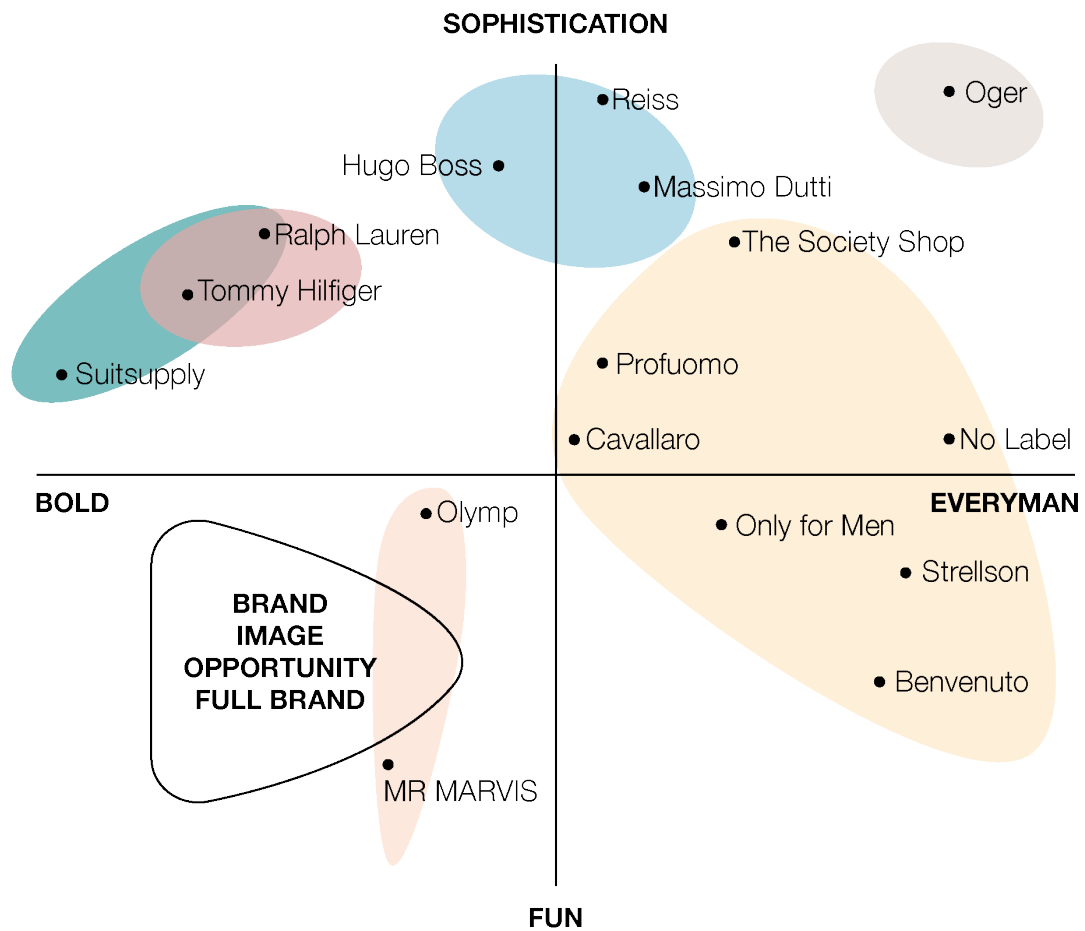


Figure 20: Competitor matrix

Conclusion

As is noticeable in Figure 20, opportunities for Van Gils arise in the 'BOLD-FUN'-quadrant. As mentioned previously, most brands focus on creating a sophisticated brand image. Whereas only specialist brands, at least in this case, focus on being perceived as 'fun'. Posing as 'fun' could definitely be an opportunity for Van Gils, since it is a full brand compared to a specialist. Additionally, it fits their product portfolio, since the brand often incorporates fun details and twists in their garments.

4.3. Case studies

Two case studies have been conducted to identify possible solutions for revitalizing or rejuvenating a brand as well as addressing a younger target group.

The case studies have been carried out through desk research and qualitative research, an interview with the marketing director of Fred de la Bretoniere and Shabbies (see Appendix I. for interview guide).

The cases were selected due to successfully reaching out to another target group by introducing different designs.

Case study 1: Shabbies

Interview Marketing Director Fred de la Bretoniere and Shabbies

Fred de la Bretoniere, founded in 1970, is a Dutch shoe and bag brand that embraces the power of each individual woman and wants to bring this unique individuality forward (Fred de la Bretoniere, n.d.). The shoes are always designed to fit a casual elegant look, be feminine, but not too feminine and always have a twist (see Example 1).

At some point, Fred de la Bretonière designed a boot that was much tougher and bolder compared to the elegance of previous designs. It did not fit the

current brand. This led to the introduction of the new brand, called Shabbies, in 2005.

Introducing another label meant reaching out to a different kind of woman. Fred de la Bretoniere attracts women that can best be described as a bit more elegant, whereas Shabbies appeals to women that might be considered a bit more tough or bold (see Example 2). The brands live next to each other perfectly, due to the positioning of them being sisters of one another. This positioning works due to the fact that it is a clear story towards consumers and it is relatively easy to identify with.

“

They have the same founding father, they share the same DNA, but they are different, they are sisters.

MARKETING DIRECTOR


FRED DE LA
BRETONIERE



Example 1: Fred de la Bretoniere

SHABBIES
AMSTERDAM



Example 2: Shabbies

Case study 2: Floris van Bommel

Desk research

Van Bommel, founded in 1734, is a Dutch brand that is renowned for its shoes as well as still being a family business for almost nine generations. The brand owns the only remaining shoe factory in the Netherlands that still produces shoes for its customers (Alisa, 2020).

During the nineties, Van Bommel started to create designs that had a youthful appearance compared to the 'traditional' dress shoe the brand has been known for (see Example 3). In 1997, a new label, called Floris van Bommel, has been created to reach out to a younger target group (see Example 4). Currently, most people are more familiar with Floris van Bommel compared to Van Bommel. More than half of the shoes that the brand sells are from this label. Additionally, in Germany, the brand only sells Floris van Bommel (7DTV, 2018).

The brand also introduced a premium collection (see Example 5). The design lab of Floris van Bommel offering this collection provides the freedom for the designers to test out ideas that might be considered too bold or daring for the regular collections (Floris van Bommel, n.d.)

van Bommel
MOERGESTEL
HOLLAND



Example 3: van Bommel

Floris van Bommel®



Example 4: Floris van Bommel



Example 5: Premium collection
Floris van Bommel

Conclusion

These case studies illustrate that brands introduced either a separate label or sub label to reach out to a different or younger target group, which is an interesting opportunity for Van Gils to look into. Especially, since the brand wants to stay true to its existing core customer base, while also reaching out to a new younger audience.

4.4. Conclusion

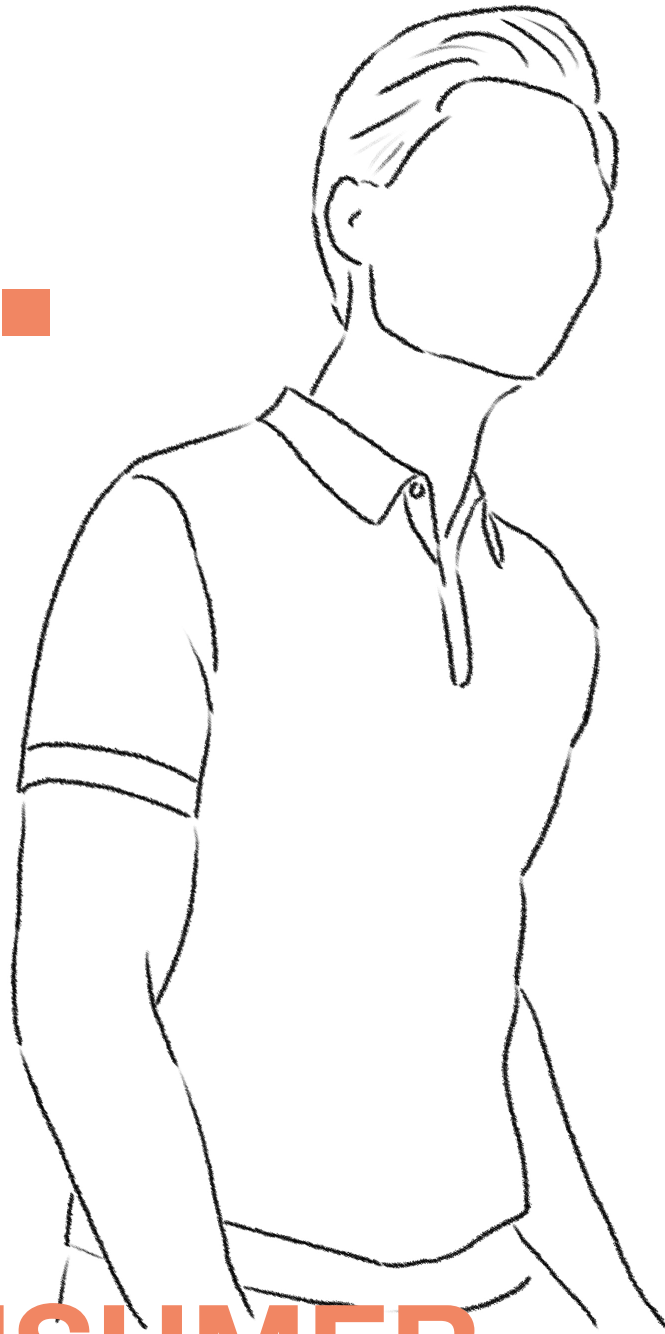
This subchapter provides an answer to one of the formulated sub-questions (Chapter 1.3.): “How can Van Gils gain a competitive advantage in the highly saturated and competitive landscape of menswear?”.

Looking at the market and acknowledging what competitors are doing, poses an opportunity for Van Gils to position the brand from a brand image point of view. As previously mentioned, due to the fashion industry being quite saturated or even overly saturated, it might be difficult to distinguish the brand from others. Especially, when Van Gils puts an emphasis on quality as the brand’s most important unique selling point, as is often mentioned during company interviews (see Chapter 3.1.1.). Other brands will claim this as well. Positioning the brand as ‘fun’ and not taking life too seriously differs from others, especially full brands, and connects to the roots of Van Gils.

Additionally, relevant trends have been chosen for Van Gils. Especially those that are about casualization and embracing lifestyle that influence brands with a focus on formal wear greatly and might pose a threat when not responding accordingly. Furthermore, it is not an option anymore to dismiss subjects like sustainability and transparency. People expect brands to take action into their own hands, produce more sustainably and be more open about operations.

Finally, the case studies illustrate the possibility for Van Gils to introduce another label to reach out to a younger audience while maintaining the already existing brand that focuses on loyal customers that still have a need for formal wear.

05.



CONSUMER RESEARCH

This chapter contains the aim, method and results of the conducted consumer research. Based on the insights gathered from research, several consumer segments have been defined.

IN THIS CHAPTER

5.1. Research results

5.2. Consumer segmentation

5.3. Associations Van Gils

5.4. Conclusion

5.1. Research results

This subchapter presents the results from the conducted interviews and focus group.

Aim

The aim of the consumer research is to gain insights in both loyal and potential customers and their personal values and needs. The goal is to create different customer segments and find a segment that Van Gils can target.

Method

Qualitative research has been conducted through seven in-depth interviews and a focus group session with four participants. Interviewees have been asked to fill in a booklet beforehand (see Appendix J.1.), in order to prepare them for the interview and provide the possibility to have an in-depth personalized discussion (See Appendix J.2. for interview guide).

Requirements of the participants consisted of being in the age group 25 - 40 years, being employed and having a certain awareness of appearance, styling and fashion (i.e. consider themselves as style- or fashion conscious, this has been acknowledged beforehand).

The results from the conducted interviews and focus group have been gathered, transcribed (see Appendix J.3.) and analyzed. The results have been categorized into functional needs and emotional needs, personal values and brand values, associations loyal customers have of Van Gils and associations potential customers have of Van Gils (See Figure 22), and two other remarkable outcomes which will be described in this chapter.



Fashion for me is a way to express my identity.

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW

Functional needs

- > Clean and neat designs
- > Originality and distinction
- > Sustainability (and transparency)
- > Durability
- > Quality
- > Value for money
- > Consistency
- > Be comfortable
- > Ability to mix and match

Functional needs

Functional needs are the needs that customers are initially drawn to. These are mostly product attributes, for example, quality of garments.

Clean and neat

No big texts or logos

Originality and distinction

Owning pieces that have a twist and are a bit different

Sustainability (and transparency)

Sustainability is an aspect that is considered as a “nice to have”, due to the subject getting increasingly more important in the fashion industry, people create a certain awareness and expect brands to take this into account. However, since the sustainable collections are still seen as too limited it is not a decisive factor when purchasing new apparel. It does play a crucial role when a certain brand has been associated with negative influences,

for instance, not contributing to help solve environmental issues or child labor. Participants have mentioned that they stay clear from brands when these kinds of issues come to light.

Durability

Participants are willing to invest in pieces that are known for their longevity and will last them for more than one season.

Quality

The desire for durability is accompanied by the need for quality. Pieces that will last longer as well as being able to see it as a quality piece.

Value for money

Even though quality is deemed as important, it needs to be regarded as being in proportion to the price that needs to be paid.

Consistency

Consistency is twofold: on the one hand, it entails knowing what to expect from a brand, for instance, newly introduced collections are not drastically different from previous collections, thus being able to match apparel purchased previously with the garments bought from the new collection. On the other hand, it consists of a brand being known for its size consistency, as such creates a form of loyalty. Participants said they are more likely to return to a brand when knowing it will always be the right fit, which is also connected to convenience.

Be comfortable

Being comfortable in apparel leads to having a certain look and image that participants want to express, for instance, feeling comfortable in certain pieces of apparel leads to feeling confident and therefore expressing it.

Ability to mix and match

It should be possible when buying a piece of apparel that it will fit other, previously bought, outfits as well. Therefore, creating a versatile wardrobe.

Emotional needs

Emotional needs are needs that customers are generally unaware of. These are the latent needs that help create brand loyalty.

Ability to self-express

The participants expressed that they use clothing or fashion as a means to present their identity, or personality traits and provide the ability to assess someone else based on their apparel. For instance, someone putting effort into his appearance, might also put greater effort in professional accomplishments.

Ability to be authentic, stay true to self and thus distinguish yourself from others

Ability to stay true to oneself. Fashion or clothing provides the ability to express how someone wants to come across, it gives someone the opportunity to stay true to oneself as well as giving others the freedom of being themselves. It is a means to distinguish yourself from others.

Be (self) conscious

Being conscious entails being self-aware and having awareness of how someone might be perceived by others. As mentioned before, this is also connected to putting energy in yourself, which might come across as also putting effort in other aspects both in personal and professional situations.

Emotional needs

- > Ability to self-express
- > Ability to be authentic, stay true to self and thus distinguish yourself from others
- > Be (self) conscious

Personal values

Personal values are values that people find important in life, in themselves and what they are looking for in others.

Ambition

Setting certain goals for yourself on both professional and personal level. This also entails success and happiness.

Trustworthy

Knowing what to expect from others and what others can expect from you. It also entails loyalty.

Confidence

Coming across as confident, especially in professional situations is perceived as highly important.

Brand values

Brand values are values that people find important when purchasing from certain brands.

Craftsmanship

The ability to see the amount of effort that is put into creating and designing new pieces.

As can be seen, the needs and values are highly connected to each other as certain elements are a recurring theme, for instance, quality, comfort, authenticity and confidence.

Two other remarkable insights that have been found are:

Two means of expressing

It has been found that participants definitely have different means of expression when being in different social circumstances or situations. They dress differently when, for example, going to work or having drinks with friends. When, for instance, meeting a client, it is important to come across as confident and professional in order to be taken seriously. Whereas meeting up with friends they want to come across as easy-going, relaxed and approachable.

Personal values

- > Ambition
- > Trustworthy
- > Confidence
- > Authenticity

Brand values

- > Quality
- > Comfortable
- > Authenticity
- > Confidence
- > Sustainability
- > Craftsmanship

Not trend sensitive

The participants considered themselves as having their own style, and therefore, not being trend sensitive. They want to be their own person and distinguish themselves from others by staying close to their own means of expressing.

5.2. Consumer segmentation

The insights gathered from the interviews and focus group made it possible to create six different consumer segments.

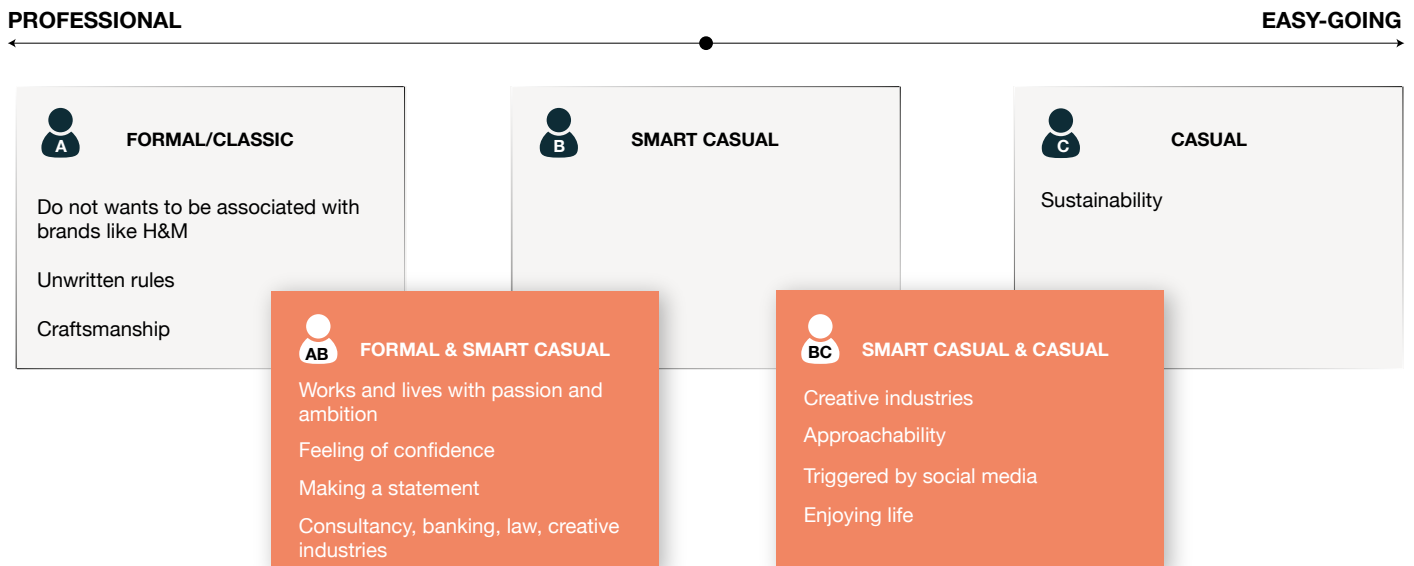


Figure 21: Consumer segments

The insights from the interviews and focus group made it possible to create five different consumer segments (see Figure 21). The functional needs, emotional needs, personal values and brand values are based on similarities, the segmentation is based on differences. The groups are divided in means of appearance (i.e. style of clothing), means of perception and what kind of industry they work in.

On the left side of the spectrum, participants identifying with, for instance, 'A. Formal', want to come across as professional and be taken seriously, because they think that having a certain level of awareness of how you seem to express yourself, and thus put energy into creating this image you might be perceived as someone you can build on or work with. It entails having a certain level of confidence. Other aspects that define them are that these men know very well what they want, either in life, work or how to dress.

Additionally, they do not want to be associated with brands like H&M, since it is meant for the masses and therefore does not have the ability to distinguish yourself from others.

Whereas the right side of the spectrum, for instance, participants identifying with 'C. Casual' want to come across as easy-going and being perceived as incredibly approachable. Additional aspects that define these groups are having a focus on enjoying life.

Interestingly, it has been found that it is most common that one of the participants either fits best in between, thus identifying with both 'A. Formal' AND 'B. Smart Casual' or with both 'B. Smart Casual' AND 'C. Casual'. This means that participants have 'two means of expressing' and dress differently for different occasions and therefore want to come across as, for example, professional during a meeting and casual or easy-going when having drinks with friends.

5.3. Associations Van Gils

This subchapter presents the associations both loyal and potential customers have of Van Gils.

During the interviews questions have been asked to gain insights in what kind of aspects participants associate with Van Gils (see Figure 22).



Van Gils stands for high quality.
It is a brand without fuss.
I like that.

LOYAL VAN GILS CUSTOMER

The distinction has been made between loyal customers, people who have (mostly) positive associations with the brand, and potential customers, a younger audience (men between 25-35 years old) who is currently not buying from the brand due to (mostly) negative associations.

To summarize and finalize the insights, a couple of aspects stand out.

Loyal customers

Loyal customers are customers who have (mostly) positive associations with the brand.

- > No nonsense business/formal brand
- > Known for its quality pieces
- > It is a bit playful
- > Known for its suits
- > Value for money
- > Not a clear image of the Van Gils man

Firstly, Van Gils is still mostly known for its suits. Secondly, participants find that the brand does not have a focus. They feel like the brand went into multiple different directions over the years and is still considered to be searching for their current direction. Thirdly, the brand is definitely known for its quality, both with loyal and potential customers. Fourthly, the brand is definitely not top-of-mind and is seen as dull and middle of the pack, it does not stand out. Fifthly, there is not a clear image of the Van Gils man compared to, for instance, the Hugo Boss man or Suitsupply man. Finally, people do like that it is a Dutch brand.



When I think of Van Gils, I think
of middle-aged men.

POTENTIAL VAN GILS CUSTOMER

Potential customers

Potential customers are customers who are currently not buying from the brand due to (mostly) negative associations.

- > Middle aged men (perfume aftershave)
- > Successful and ambitious men who are aware of their appearance
- > Known for its quality pieces
- > Look and appeal not addressed towards younger audience
- > Not young enough, but also not formal enough for special occasions
- > Not a clear image of the Van Gils man

Figure 22: Associations Van Gils

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter provides answers to the following sub-questions: “What are the needs and values of a younger target group?”, and “What do loyal and potential customers associate Van Gils with?”.

The emotional and functional needs have been determined, it has been found what participants value in both life and brands, and brand associations have been described.

Due to Van Gils still mostly being known for its suits, the brand is often associated with being relatively formal, and therefore, being mostly correlated with group ‘A. Formal’. In consideration of most participants belonging to a segment that has two means of expressing, it will be interesting to examine how to move the brand from being perceived as ‘A. Formal’ to ‘AB. Formal & Smart Casual’ (see Figure 23), a group that has the need to dress both formal and smart casual.

With most of the needs, especially functional needs, being covered by Van Gils, it yet again, comes back to the brand image and identity. Generally speaking, people do not recognize Van Gils, since there is not a clear image of a typical Van Gils man (compared to Hugo Boss or Suitsupply) nor identify with the image that is currently existing in their minds. In order to reach out to a younger audience, it is extremely important to provide a clear direction that leads to a clear brand image and creating a brand identity that one might be able to identify with.

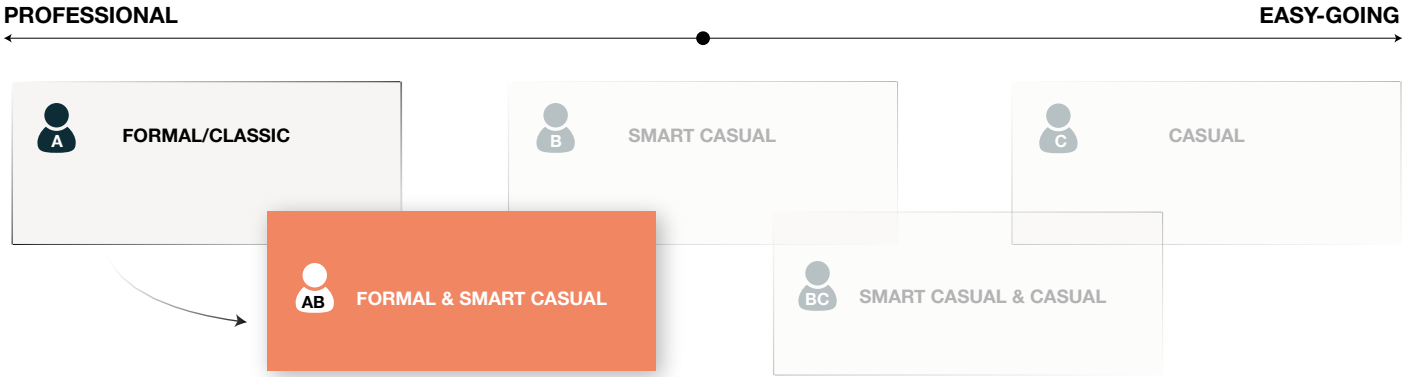


Figure 23: Future consumer focus

06.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

This chapter contains the strategic decisions that have been made based on the insights gathered during the aforementioned analyses.

IN THIS CHAPTER

6.1. Main insights

6.2. Purpose, vision and mission

6.3. Strategic decisions

6.4. Brand repositioning or sub-brand

6.5. Two-brand strategy

6.6. Conclusion

6.1. Main insights

A summary of the main insights from different analyses is presented below.

INTERNAL ANALYSIS

Desired culture: act with passion and ambition, act in unity

USPs: quality, Dutch signature/heritage, not having many distinctive ones

Casualization of brand is an opportunity

Brand principles have been defined

Brand values have been defined

Keywords for purpose, vision, mission: confidence, fun, lifestyle, enabling potential, guiding men

EXTERNAL ANALYSIS

Relevant trends have been selected: e.g. casualization, lifestyle, transparency and getting woke

Case studies:
Another label or sublabel to reach a different target group

Aspects that distinguish Van Gils from competitors have not yet been found

CONSUMER RESEARCH

Functional needs have been defined

Emotional needs have been defined

Personal and brand values have been defined: e.g. ambition and confidence

Associations Van Gils of loyal and potential customers have been found

Consumer segments are created

Two means of expression

The insights from the analyses lead to the formulation of the purpose, vision and mission statements. Furthermore, a strategic design direction has been found (see figure 24).



Figure 24: From analyses and research to purpose, vision, mission and strategic direction

6.2. Purpose, vision and mission

Based on the different analyses, the purpose, vision and mission statements have been formulated.

As described in *Chapter 3.2.*, a creative session with employees of Van Gils has taken place to generate keywords that have been the foundation of the statements. In *Chapter 2.2.*, the difference between the purpose, vision and mission has been explained. The theory is applied to define the statements with the use of the keywords defined previously; confidence, enabling potential, fun and lifestyle (see *Chapter 3.2.2.*). Explanations for the statements are as follows:

Purpose

The reason for Van Gils' existence is defined by the keywords confidence and enabling potential. Van Gils triggers confidence in ways of dressing. This confidence leads to being true to oneself and therefore enabling potential and being the best version someone can be. This is also incorporated in the essence of 'NO STITCH NO STORY' and its 'winning or learning'-mentality.

Vision

Van Gils envisions to be the preferred menswear brand choice. In order to develop this desirability, the focus will be on the playful and fun aspects of the brand, therefore fun is incorporated in the vision.

Mission

The lifestyle aspect is incorporated in the mission as it explains what is necessary to actually achieve it. In order to become a desirable and preferred brand, Van Gils will offer garments for every occasion, which is also a result from the consumer research.



PURPOSE

Make men feel confident by providing the ability to express who they are and who they want to be.

We exist to enable potential, make men feel confident and comfortable in the way that they dress, to make sure that they are able to reach their own potential and be the best version of themselves.



VISION

Be a man's preferred choice as menswear brand in the mid- to premium segment of the fashion industry.

Creating a desirable brand by offering the best quality products and embracing fun by incorporating playful twists and hidden messages in our garments as well as creating pieces that stand out.



MISSION

Create garments that make Van Gils men feel comfortable and confident in every occasion in their life.

Whether men need to dress up for a special occasion or dress down for a casual activity, we provide garments for every moment in life.

6.3. Strategic decisions

The main insights gathered from the internal and external analyses as well as the consumer research come together in the brand positioning.

As mentioned previously, brand positioning is the act of designing the company's offer and image in such a way that it occupies a distinct and valued place in the target consumer's mind (Keller, 2013). According to Ries and Trout (1981), this takes the form of certain abstract values and is expressed externally via, for example, unique selling points, personalities and tone of voice. In essence, the brand's position ensures the balance between customer needs, competitor gaps and core capabilities of the organization (Beverland, 2018), as can be seen in the visual (see Figure 25).

This balance helps understand that consumer analysis ensures brand relevance, a competitive gap ensures brand differentiation and core capabilities ensure authenticity and reason to believe in the brand, thus creating consistency in the end (Beverland, 2018).

Consumer needs

Besides the functional needs, emotional needs and values, the most remarkable insight from the consumer research is the

two means of expressing (see Chapter 5.1.). Due to people falling mostly in between groups an opportunity poses for Van Gils to become a brand that suits every occasion, both professionally and personally, therefore in need of both formal and (smart) casual attire.

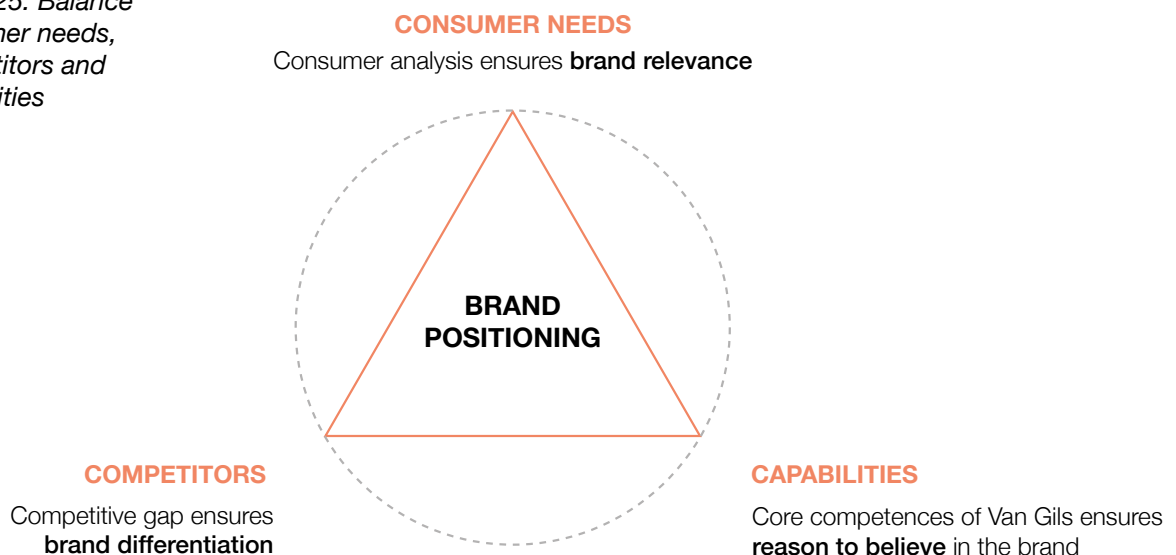
Competitors

It is important to note that from a product point of view, Van Gils will not have too many distinguishable unique selling points compared to its competitors. Looking from a brand image point of view, there is an interesting opportunity to position the brand as not too serious and creating a 'fun' brand image (see Chapter 4.2.), which is already captured in Van Gils' roots.

Capabilities

An overview of the organization's capabilities or core competences is used to create a better understanding of Van Gils' strengths and weaknesses and to what degree these are linked to the consumer needs that are described previously (see Chapter 5.1.). These competences are divided in unique attributes of the organization and unique attributes of the products offered by the brand, see Figure 26.

Figure 25: Balance consumer needs, competitors and capabilities



UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES ORGANIZATION

- > Trustworthy image of Dutch heritage.
- > It takes life as it is, embracing ups and downs, with a focus on positive vibes and celebrating life.
- > Self-conscious - be aware of what the brand's contribution is to the environment.

CONSUMER NEEDS

- > Consistency, knowing what to expect from a brand.
- > Ability to be authentic and true to oneself.
- > Expectation of brands to think beyond offering products - getting woke.

UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES VAN GILS' PRODUCTS

- > Offering different capsule collections (e.g. "The Green Stitch" for sustainable produced garments; "On-the-go" for embracing the on-the-go lifestyle.)
- > Offer quality products, size-fit consistency, craftsmanship and tailoring.
- > Durability of its clothing.
- > Price-quality ratio.
- > Garments always have a fun twist.
- > Offering "The Green Stitch" collection - garments produced in the most 'green' way.

CONSUMER NEEDS

- > Versatility due to having the ability to mix and match different pieces of apparel.
- > Consistency - Knowing what to expect from quality and consistency in fit.
- > Durability - Willingness to invest in garments that have a long lifespan.
- > Value for money.
- > Originality and distinction.
- > Sustainability

Figure 26: Attributes linked to consumer needs

Conclusion

The strategic decisions described are based on the results emerged from the analyses. Bringing together the consumer needs, competitors and capabilities with the most important insights from the analyses, creates an interesting opportunity for the brand to position itself. The emerging casualization and lifestyle trend combined with the versatility need of mixing and matching garments of

consumers poses the question for Van Gils to either reposition the brand to reach out to a younger target group or creating another brand that serves a different target group while Van Gils stays loyal to its core customers.

6.4. Brand repositioning or sub-brand

The possibilities for brand revitalization are creating a sub-brand (or another label) or brand repositioning. The differences between both are explained below and a decision has been made on how to move forward.

Reasoning for brand repositioning

When a brand position is developed, the goal is to sustain it over time. However, certain circumstances may require the repositioning of a brand (Tybout, 2019). Repositioning enables companies to change the way customers associate with their brands and products (Drummond, 2018). Brand repositioning is more difficult than initially positioning a brand because you must first help the customer “unlearn” the current brand positioning (Van Auken, 2016). Brand repositioning can provide a solution if your brand has an unwanted image, your target market is changing or your strategic direction is changing (Drummond, 2018).



Repositioning is a strategy of last resort, as it is likely to alienate the brand’s core users.

TYBOUT, 2019

However, there are certain disadvantages and risks when it comes to repositioning. It could place your brand in no-man’s land, which means that it is positioned in such a way that does not reach anyone, thus leading to losing both loyal and potential customers. Additionally, repositioning is a strategy of last resort, as it is likely to alienate the brand’s core users. Besides alienating, it might confuse consumers since it may conflict with the prior brand position (Tybout, 2019).

Nonetheless, there are a couple of examples of successful repositioning. Apple adopted a new frame of reference for its Apple Watch. Initially, it has been introduced as a fashion item whose bands could be changed to accommodate different wearing occasions.

The position was reframed as a functional device for those interested in health and fitness. It was considered successful due to the fact that the Apple Watch never gained traction as a fashion accessory, but was definitely relevant for monitoring health and fitness (Tybout, 2019). Burberry introduced a plan to reposition itself as a true luxury player (Shannon, 2018), similar to Dior and Gucci. The brand embraced its younger audience and repositioned itself as a young and aspiring brand, utilizing social media and becoming one of the first haute-couture fashion houses to create an e-commerce website. The brand successfully repackaged its roots, the image of sophistication, to better suit its new demographic (Buhay, 2017).

Reasoning for introducing a sub-brand

Sub-brands are essentially spin-off concepts that are related to your existing company but embrace their own identity, personality, and values in order to attract new customers.



It is essential for a sub-brand to connect to the parent brand in some way.

PEATE, 2019

With sub-brands, businesses have the freedom to explore beyond their initial portfolio and USPs. It is, of course, essential for the sub-brand to connect to the parent brand in some way (Peate, 2019).

Sub-brands are most effective when there is a need to distinguish between products sold under a particular brand (Duckler, 2017). This is definitely the case for Van Gils, wanting to become a lifestyle brand by offering both formal and casual wear as defined in the mission statement.

The case studies of Floris van Bommel and Shabbies (see Chapter 4.3.) portray that both sub-brands embrace their own identity and personality, yet are connected to their parent brands. They are, however, sufficiently different to be established as their own entity. Using the same name, makes it relatively obvious for consumers that 'Floris van Bommel' and 'Van Bommel' are related, as such makes it easier to recognize the sub-brand and associate it with certain characteristics from the 'parent' brand. It might occur that consumers will not realize that the brands 'Shabbies' and 'Fred de la Bretonniere' are connected, due to the fact that different names are being used. However, the brands are related due to similar DNA elements being incorporated in the designs.



Sub-branding creates exposure for both 'parent' and 'child' brands, engaging new and existing audiences.

Hodgson, 2019

There are certain benefits to sub-branding. Sub-branding creates exposure for both the 'parent' and 'child' brands, engaging new and existing audiences while taking advantage of the trust the brand already spent years building (Hodgson, 2019). Since Van Gils already has an established name, especially when it comes to the quality of the garments, it can rely on this current identity when reaching out to a different audience.

Additionally, it can help target a specific customer segment. Breaking down into segments helps to refine messaging and ensure that it is as targeted as possible (Hodgson, 2019).

Sub-branding is an excellent idea, when a company wants to connect with a new market, satisfy needs of new customers (Hodgson, 2019), and when attempting to enrich the 'parent' brand with new associations (Adamska, 2016).

Nonetheless, there are certain disadvantages to sub-branding as well as it is expensive and challenging, since promoting and maintaining a new brand is difficult.

There are many brands that have sub-brands in their portfolio or maintain a sub-brand like architecture. For instance, Tommy Hilfiger has Tommy Jeans, Ralph Lauren has a plethora of brands in their portfolio, for example, Polo and Purple Label, Nike has Converse, and Hugo Boss offers Hugo and Boss.

Conclusion

With Van Gils having the need to reach out to two different target groups, their core audience that is still incredibly interested in formal wear and their new target group of men who dress a bit more casual, it makes sense for the brand to introduce another brand. Furthermore, based on the conducted consumer research it became clear that people want to express themselves differently for different occasions. Whether men want to express themselves professionally for a work meeting or as easy-going when meeting up with friends. Van Gils becomes the brand that switches between formal and casual wear whenever that is needed and suits whatever occasion someone might find himself in. Brand repositioning would be a great risk, due to the possibility of the core audience not understanding the new direction and the new target group not seeing enough of an interesting difference to jump in, meaning the brand would lose everything.

6.5. Two-brand strategy

The strategic decision has been made to introduce another brand. In this subchapter the new brand is introduced and the process is described of how the brand came to be.

Introducing a new brand, means that Van Gils as a brand, will exclusively focus on formal wear as the new brand would focus on (smart) casual wear. A two-brand strategy will be created where these two brands co-exist simultaneously next to each other. Two separate worlds would be designed, with their own tone of voice, personality and their own means of communication. Needless to say, both brands are built from the same foundation, having similar brand elements, and thus provide the possibility of merging together.

6.5.1. DNA elements

Moodboards have been created to understand which DNA elements are the foundation of the Van Gils brand and would be incorporated into the new brand. It is also a visualization of what these elements mean.

Van Gils is characterised by several elements, as can be seen in the moodboard below.



Firstly, it is a brand that is considered to be *formal* and *timeless*. It will still be formal in the traditional sense of offering classic suits and introducing more design freedom in the form of high-end designs. It would be timeless in the sense that classic garments would fit modern times by implementing casual suiting, thus providing mix and match possibilities. Secondly, the brand is known for its *details*, whether it is about the quality of its pieces, subtlety used in the lining or implementing fun twists like hidden messages. Thirdly, the brand always tries to make a statement by being a *little bit different* and a *little bit out there*. This is, of course, connected to the previously mentioned aspect of detailing. Van Gils men try to stand out in a subtle manner, whether it is about wearing a tie or pocket square in a vivid colour and combining this with a muted coloured suit.

Finally, and most importantly, the element that makes Van Gils remarkable is *fun*. This entails using positive vibes in their messaging, not always taking life too seriously and enjoying life as is. Whether this is about jumping in the pool with your clothes on or spending good times with friends and family. As fitting with the brand, it is fun in a sophisticated manner. It is not too upper class, it is just ‘smart fun’.

The combination of these elements is what creates the brand identity and what makes it unique (see Figure 27).

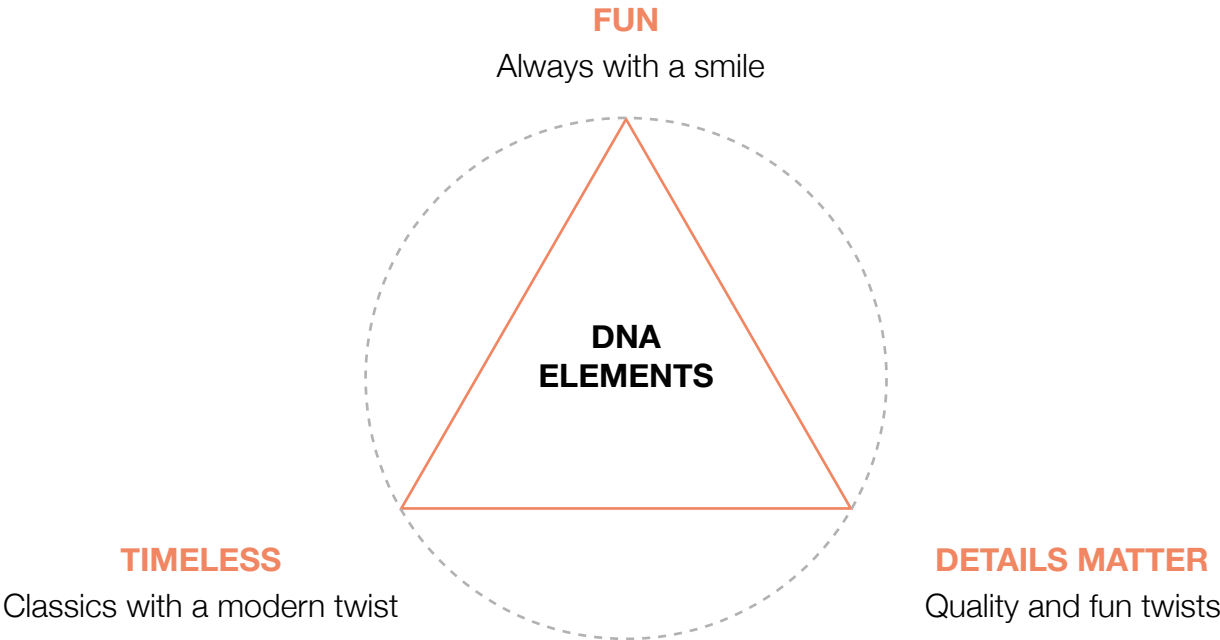


Figure 27: DNA elements

The brand launched 'The Green Stitch', a collection produced in the most 'green' way. Although this is only a baby step in the right direction, it does pave the way for the brand to take responsibility. With Van Gils joining the Better Cotton Initiative as of 2019, it only makes sense to focus on natural and eco-friendly materials from the start when launching a new brand (see Figure 28).

Finally, a moodboard has been created for a womenswear label (as can be seen in Appendix L.) due to it being an opportunity for Van Gils to expand their business. Obviously, similar DNA elements would be the foundation of such a label. However, since this project is focused on revitalizing a traditional menswear brand by embracing a casualization trend within menswear and focusing on a younger male target group, the womenswear label will not be further elaborated on. However, it will be taken into account in 'Chapter 9.2 Recommendations and limitations'.

TEXTILE - natural fibres / manmade natural / manmade synthetics

FOCUS ON NATURAL & ECO-FRIENDLY MATERIALS - Eco-friendly alternatives examples

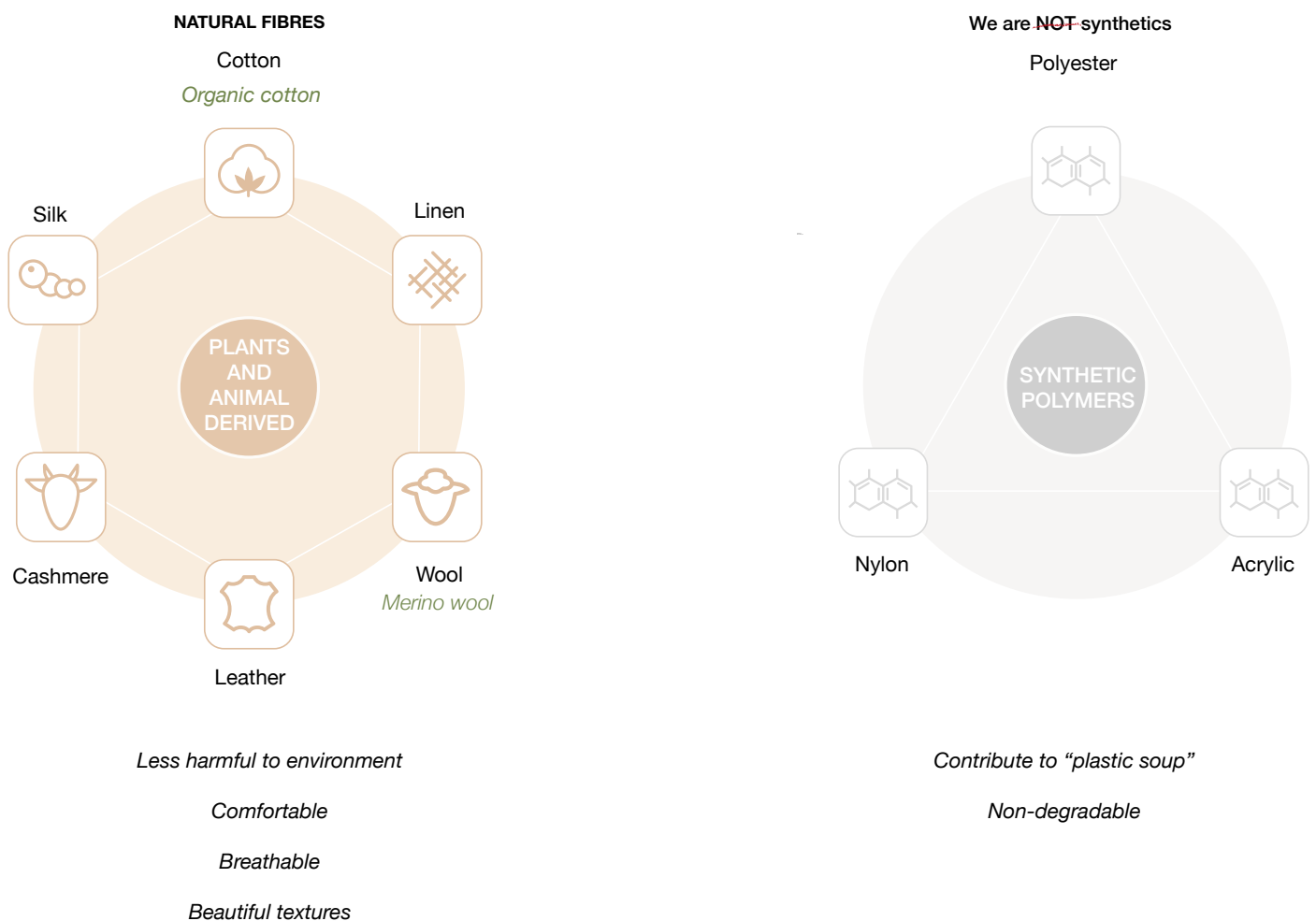


Figure 28: Textiles used in new brand

TWO BRAND STRATEGY

Living simultaneously together

An example

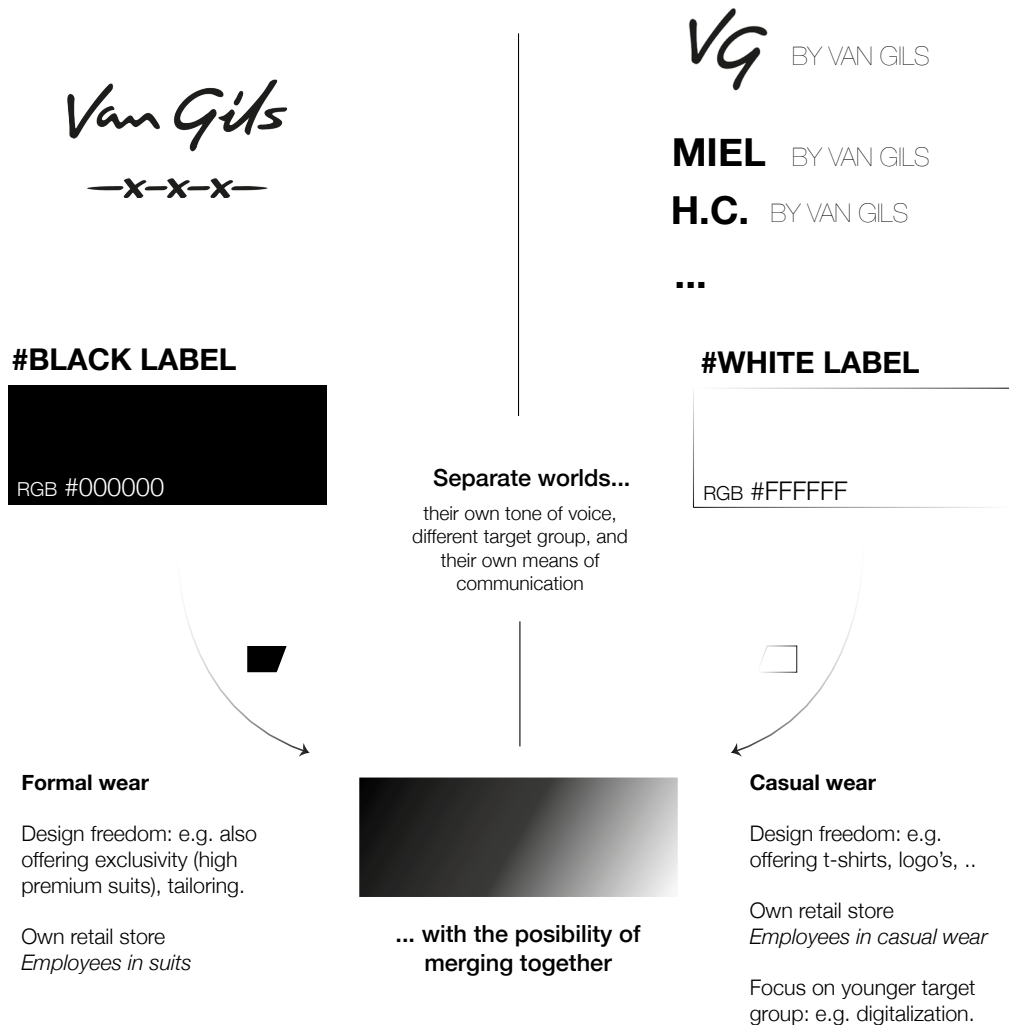


Figure 29: Example two-brand strategy

6.5.2. Brand positioning and brand personality brainstorm

Based on the moodboards a creative session, with two Industrial Design graduates, has taken place to find the brand positioning opportunity and the brand personality for the casual brand. Additionally, the differences in positioning between the brands has been defined.

The starting point of this session has been the idea of creating a black and white label which represent polar opposites (see Figure 29), since these brands should have their own separate worlds.

However, relatively quickly it became apparent that these two brands should not be completely opposite as is represented by black and white. It is much more of a 'grey' area, since an ability of merging or blending brands together should be a possibility. With this in mind, combinations have been found of aspects that are considered opposites, but definitely complement each other (mindmap can be found in Appendix M).

Simultaneously, a mindmap for the brand personality has been created (see Appendix M). Keywords that have come to mind are 'fun', 'easy-going', 'confident', and 'identifiable'. These are all words that would embrace a possible brand personality for a casual brand that fits the brand identity of Van Gils.

After the session, the brand personality, positioning and name of the new brand have been defined. Looking at the differences between the two brands, the formal and casual wear, it became clear that the distinction between the days of the week and the 'easy-going' personality describe the contrast between the brands best.

As mentioned previously in *Chapter 5*. *Consumer research* people have two means of expressing, as there are different means of expressing oneself when being in different situations. People dress differently when, for example, having an important business meeting than when catching up with friends.

Generally speaking, expressing oneself as ambitious and professional in the former situation and approachable, relaxed and easy-going in the latter. Thus, creating a connection between the days of the week and the brands fits the consumer research. In general, Monday has the image of 'back-to-business', whereas Saturday is about spending time with friends or a partner and Sunday is mostly visiting family or spending time at home on the couch.

During the week, it is about those business meetings and meeting up with clients, whereas the weekend, especially Saturday, is about having fun, meeting up with friends and spending time with loved ones. Therefore, during the week someone wears Van Gils and, on the weekend, someone wears SATURDAY.



Garments for the Van Gils men for every occasion

During the week, he wears **Van Gils Business and special occasions**



Professional
Ambitious
Success

During the weekend, he wears **SATURDAY Lifestyle**



Fun
Easy-going
Smart
Comfort

OR bring both worlds together by **mix and matching Van Gils and SATURDAY**

AGE 30

On Saturday



he goes shopping with his girlfriend

he goes out for drinks with friends in the evening

He wears



a horizontal striped sweater

shorts

sneakers

AGE 40

On Saturday



he watches his kids play hockey

he goes out to have food with friends and family

He wears



polo

jeans

boots

Figure 30: Persona

6.5.3. Persona

To clarify, a persona has been created to portray the different stages in the life of Jesse (see Figure 30).

Personas are an imagined character that represents the target segment (Beverland, 2018) are used to understand consumer's needs and, therefore, help in the brand building process. As can be seen in Figure 23, at the age of 30, Jesse spends his Saturday shopping with his partner and going out for drinks with his friends in the evening. It is about having a good time overall. Since Jesse wants to be a bit more comfortable while still looking neat, he wears stylish casual pieces of clothing.

At the age of 40, Jesse has kids and supports them on the hockey field. Yet again, he wants to wear pieces of clothing that are considered more casual, but still look stylish. Overall, it does not matter at what stage someone is in his life, on Saturday someone wants to dress more casual due to mostly having multiple events or social activities.

Thus, during the week Jesse wants to be taken seriously and express himself as professional, ambitious and successful, therefore, wearing Van Gils. On the weekend, he wants to be seen as approachable, relaxed and easy-going, therefore he wears SATURDAY.



SATURDAY

by *Van Gils*

6.5.4. Brand personality

In this section, the brand personality is discussed which will be the driving tone of voice of the brand. Due to creating a two-brand strategy, a clear distinction is necessary between both brands. As can be seen in the persona (see Figure 30), there are different characteristics belonging to each brand. The characteristics that describe SATURDAY are:

- *Easy-going*

Someone who is relaxed, unworried and calm and embraces what that day might bring. This trait reflects the 'Saturday feeling'.

- *Social*

Someone who is excited, talkative and a people person. Saturday is about hanging out with friends and loved ones.

- *Confident*

Someone who feels comfortable in the way he dresses which gives him the confidence to be himself.

- *Genuine*

Someone who is authentic and realistic. He also needs to balance work and personal life, just like everybody else.

- *A little bit out there*

Someone who likes to be bold and make a statement in a subtle manner (e.g. wearing an accessory in a vivid color). Just being a little bit different.

- *Smart*

Someone who is smart about life. He likes to have fun, but it is 'smart fun'. He likes to be casual, but, of course, 'smart casual'. He likes details and twists, but these are 'smart details', subtle twists that only he notices.

To make the personality more specific, there are also characteristics that do NOT fit the brand, which are:

- Arrogant
- Too serious
- Slick
- Old-fashioned
- Fashion sensitive

Conclusion

The aforementioned characteristics fit the brand in multiple aspects. These traits are embedded in the brand values, tap into relevant trends like lifestyle and casualization, provide additional value to Van Gils' core competences and provide a new brand experience for customers.

6.5.5. Brand proposition

The brand proposition is the value that the brand offers to its customers. Van Gils expanding their portfolio with another brand means satisfying one of the most important consumer needs of having the ability to mix and match and building a durable and versatile wardrobe. Van Gils and SATURDAY become the brands that offer suitable apparel for every occasion, switching between formal and smart casual whenever is needed (see Figure 31).

Looking at the competitors (Chapter 4.2. Competitor analysis) there are other brands offering multiple styles of apparel for different occasions, like Ralph Lauren or Hugo Boss. However, it yet again comes back to brand identification. For example, someone might not be able to identify with the American preppy image of Ralph Lauren or the level of sophistication and seriousness of Hugo Boss.

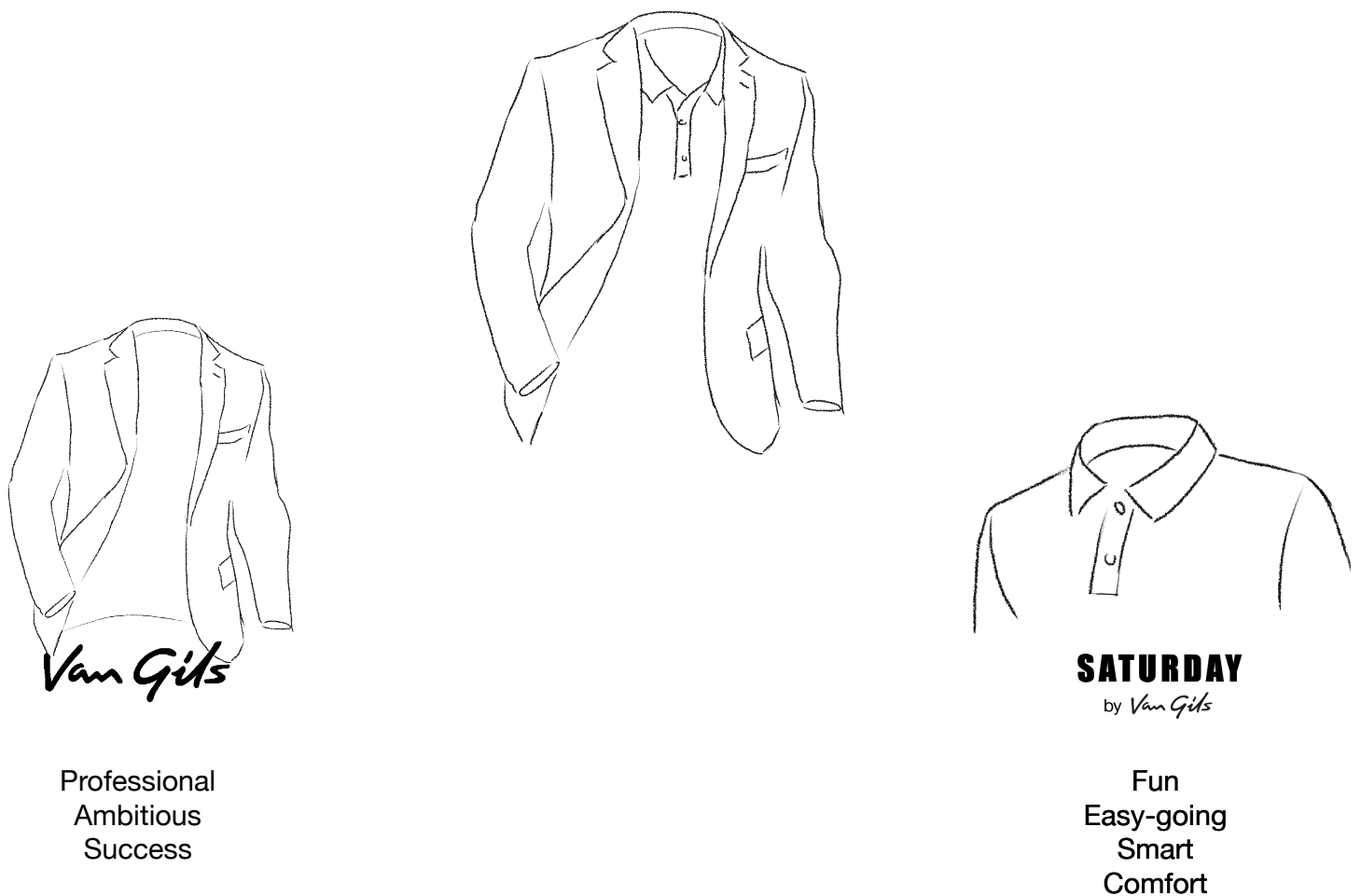


Figure 31: Brand proposition

6.5.6. Design principles

The design principles are the foundation of the visual style, based on the brand DNA, its purpose, brand principles and values as well as the tone of voice. These support creatives in developing brand touchpoints that are consistent with the brand.

1. *Personal*

The first principle reflects the brand's purpose of being true to yourself by showing who you are and who you want to be. It is about making it human and personal. Therefore, it is essential to be able to connect to the person shown in imagery. This means that facial expressions and emotions are shown. Additionally, this means not hiding behind sunglasses and portraying a lifestyle that the target audience can identify with.

2. *Positive vibes*

The second principle embraces the positivity that is embedded in, among others, the brand personality. Positive vibes are used in communications, due to the brand being a glass half full kind of person. This means that the use of black and white photography is minimized and the focus lies on using the brand's true colors.

3. *Be bold*

The third and final principle is mostly embedded in the brand's DNA. The confidence that comes with the brand is translated into subtle boldness. This includes having twists, like hidden messages and fun elements that stand out. Daring to be a little bit different, just not completely out there. This means using large imagery and hints of colorful elements. Additionally, confidence and boldness is portrayed by using photographs with subjects that are looking directly at the viewer.

6.5.7. Collective potential

As mentioned in *Chapter 5. Consumer research*, the look and appeal of the brand is not addressed towards a younger audience. Therefore, it is important for Van Gils to create partnerships and collaborations with other people that a younger target group can identify with. It is also incredibly important that these collaborations embrace the newly defined brand identity.

Additionally, working together with other brands might open up the possibility to create new positive associations. Creating and developing sneakers, for example, is not Van Gils' expertise, thus it would be interesting to collaborate with others who are experts in shoes. Again, fitting the newly defined brand identity.

Collaborating and co-creating with other people and brands taps into the collective potential and will, hopefully, lead to an increased brand awareness for all involved.

Potential collaborations can be found in the brand book.

6.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, the different elements have been described and defined that are relevant for the proposed strategic direction of introducing a two-brand strategy for Van Gils. Important aspects of the SATURDAY brand have been presented, like DNA elements, brand personality and brand proposition.

The main insights from the internal and external analyses have been summarized. These insights have led to the formulation of the purpose, vision and mission statements. The difference between introducing another brand or reposition the brand has been explained and the decision is made to continue with another label. Finally, the elements that are the foundation of the two-brand strategy are explained.

Design direction

The elements described in this chapter will be used to develop the brand book. A brand book is used for internal communication as it is important for a brand to create consistency, especially when a new brand is introduced.

Additionally, brand touchpoint designs are created that visualize examples of the translation from brand book to design.

Finally, a launch campaign is described to introduce the new brand and to make sure it reaches enough people.

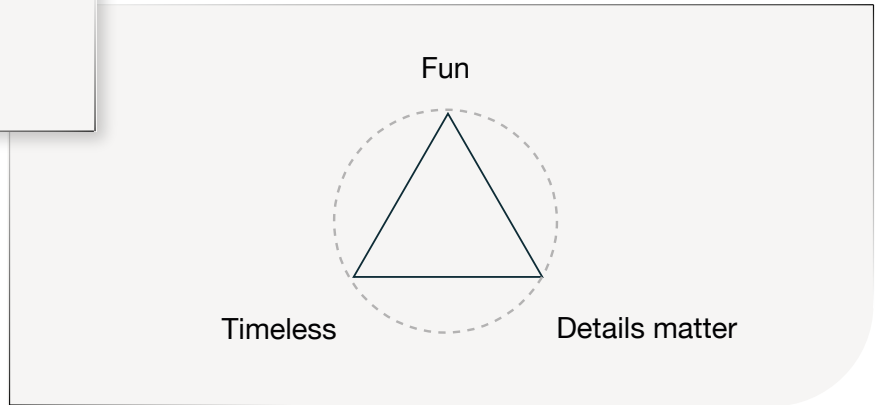


SATURDAY

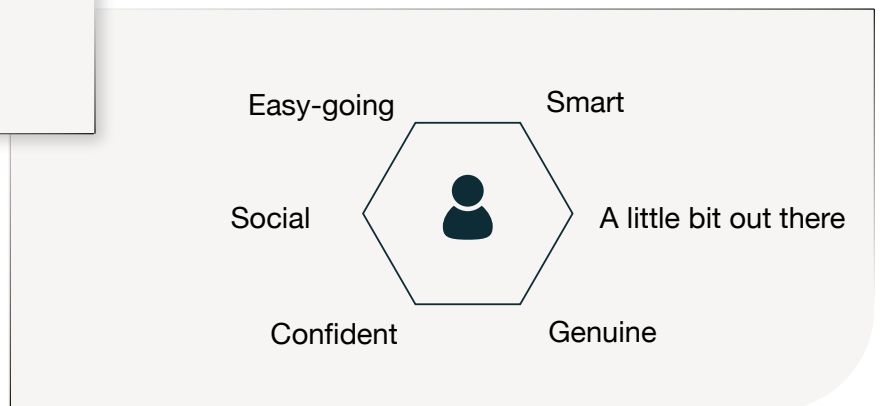
by *Van Gils*



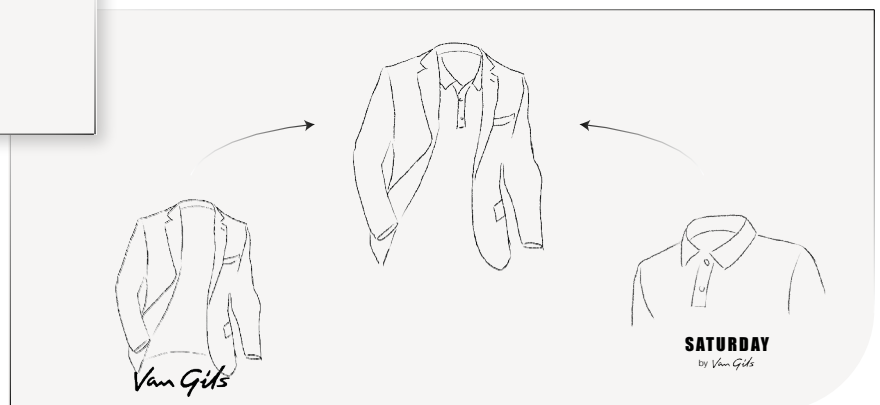
DNA ELEMENTS



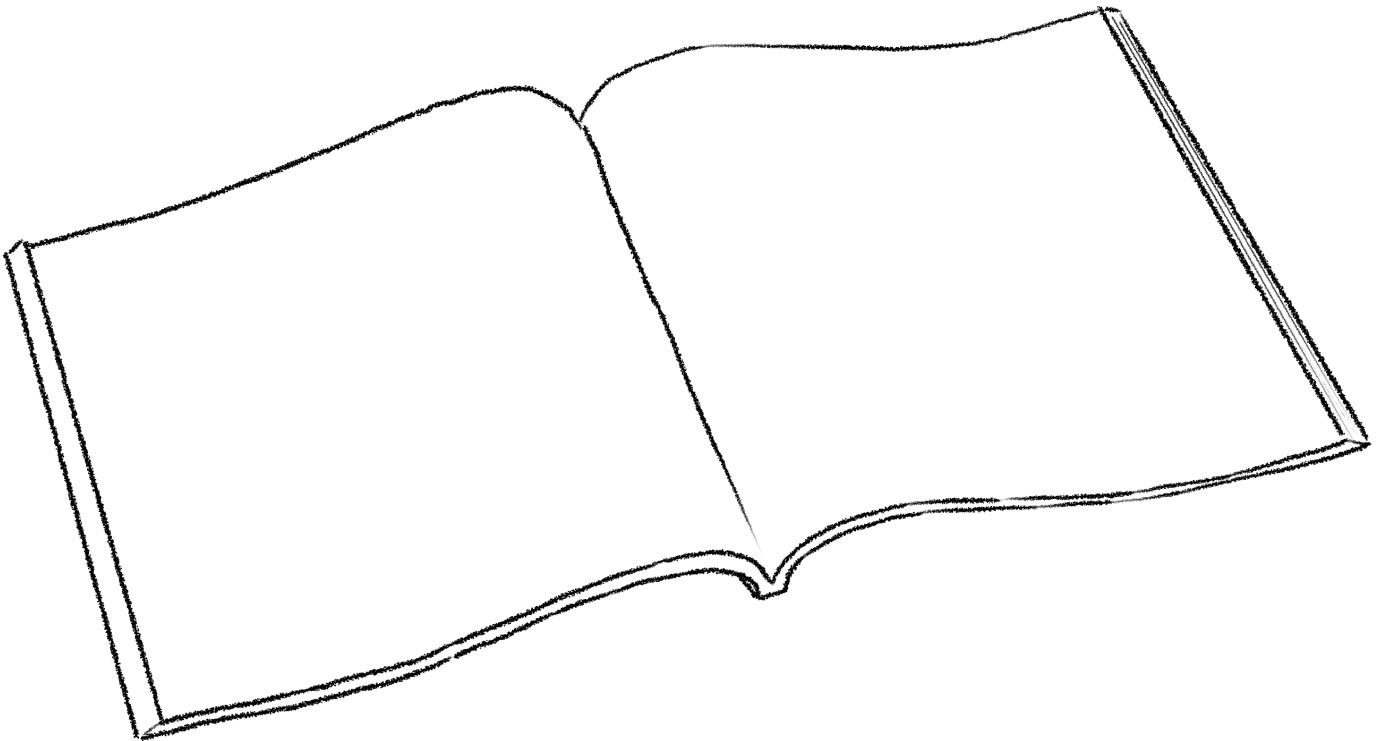
BRAND PERSONALITY



BRAND PROPOSITION



07.



DESIGN

This chapter contains the outcomes of the design direction, a brand book, brand touchpoint designs, and a launch campaign for the new brand.

IN THIS CHAPTER

7.1. Brand book

7.2. Brand touchpoint designs

7.3. Brand launch

7.4. Conclusion

7.1. Brand book

This subchapter showcases the main deliverable of this thesis, the brand book.

A brand book is used internally to provide alignment and consistency. It is used to create a mutual understanding of the proposed strategic direction and support creatives in designing brand touchpoints that visualize the brand identity.

The brand book (several pages can be seen in Figure 32) for the new brand SATURDAY incorporated the elements described in the previous chapter and is divided into the following subjects:

Our brand

This part consists of the story of how the brand came to be, an understanding of the purpose, vision and mission, the DNA elements that the brand is made of, and finally, the brand principles and brand values.

Our voice

In this section, the brand personality is discussed which will be the driving tone of voice of the brand. It consists of the different characteristics that make up the brand personality.

Our audience

The core customer, as defined in xx Consumer research, is portrayed. Additionally the brand proposition is explained, the value that is offered to consumers by offering two different brands with the ability to mix and match brands.



Our design

This part consists of the aforementioned design principles and visual guidelines. The visual guidelines show the colour palette that will be used, the use of the logo, typography and the use of labels.

This part consists of the design principles and visual guidelines that should create consistency in brand touchpoints and means of communications. The visual guidelines show the colour palette that will be used, the use of the logo, typography and the use of labels.

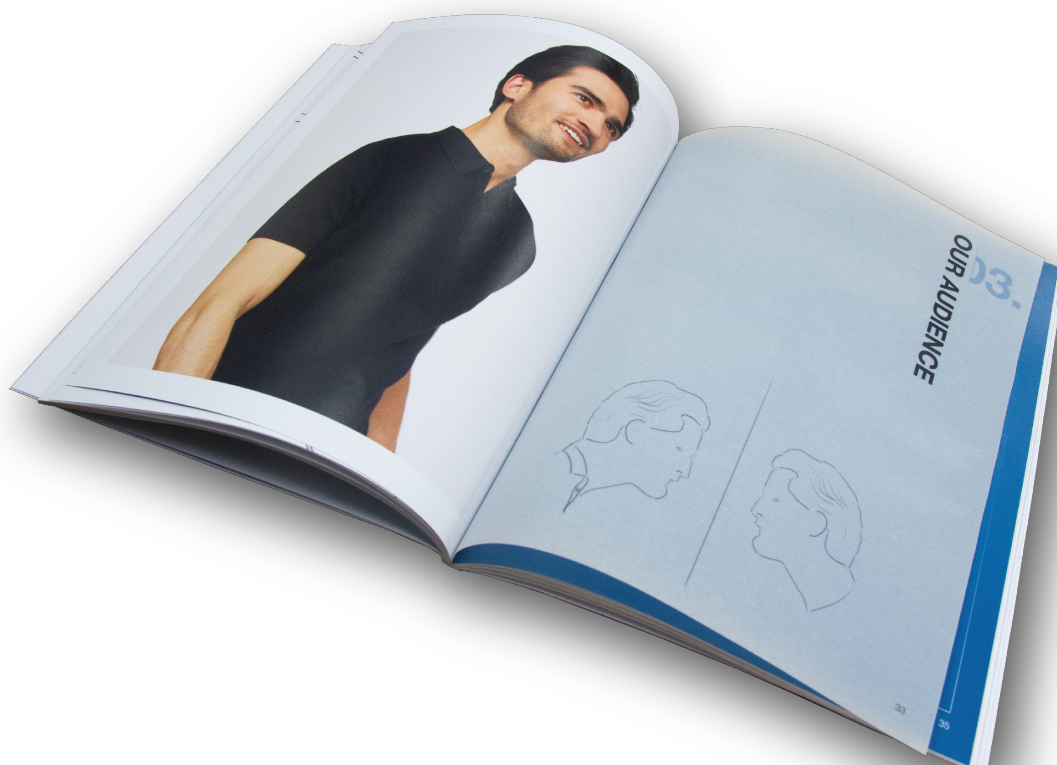
The primary colours used for the brand are influenced by the personality, brand name and design principles. A colder tone like blue is perceived as relaxing and calm as well as dependable and high quality (Bottomley & Doyle, 2006) and that is what the brand stands for. Black is associated with powerful (Bottomley & Doyle, 2006).

Additionally, grey and black hues represent neutrality and sophistication (Nassau, n.d.) which relates to confident and smart traits. A warm tone portrays warmth and happiness. Such a tone is used as an accent colour that will be used occasionally to show those small elements that stand out.

The combination of these colours capture the brand as being easy-going, stylish, confident and a little bit out there. It captivates the ultimate Saturday feeling, enjoying life, being relaxed and a little bit out there.

Our collective potential

As mentioned previously, the collective potential consists of suggestions for brand ambassadors and other brands to co-create and establish partnerships with.



**OUR
PASSION**

1.

PURPOSE

Make men feel confident by providing the ability to express who they are and who they want to be.

We exist to enable potential, make men feel confident and comfortable in the way that they dress, to make sure that they are able to reach their own potential and be the best version of themselves.

2.

VISION

Be a man's preferred choice as menswear brand in the mid- to premium segment of the fashion industry.

Creating a desirable brand by offering the best quality products and embracing fun by incorporating playful twists and hidden messages in our garments as well as creating pieces that stand out.

3.

MISSION

Create garments that make Van Gils men feel comfortable and confident in every occasion in their life.

Whether men need to dress up for a special occasion or dress down for a casual social activity, we provide garments for every moment in life.

Brand promise

Offering the best quality products, always with a fun twist.

10



We always keep the environment in our minds.



Only the best meets our standards.

22

**OUR
BRAND PRINCIPLES**

THIS IS WHAT WE STAND FOR

Be sustainable

We have taken a commitment to respect the environment. Our garments are made with eco-friendly materials like organic cotton and recycled wool. Together with our resellers we take a collective responsibility and unite forces to create positive change in the industry.

Be transparent

It is essential for us to be open and honest about operations. Also, our products are approved by the Business Social Compliance Initiative, an organisation that vouches for better circumstances for workers participating in production processes.

Quality first

We stay true to our roots of craftsmanship and always offer quality products. When it comes to fabrics and materials, only the best measures our standards.

23

Figure 32: Pages brand book



7.2. Brand touchpoint designs

This subchapter visualizes the translation from brand book to brand touchpoint designs and portrays a couple of examples.

Brand touchpoints are embodiments of the brand, which portray the brand's identity towards consumers. Several examples of brand touchpoint designs are shown below. These are examples of translations from brand book to designs.

7.2.1. In-store element

A fashion retail store consists of different elements, like the display of apparel, fitting rooms, a lounge area for another person to wait while someone else is fitting on clothes, cash desk etc.

Since the main deliverable of this project is the brand book, only one aspect of the SATURDAY brandstore will be designed. This is the display of apparel.

Generally speaking, a display of apparel is either clothes hanging on a rack or laying on a table, as the example in the picture below shows.



Due to the SATURDAY brand having certain elements that stand out, it is interesting to create a display that is just a little bit different than usual.

An in-store element is created based on the design principles in combination with the DNA elements. The brand book is applied to create the concept seen in Figure 33.

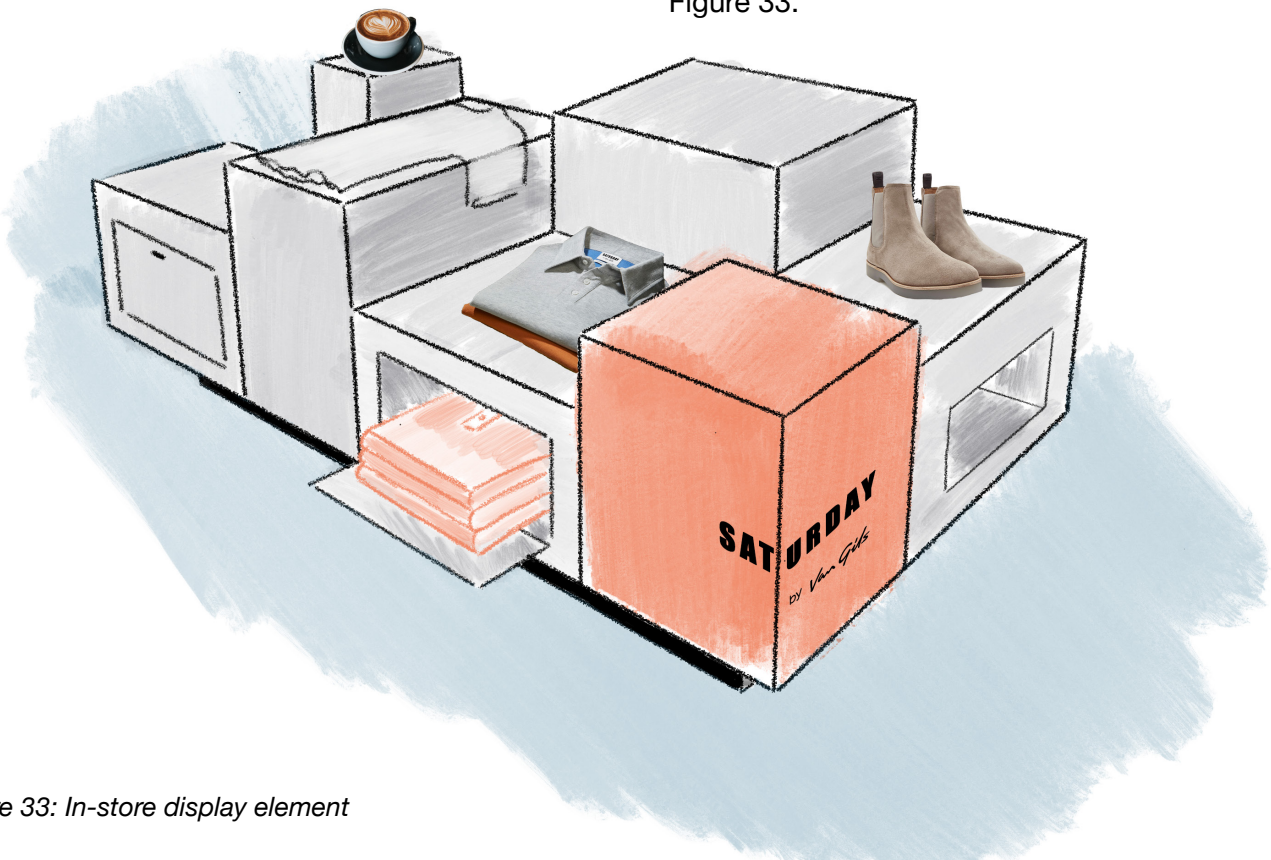


Figure 33: In-store display element

A modular system of different blocks provides the ability to change the display when necessary. The table brings together elements of subtle boldness, due to being different than usual. Fun, due to the table having an element of playfulness by switching around the different blocks.

Details matter, due to openings and doors that reveal or hide certain elements comparable to the hidden messages in the garments. Additionally, it is possible to put emphasis on certain elements as a result of the height differences incorporated in the display.

Finally, offering something small, like a cup of coffee, is a personal touch that makes the consumer feel acknowledged when he or she is in the store.

Overall, it embraces the positive vibes. Additionally, it is possible for the consumer to have an overview of what is available in store relatively quickly, which makes the shopping experience fast and easy.

7.2.2. Label

With the brand creating more awareness towards the environment and social issues, and thus creating more transparency, a new label will be used in garments. This label (see Figure 34) provides information about the material used to produce this specific piece of clothing as well as a QR-code. The QR-code will send you to a part of the SATURDAY website (see Figure 37) to provide additional information, for instance, where the garment is made and by whom.



Figure 34: Label

7.2.3. Website

Introducing the new SATURDAY brand, means that the Van Gils website will change as it is currently. Especially, since the brands should co-exist simultaneously next to each other, both brands need to have equal space to present their pieces of apparel. When visiting the existing website, visitors will immediately be introduced to both brands (see Figure 35). It is possible to go to either one of the brands by pressing 'Discover' that relates to the corresponding brand or pressing the logo on top. Additionally, when visiting the 'Clothing' section on the homepage (on the top bar), pieces of apparel from both brands will be displayed as well as mix and match possibilities.

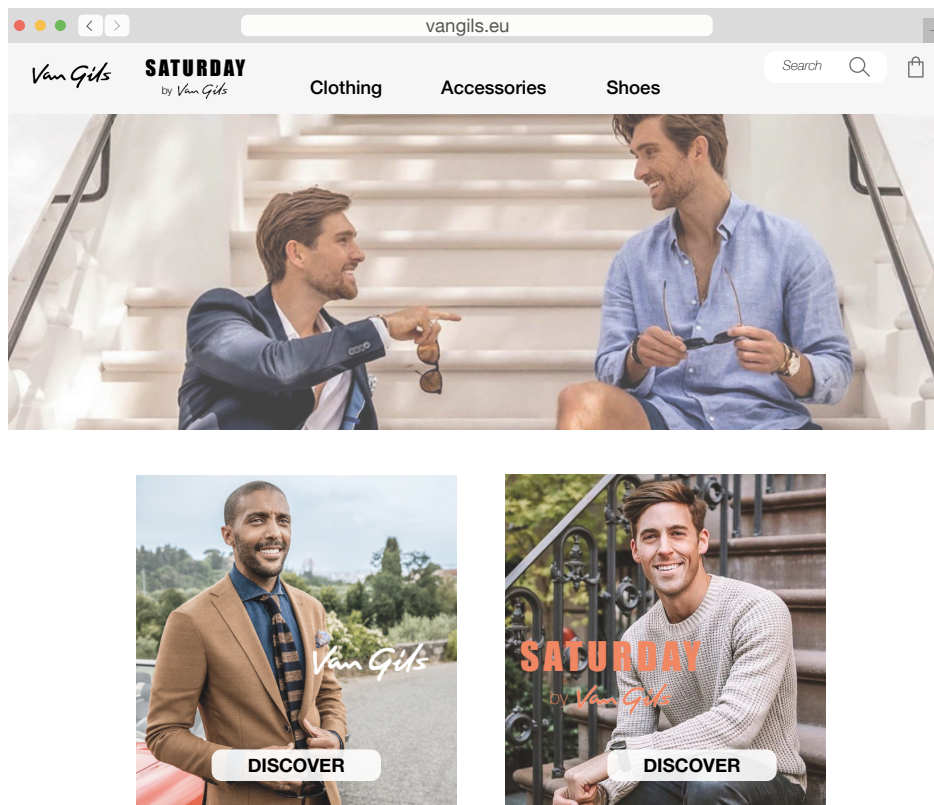


Figure 35: Homepage website

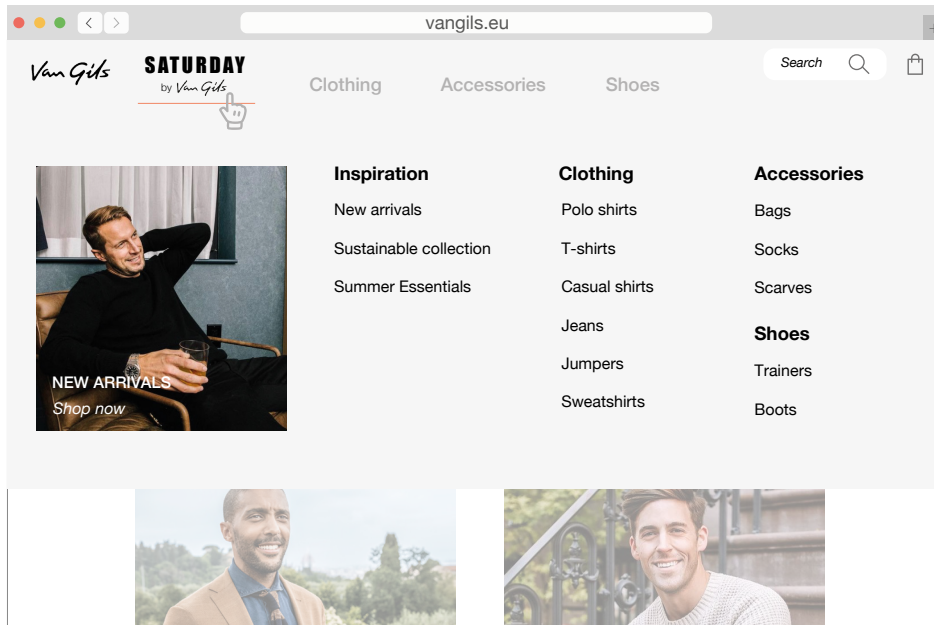


Figure 36: SATURDAY collection

When hovering over the SATURDAY brand logo on the homepage, the different pieces of apparel are displayed of this brand (see Figure 36).

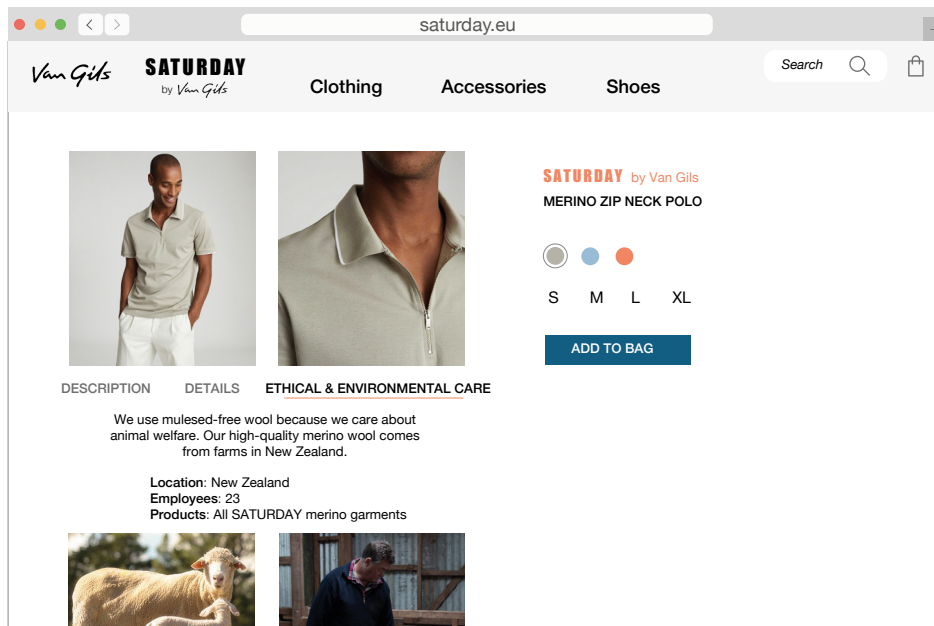


Figure 37: Additional information page

The product page of one piece of apparel shows additional information and details. Furthermore, when someone scans a QR-code that is found within one of the garments, he or she will be led to the 'Ethical & Environmental care' section of the product page where additional

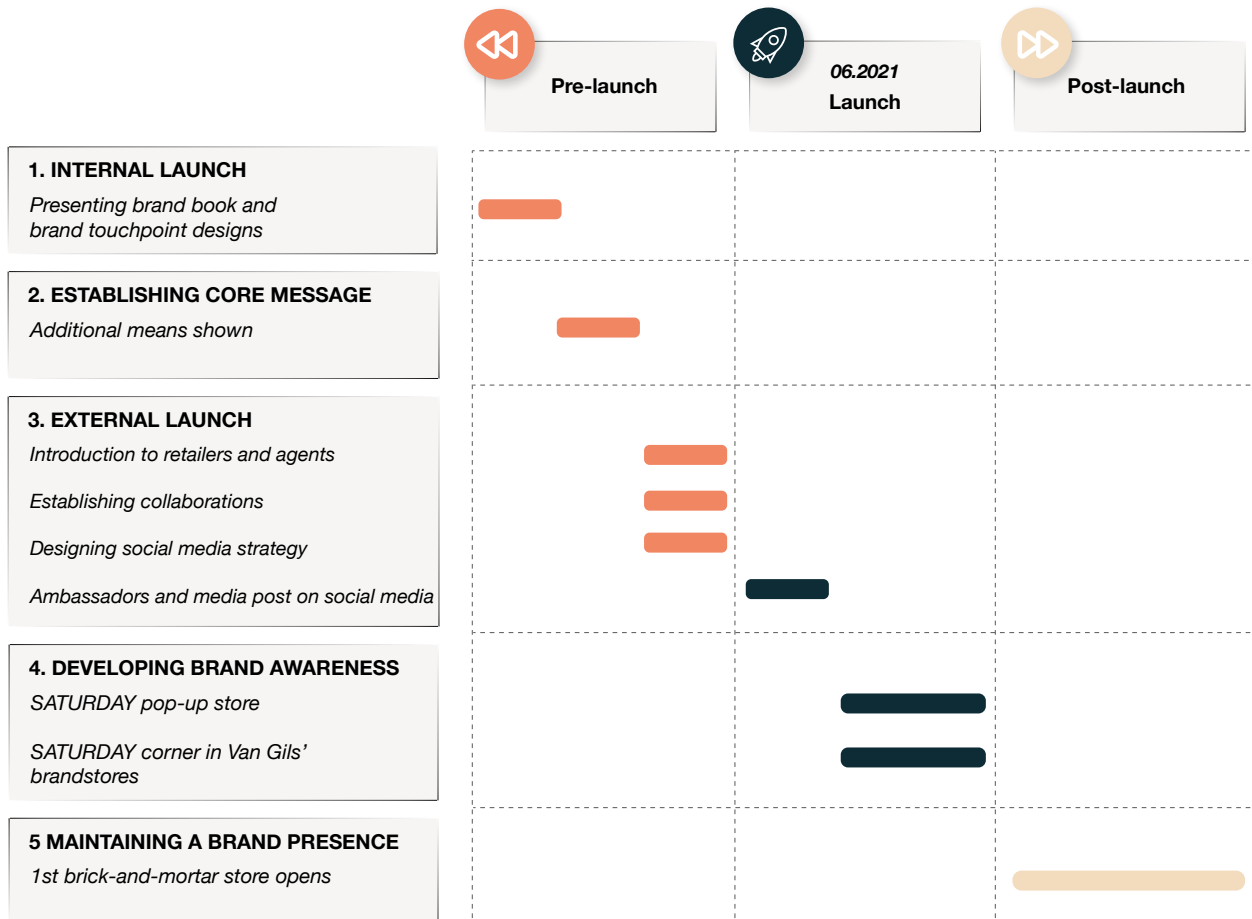
information is found (see Figure 37), for instance, the location of a farm. Additionally, as can be seen, the URL has changed. This means that the website is approachable via the Van Gils website and its own, thus being its own entity.

7.3. Brand launch

This subchapter identifies five steps that are relevant for brand launch and addresses the launch of the SATURDAY brand.

A strong brand launch is important to establish brand recognition (Lynch, 2018)

Figure 38: Brand launch



Based on Doyle (2019), Lynch (2018), and Balkhi (2018), the following steps for brand launch have been identified (see Figure 38):

1. Internal launch
2. Establishing core message
3. External launch
4. Developing brand awareness
5. Maintaining a brand presence

1. Internal launch

A new brand is as important for the internal team as for the external audience (Lynch, 2018).

This means that the first step before launching a new brand to consumers is creating internal alignment as it is incredibly important to create consistency and making sure people internally are on the same page when it comes to introducing the new brand. Thus, introduce SATURDAY to employees and involve them in the development of the SATURDAY brand.

This step consists of introducing the brand and presenting the brand book. Additionally, examples of brand touchpoint designs are presented.

2. Establishing core message

To create a better understanding additional means can be shown like a campaign video or poster. The core message or the brand narrative has a focus on the defined purpose, feeling confident by being true to yourself and showing your identity. As “style is an expression of who you are and who you want to be” it should reflect the brand personality. It should reflect the feelings that are accompanied with Saturday, the happiness, feeling relaxed, enjoying the moment and not keeping in touch with time, as these feelings make someone feel comfortable in their own skin. Feeling comfortable leads to being confident in portraying your identity, staying true to oneself and enabling potential. Thus, referring back to the purpose.

3. External launch

When internal alignment is created, the new brand will be introduced externally. The external launch consists of two phases. On the one hand, clients like retailers and agents are introduced to the new brand.

On the other hand, consumers are introduced to SATURDAY. Before introducing it to the audience, partnerships need to be made. Since Van Gils does not have incredible amounts of people following the brand on social media, it is important for the brand to already have established collaborations with other brands and brand ambassadors beforehand. A possibility is to co-create a smaller capsule collection with an ambassador.

Design a social media strategy

A new Instagram page for SATURDAY will be created (see Figure 39). The brand will be introduced via Van Gils’ Instagram as well as the established collaborations with other brands and ambassadors. This way, others can promote the brand as well on launch day.

Launch day

Ambassadors and selected media will post on social media. At this point, it is possible to purchase the collection via social media as well (see Figure 40).

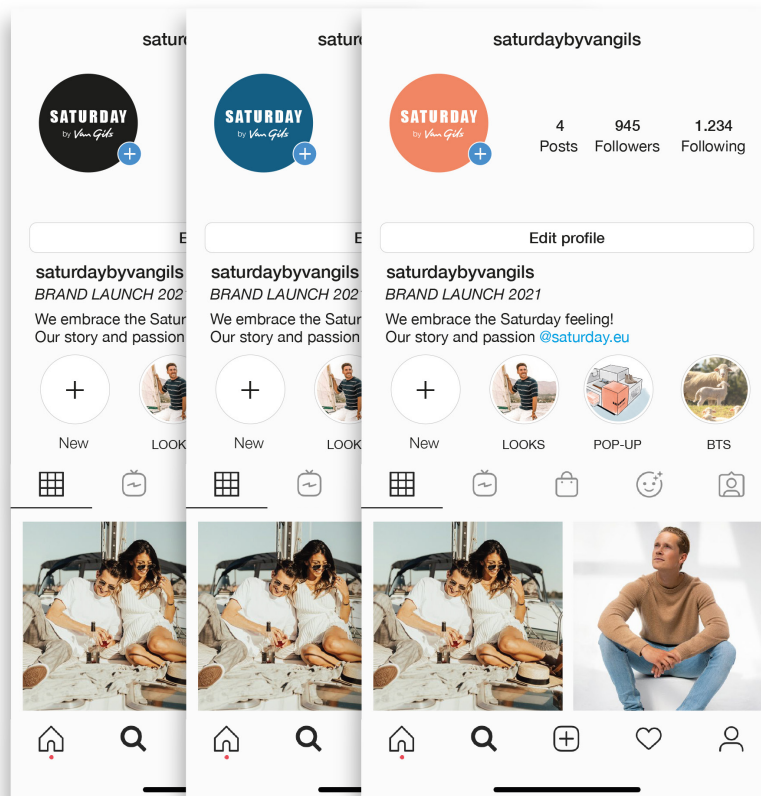


Figure 39: Instagram page SATURDAY

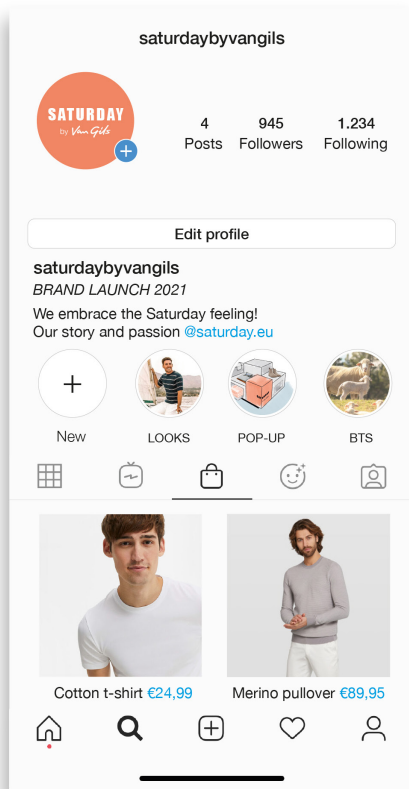


Figure 40: Additional Instagram pages

4. Developing brand awareness

In order to develop brand awareness, it is important for as many people to see the new brand as possible. This means that for people who are already familiar with the brand and might also purchase from the brand, a new section within the already existing Van Gils' brandstores will be dedicated to the SATURDAY brand. As mentioned previously, the modular system (see Chapter 7.2.1.) makes it relatively easy to create a display that fits each store. Additionally, this will immediately show customers the possibilities to mix and match both brands.

To reach out to a broader audience, pop-up stores will be introduced. These stores will be stationary on Saturdays on different locations offering the upcoming collection. Locations will be chosen based on demographic, making sure that the targeted younger audience will be reached. Since most people are mostly looking for a fun experience when visiting a pop-up store (Retail Touchpoints, 2020), only offering the upcoming collection might not be enough. The experience should reflect the Saturday feeling that the brand stands

for, thus, for instance, offering free mini drinks like Gin & Tonics.

Additionally, it is possible to work together with brands that people might already be familiar with like Nubikk or VanMoof (see brand book), since these brands have a follower's base that provides the possibility to lift up a new brand.

5. Maintaining a brand presence

After the initial launch, it is incredibly important to sustain brand presence to ensure consistency and encourage brand loyalty (Doyle, 2019).

Subsequently to initial launch is the opening of the first brick-and-mortar store. A possibility would be, for example, Utrecht. The city does not have a Van Gils brandstore, and most of its population is between the age of 20-39 years old (Gemeente Utrecht, 2020).

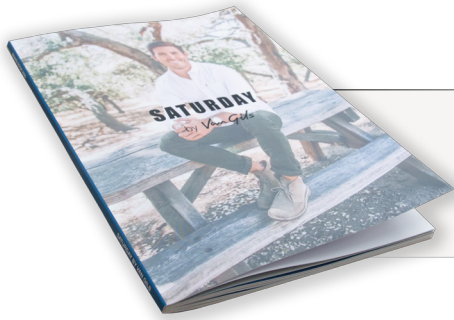
Providing a personal touch could also help maintain brand presence. For instance, keeping in touch with consumers and making it incredibly straightforward for them to reach out. A possibility could be having a WhatsApp number available for questions like returns and personal style advice.

7.4. Conclusion

This chapter concludes the design phase by showcasing several design elements.

Several design elements have been showcased that are meant to create internal harmonization and clarification due to the presentation of the brand book and external consistency as a result of the translation of the book to brand touchpoint design examples.

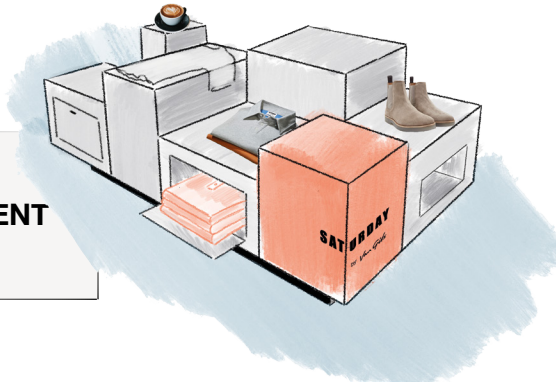
The brand launch exclusively focused on the new SATURDAY brand. However, it is incredibly important for Van Gils to create consistency in the look and feel of its own brandstores, as it is one of the most prominent brand touchpoints that a consumer can get in touch with, and thus creates brand associations. Additionally, it is critical that both brands are on the same level of dedication and commitment.



BRAND BOOK



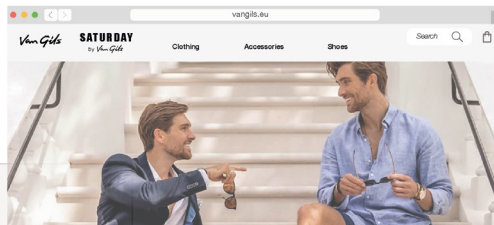
IN-STORE DISPLAY ELEMENT



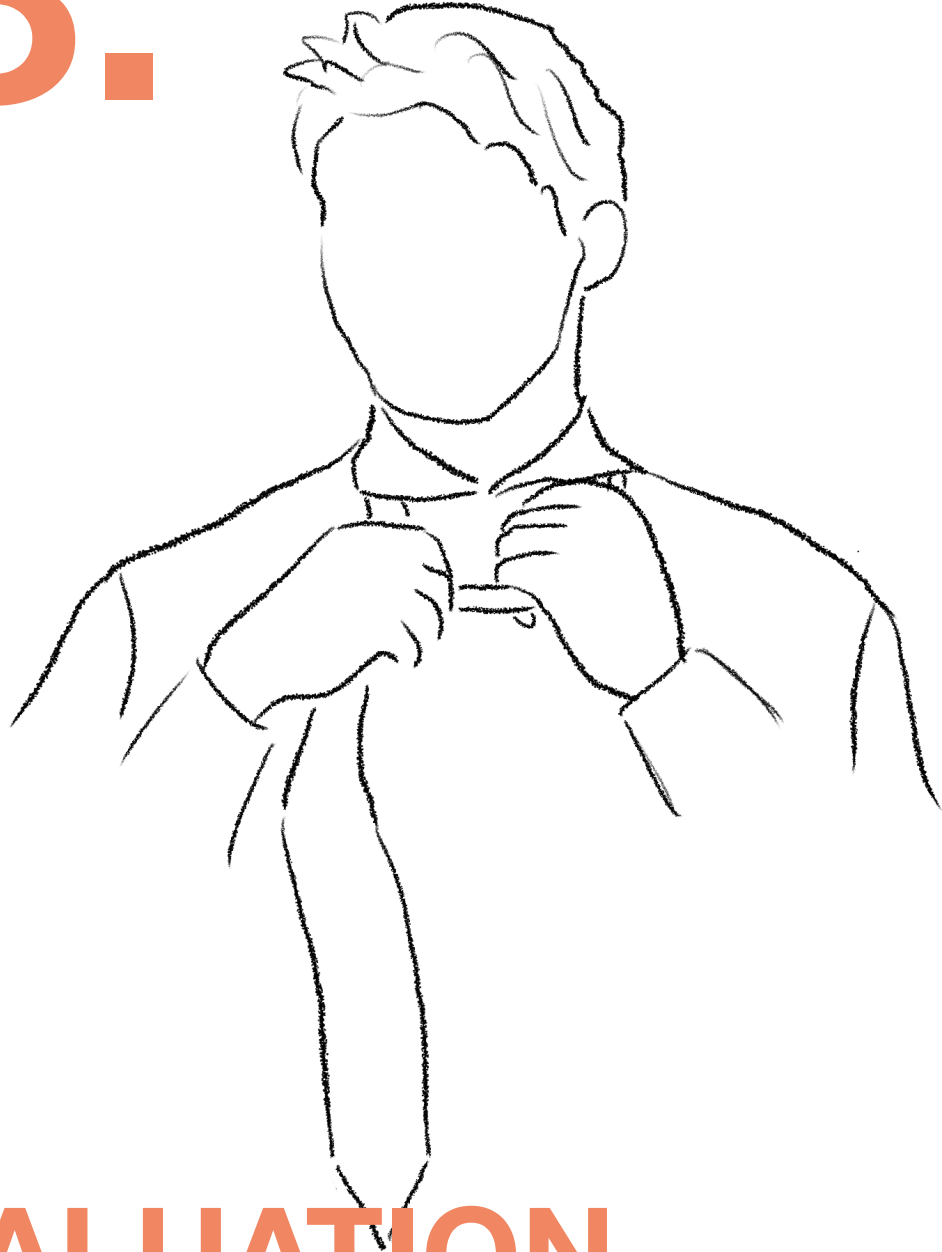
LABEL



WEBSITE



08.



EVALUATION

This chapter addresses the evaluation of the theoretical framework, the strategic direction and the brand book.

IN THIS CHAPTER

8.1. Evaluation theoretical framework

8.2. Evaluation strategic direction and brand book

8.3. Conclusion

8.1. Evaluation theoretical framework

This subchapter addresses the evaluation of the theoretical framework.

The theoretical framework (see *Chapter 2.3.*) has been created to gain a thorough understanding of the elements that play a vital role when it comes to brand revitalization. Additionally, the interaction between these elements has been presented.

The theoretical framework is based on the identification of three levels of brand revitalization: purpose, brand-level and consumer-level. These levels have been the general guideline in the process of brand revitalization.

Purpose

Commencing the project by exploring the purpose level meant diving into the purpose of Van Gils by going back to its roots and discovering values that are considered important and essential to describe the brand and company.

The foundation of the purpose statement and, additionally, the vision and mission statements (as part of the brand-level) has been established in a creative session with the management team of Van Gils. The statements have seen multiple iterations.

The formulated statements as well as the brand principles and brand values have been agreed upon in another session. Even though certain values were already familiar to Van Gils, it does establish alignment by ensuring that employees describe these values similarly.

Brand-level

This phase consisted of analyzing the brand to create a thorough understanding of the current situation of the brand and the desired situation. The purpose, vision and mission statements have been formulated in a creative session, as mentioned previously. A deep dive into the brand and the company led to interesting

insights about the way of working, unique selling points, differences in brandstores, and the distinction in the current and desired situation of the brand.

During this phase it has not been possible to establish a new brand identity, brand personality and brand positioning already. These aspects have been taken into account during strategic direction. The focus of the brand-level has been on creating an understanding of what is happening internally.

Consumer-level

This phase consisted of gaining knowledge about brand associations and brand image from a consumer's point of view. Part of the consumer research led to relevant insights into these subjects. Associations consumers have with Van Gils have been established. Additionally, insights in brand awareness and brand image have been gathered.

Conclusion

The theoretical framework has been of great guidance throughout this project and established a structure in the process of brand revitalization. Knowledge about the aforementioned subjects and bringing together the most essential insights is important in this process. The framework encompasses literature from brand revitalization, branding and purpose. Nevertheless, additional literature research and case studies can establish other relevant subjects for the framework and create iterations to ensure its applicability.

The framework resulted in a strategic direction by combining different elements.

8.2. Evaluation strategic direction and brand book

This subchapter describes the evaluation of the strategic direction (see Chapter 6) and the brand book. The insights gathered from the analyses are used to make strategic decisions.

Brand repositioning or sub-brand

After the analyses have been conducted, the question arose whether Van Gils should reposition the brand or introduce a sub-brand. Additional research was needed to convince the company that moving forward with the creation of another label is the right direction for the brand to reach out to the new target audience. The advantages and disadvantages of both have been presented as well as examples of brands conducting either a repositioning or introducing a sub-brand (see Appendix N.).

Due to time restrictions the decision to move forward with a sub-brand has been made relatively quickly. Therefore, it would be necessary to create business cases for both situations in order to establish feasibility, especially from a financial point of view.

Brand name

A brand name for the new brand, SATURDAY, has been suggested to make the brand come alive. However, additional research is necessary before implementation, for example, legal issues that come to mind.

Two-brand strategy

A two-brand strategy has been proposed. This means that both brands exist simultaneously next to each other and are equal entities. Due to COVID-19, which will be further elaborated on in 'Chapter 9.2 Recommendations and limitations', a shift in that balance is probable. This project focused on a casualization trend. A trend that has grown exponentially due to COVID-19 establishing working from home as the new normal. It would probably make sense for Van Gils, moving forward, to have an emphasis on smart casual, and therefore, the SATURDAY brand.

Brand personality

A brand personality has been defined with several characteristics. Its main emphasis is on embracing the Saturday feeling. It is recommended to conduct further research to gain additional in-depth insights in these personality traits and possibly define these even more.

Brand proposition

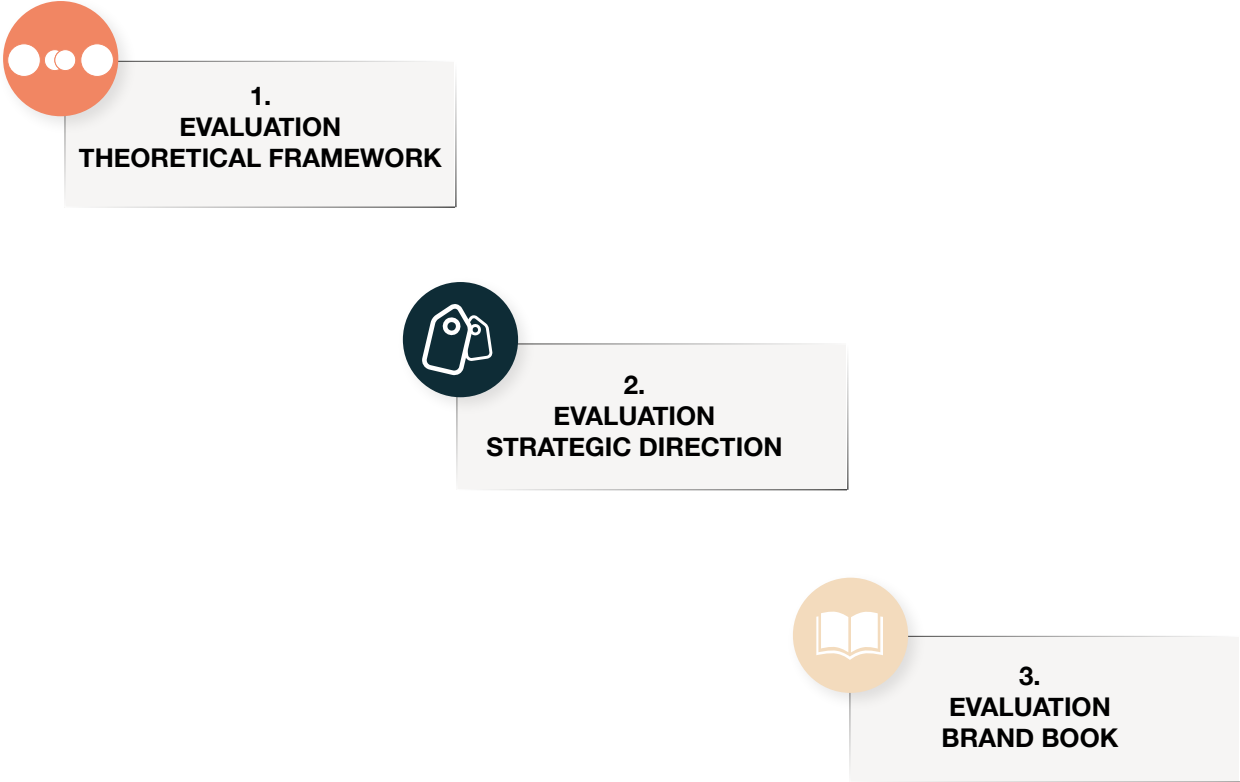
In the competitor map (see Chapter 4.2), an opportunity poses for Van Gils to position itself from a brand image point of view. Together with the brand proposition, offering garments for every occasion, a level of desirability is established for consumers. However, to increase desirability and feasibility, it is essential to create multiple competitors maps with several different competitors. Currently, only a small amount of competitors have been mapped. Since there are many more in an overly saturated market, it is important to gain an understanding for opportunities from different directions.

Design principles

The design principles have been established based on, among others, the DNA elements and the tone of voice. These are meant to create consistency in photography and advertising as well as brand touchpoints. Examples of brand touchpoint designs have been created with the principles in mind. However, it would be recommended to explore these designs, or others, further.

Brand book

The brand book is used to showcase the new brand and create internal alignment and consistency. The book has been presented internally. However, due to organisational changes (see *Chapter 9.2 Recommendations and limitations*), further evaluation and iteration have not been possible. That being said, there has been internal agreement that the book captures the atmosphere and feeling incredibly well.



8.3. Conclusion

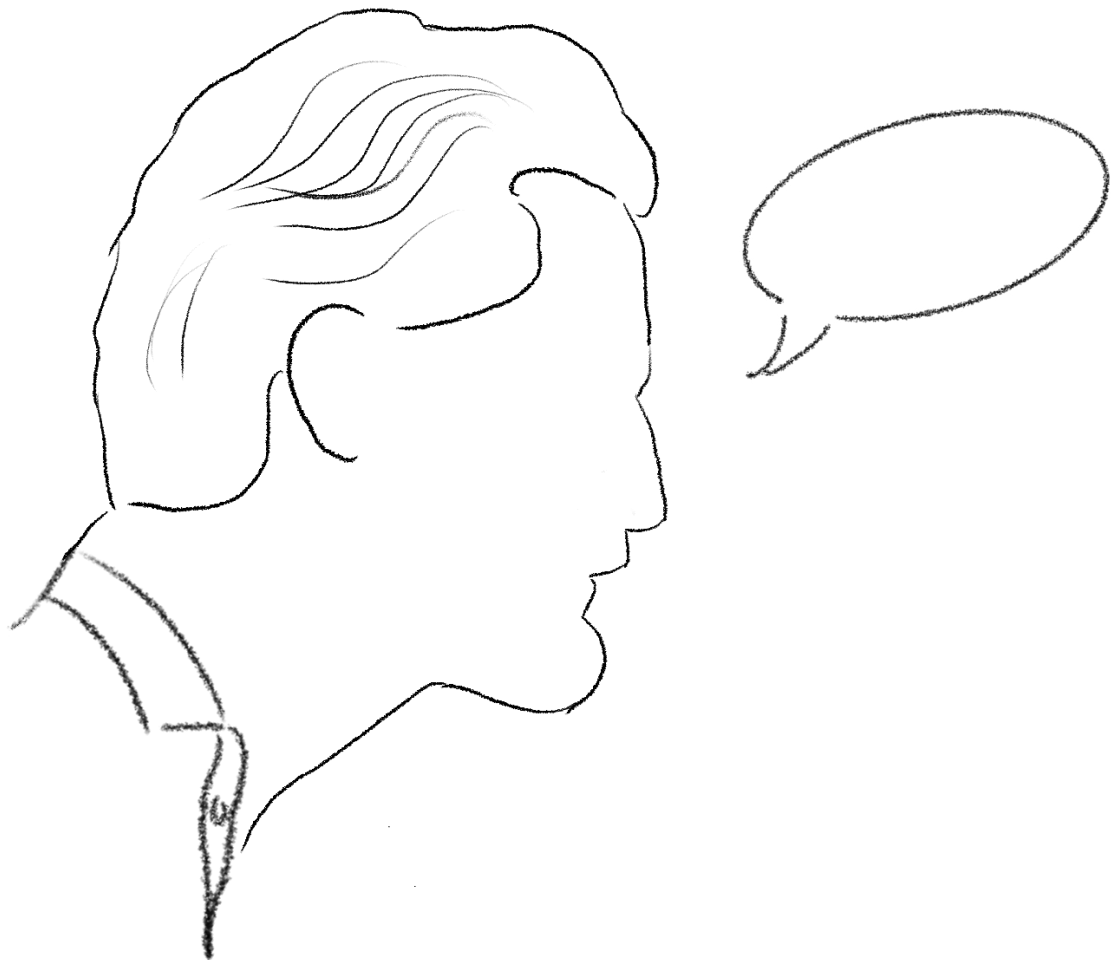
This chapter evaluates several aspects, namely the theoretical framework, strategic direction and brand book. The strategic direction has been the foundation in creating the final designs.

Further research is necessary to establish investment capacity feasibility, since this has not been taken into account during this project. Desirability has been established based on the analyses and thus addressing the needs of the stakeholders.

Viability has been established due to internal approval. Introducing another brand has the potential for long-term growth.

Due to time constraints, it has only been possible to present the brand book internally. It would be recommended to evaluate the brand book with brand experts, to gain additional insights from an outside point of view and have a final round of iterations.

09.



DISCUSSION

This thesis presents a strategic direction for Van Gils in order to reach out to a new younger audience while simultaneously staying true to loyal customers. In this chapter the thesis is concluded and recommendations are proposed.

IN THIS CHAPTER

9.1. Conclusion

9.2. Recommendations and limitations

9.3. Personal reflection

9.1. Conclusion

This subchapter answers the thesis' research questions.

This thesis has aimed to address the following research question:

“How to revitalize a traditional menswear brand in order to attract a new younger target group while also staying true to loyal customers?”

In order to address this question, sub-questions have been formulated that have been addressed throughout this thesis. The most important conclusions have been drawn to answer these questions.

1. How can Van Gils gain a competitive advantage in the highly saturated and competitive landscape of menswear? (see Chapter 4.2.).

The external analysis provided an opportunity for Van Gils to position the brand and distinguish itself from others from a brand image point of view. Due to the market being highly saturated it is difficult to differentiate. Especially, when Van Gils puts an emphasis on quality as the brand's most important unique selling point, as most competitors will claim to achieve this as well. The brand image that poses an opportunity for Van Gils, is 'fun' and not taking life too seriously. It differs from others, especially other full brands, and relates to the core and the roots of Van Gils.

2. What are the needs and values of a younger target group? (see Chapter 5.1.)

Consumer research made it possible to define functional needs, emotional needs, brand values and personal values. The most important insights gathered from this research that have been essential in providing direction are the mix and match ability of garments and two ways of expressing. This means that the same person expresses himself differently on different occasions, for example, wearing a suit for an important business meeting to

express oneself as professional and ambitious and wearing a polo shirt and jeans when having drinks with friends and expressing oneself as easy-going and approachable. Additionally, having the possibility to mix and match these garments used for different occasions is a must.

3. What do loyal and potential customers associate Van Gils with? (see Chapter 5.3.).

Consumer research made it also possible to establish associations participants have with Van Gils. The most important insights are that, firstly, Van Gils is still mostly known for its suits. Secondly, participants of the consumer research found that the brand does not have focus. They feel like the brand went into multiple different directions over the years and is still considered to be searching for their current direction. Thirdly, the brand is considered as dull and middle of the pack, participants even mentioned associating the brand with middle-aged men. Fourthly, there is not a clear image of the Van Gils man compared to, for instance, the Hugo Boss man or Suitsupply man. Finally, the brand is definitely known for its quality.

Based on these sub-questions a promising opportunity has been discovered in the creation of another brand in order to revitalize a traditional menswear brand like Van Gils. Introducing another brand, means Van Gils is still able to focus on loyal customers and stay true to what the brand is known for. Additionally, SATURDAY, as a brand, can focus on reaching out to a new and younger target audience.

9.2. Recommendations and limitations

This subchapter addresses the recommendations for further research and next steps as well as the limitations of the project.

9.2.1. Recommendations

To further develop the SATURDAY brand and ensure brand implementation, multiple developments need to take place. Furthermore, additional research needs to be conducted.

Before diving into the development of the brand, it is essential to have an internal evaluation of the brand book and ensure internal alignment. Moreover, in order to successfully introduce a new brand, it is essential to have passion amongst employees. Creating passion can be carried out by, for instance, letting employees actually experience the DNA of the brand. For example, doing a certain activity that embraces fun.

Looking at the SATURDAY brand it is essential to dive deeper into physical attributes of the brand, for instance, from a fashion design perspective what kind of garments fit the brand. This thesis focused on smart casual attire, however, it would be interesting to see whether fields like athleisure or sportswear fit into this atmosphere as well. Moreover, it would be interesting to see the translation of the DNA elements into physical attributes. For instance, as mentioned in *Chapter 1.2.*, Van Gils puts hidden messages in their garments, for example, 'Don't forget to look awesome.'

It is essential to establish how these elements are translated into the smart casual brand.

Similarly, it is incredibly important to develop the transparency and sustainability values. This means translating these values into tangible aspects. Due to COVID-19 it is imaginable that awareness has increased on these subjects and moved the timeline to incorporate tangible

aspects into the brand and garments forward immensely.

Additionally, the same can be imaginable for the route to market. Manufacturing entities closing, due to the pandemic, meant it was not possible for brands to deliver an upcoming collection or even introducing a new collection, and therefore, still offering existing pieces of apparel. From a consumer perspective, this might also mean that wardrobes are not being expended. It is more likely that these become smaller instead of bigger, due to working from home becoming the new normal. Therefore, a focus on **design for longevity** might be a new opportunity for brands to look into, especially when introducing a new brand like SATURDAY.

Additionally, it is essential for Van Gils to create consistency amongst brand touchpoints. Due to the mix and match possibilities of both brands, it is inevitable that consumers will also get in touch with Van Gils. However, the massive differences between Van Gils' brandstores might be confusing for consumers. Therefore, consistency is fundamental.

Furthermore, additional consumer research is necessary to gain more insights into the target audience, for instance lifestyle and other brands these men are buying from, not only within fashion. It is also recommended to evaluate the SATURDAY brand with the target consumer. Moreover, further research needs to be conducted to gain a thorough understanding of the extent to which COVID-19 has changed and influenced consumer behaviour or even purchasing decisions, the market and the fashion industry as a whole.

This also means that the company needs to have a closer look internally. From an organisational design perspective, it is essential to dive into whether the current way of working is still viable with lead times of six months.

Introducing a womenswear label has been briefly mentioned in Chapter 6.5. However, before tapping into a new market, it is essential for Van Gils to make sure that the core business is utterly solid.

9.2.2. Limitations

There are multiple limitations that need to be taken into account in this thesis.

There is a feasibility uncertainty concerning the introduction of the new brand, due to the investment capacity not taken into account during this project. The required research for the financial investment is not feasible within the project's time frame and is not part of the expertise of the SPD field of study.

Additionally, there is a desirability uncertainty due to the SATURDAY brand not being evaluated by the target consumer. Once again due to it not being feasible within the project's time frame.

Finally, COVID-19 and the impact it has had on Van Gils as a company influenced the trajectory of this project. Especially, during the transition period of working at the office to working from home, it initially became increasingly more difficult to get in touch with employees or outside experts, since other aspects, understandably, became a priority. This limitation caused difficulty in receiving feedback.

9.3. Personal reflection

The final section addresses my reflection on personal goals and experiences throughout this project.

Before starting my graduation project, I knew I wanted my project to be within the fashion industry and, preferably, focus on brand strategy. As I am passionate about the subjects of fashion and brand strategy and I wanted to acknowledge whether I would like to pursue a career that combines both.

I reached out to Van Gils, because I have a personal connection with the brand as my grandparents worked with the brand many years ago and, therefore, I was curious what had happened to the brand. Van Gils offered me the opportunity to work in the fashion industry and focus on brand strategy. The company gave me the utmost freedom to shape and create a project according to my preferences.

This freedom also, of course, led to certain challenges. It meant that I needed to trust my own instincts and be confident in my ways of working as a strategic designer. Initially, this was hard, since I struggled with finding direction and it took quite some time for me to get acquainted with the material, and therefore, scoping and moving on to the consumer research definitely was much later than I anticipated. The fuzzy front end has never been my strong suit. Looking back I definitely needed reassurance. I am thankful for my supervisory team providing me this reassurance, but also at the same time always challenging me. I definitely think them challenging me provided me with the confidence that I needed to create certainty and create the best possible project. With this confidence in mind, I was able to convince my company mentor, the CEO at that time, that the direction that I came up with is the most promising direction for the brand. I am definitely proud of how I was able to follow my instincts and beliefs in order to move on with my own direction.

Unfortunately, there have been other unforeseen circumstances that made the project quite challenging. Firstly, COVID-19 hit relatively early on in my project and led to me working from home, while still needing to conduct consumer research, a creative session with the management team and visiting brandstores. Since I wanted to learn more about doing creative sessions and getting acquainted with those, it was definitely not how I anticipated the sessions or focus group to go. I definitely struggled with creating interaction between people while being on a video call. It took some time to get adjusted, but in the end, I got the insights and results that I needed. Additionally, nearing the end of my project, Van Gils announced that they did not survive the implications caused by COVID, and therefore ending business. This meant that I lost my initial company mentor and needed to find another and that I struggled a bit with finding motivation, due to the future of the company being very uncertain. However, it made me realize that I still very much believe in my direction, COVID or non-COVID.

Furthermore, I definitely realized and learned that even though it is an individual project, there are a lot of people who are very much willing to help when I struggled most.

Looking back at the project I am definitely proud of what I was capable of achieving and delivering in the end, especially with the unforeseen circumstances in mind. I am very happy to realize that there is definitely value for strategic designers in the fashion industry. I sincerely hope that I sparked Van Gils' curiosity and that they still might be able to use my proposal for future strategic development.

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