Brand experience design

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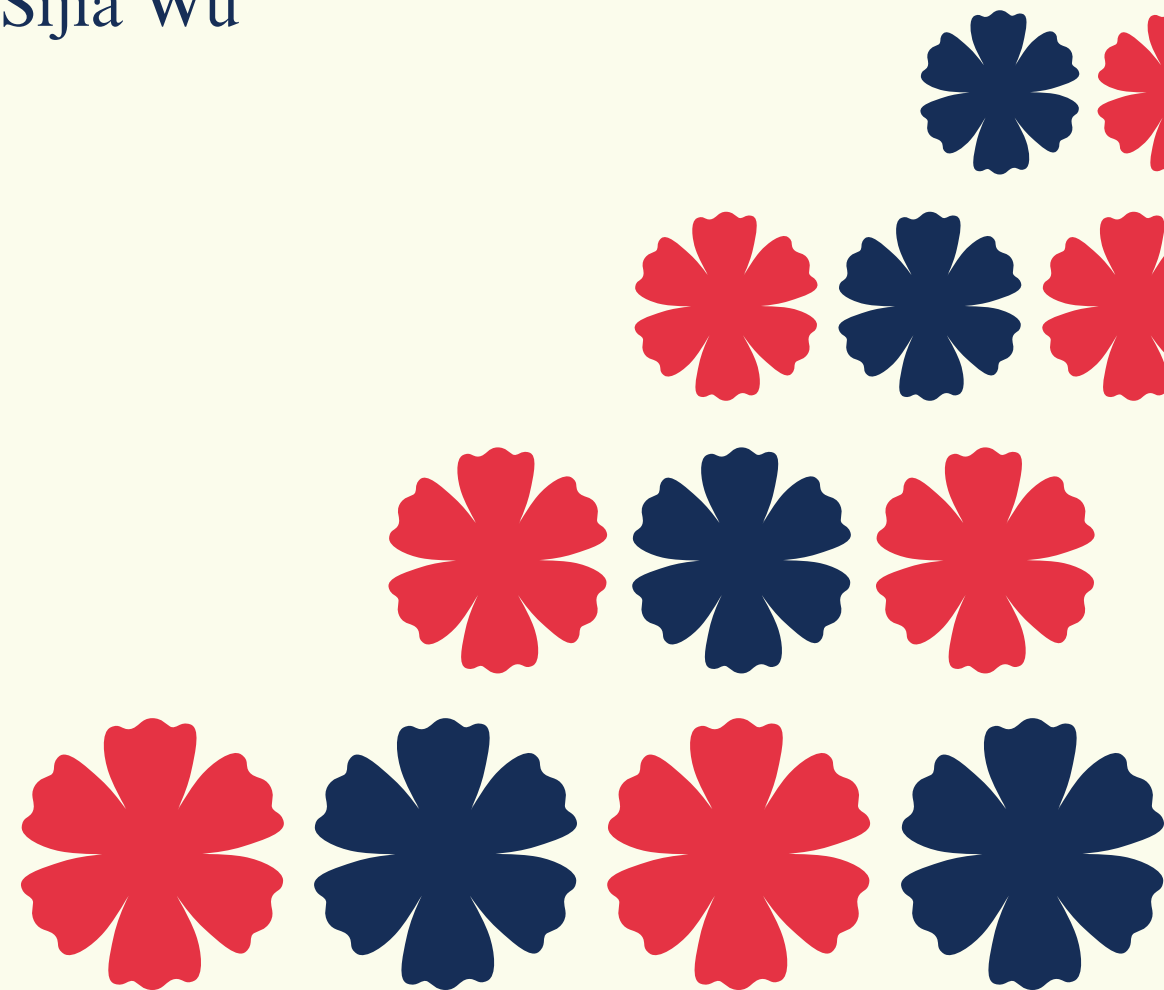
Sijia Wu



BRAND EXPERIENCE DESIGN

Sijia Wu

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BRAND EXPERIENCE DESIGN

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To my boys

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Summary

This thesis reports the findings of a doctoral research project that investigates the design of brand experience (BE). BE is defined as subjective internal consumer responses evoked by interaction with brand-related touchpoints (TPs). BE design involves both creation and management activities concerned with multiple types of TPs. These activities aim to support strategic brand management and create a competitive advantage for organisations. Since the introduction of the experience economy, BE has gained significant interest from both research scholars and practitioners. BE results in a large variety of consumer outcomes related to a brand, such as brand equity, brand attitude, and purchase intention. Not surprisingly, organisations have rapidly increased their BE spend, and BE is recognised as the new era of marketing in various industries. However, past research has primarily focused on the conceptualisation and consequences of BE from a brand management and consumer perspective, but not on the design of BE. Several relevant literature streams examine particular types of TPs in unconnected research fields. As most experience design research takes a user-centric approach, it often lacks a brand perspective. Therefore, the research gap consists of design knowledge that can be applied across various types of TPs in line with strategic brand management. Consequently, this research investigates the following main research question: *How could meaningful BE be designed to help organisations achieve favourable consumer outcomes aligned with strategic brand management?*

This research question is addressed from three perspectives. The first perspective centres on design knowledge. It delves into design activities occurring at both tactical and strategic levels, involving all those who apply design skills or design thinking and design management practices, instead of being limited to professional designers. The second perspective is the experiential aspect. It emphasises various types of TPs through which BE is shaped. The scope of this research is limited to brand-owned and partner-owned TPs that can be (co)designed by the organisation. The third perspective revolves around strategic brand management. It concerns strategic brand management objectives that contribute to organisational success.

The philosophical worldview that shapes this doctoral research is the pragmatic worldview. It provides a philosophical foundation centred on the main research question. To optimally explore this under-researched domain, I opt for an exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach. The first study is a qualitative multiple-case study, allowing for an in-depth exploration of BE design. Subsequently, the second study adopts a quantitative approach, aiming to deepen the understanding of a single specific emerging topic within the realm of BE design. This research builds on theories from different fields, including brand management, integrated marketing communication, service design, product design and innovation, and design research.

The first study started with a literature review exploring the design and management of various TPs. More specifically, it looked at various types of TPs, one specific type of TP, and the visual aspects of TPs. As TPs differ substantially from each other, the design of one particular TP type may call for specific design skills and approaches that are different from those required for another one. As different types of TPs fall under separate disciplines within an organisation, coordination is needed to bridge the different mindsets and stimulate collaboration. Due to the unprecedented proliferation of TPs, the need for a more integrative approach is greater than ever before. To narrow down the scope of this research, I choose to focus on the visual aspects of TPs. The visual appearance of TPs plays a major role in forming consumers' perception of brand identity, thereby affecting brand-related outcomes and creating brand value. In fact, visual appearance has a more substantial effect in communicating a specific brand identity than user interaction with products. Moreover, multiple TPs have a combined effect on perceptions of a brand identity, influencing consumers' BEs. Based on this literature review, the first research question is therefore formulated as follows: *How could the visual appearance of various TPs be designed to support strategic brand management goals?*

To investigate the current state of the art and provide novel insights for researchers and practitioners, the first study utilises a multiple-case study method. This choice is guided by the nature of the research question; the level of control a researcher can exert over behavioural events; and the emphasis on contemporary versus historical events. In the first stage of data collection, four cases were selected according to theoretical sampling. The selection is based on combinations of two factors: large organisations vs. small and medium enterprises and internal vs. external design capability. Recently completed TP design projects involving different design disciplines were selected to address the diversity of TPs. I recruited informants with two different BE design roles, as defined in the literature. The second stage of data collection involved interviews with experts and fellow researchers. This stage helps avoid researcher bias and misinterpretations, and identifies deeper findings. Five design and research experts were interviewed to consolidate the preliminary findings.

The results show that BE design encompasses an extensive range of TPs. To design the visual appearance of various TPs, practitioners pay attention to the influences among TPs and the influences between TPs and the brand. The results are structured according to three levels of BE design complexity: (1) individual TP, (2) a portfolio of TPs, and (3) generations of TPs. As each level poses different challenges, designers and managers deal with different tension fields and strive to achieve corresponding outcomes. These tension fields include *consistency* versus *originality* on the level of an individual TP, *consistency* versus *adaptation* on the level of a TP portfolio, and *consistency* versus *relevance* on the level of TP generations. The corresponding desired outcomes are the *distinctiveness* of an individual TP, *coherence* of a TP portfolio, and *continuity* between the TP generations. Two distinct types of practices,

creation and *coordination,* are essential to achieve the desired outcomes. *Creation* practices emphasise discovering and developing new possibilities for TP design, such as new display shapes or new logos. These practices include *inspiring*, *guiding*, and *learning. Coordination* practices focus on optimising efficiency or effectiveness, such as decisions on investing in a specific TP, and they entail prioritising, governing, and *regulating* practices. Furthermore, in all the analysed cases, these practices have resulted in positive results ranging from favourable consumer responses and strong brand positioning in the market to greater sales and internal support for these BE design practices. These empirically derived practices provide initial insights into how designers and managers can successfully overcome BE design challenges and foster favourable consumer outcomes.

The results of Study 1 point to the importance of inspiration examples in BE design. In this thesis, design tasks concerned with the visual aspects of a TP to communicate a desired brand identity are termed *styling tasks*. Earlier studies have shown that inspiration examples can support designers in general problem-solving tasks. However, little is known about how they can stimulate creativity in styling tasks. To address this research gap, I explored the following research question in the second study: *How can inspiration examples affect the quality of styling tasks in the BE design process?* To answer this question, I conducted the second study. It started with a literature review that identified a set of primary criteria for assessing the design outcomes of styling tasks. These criteria include personality coherence, visual coherence, and originality. Second, the literature review drew on design research findings to identify criteria for generating inspiration examples that can be potentially beneficial. These criteria include inspiration properties, inspiration sources, and their representation forms.

The second study used an explorative experiment that compared a participant group to which no examples were provided with three groups that each received a different example. To enhance generalisability, I used two design briefs for different products. The design task asked participants to develop a concept, either without any example or with an example (i.e. a sentence, a mood board, or an image of a dissimilar product). These examples were created for the specific design brief by two master students. Two hundred and fifty-two bachelor students consented to participate. They were randomly assigned to one of the eight design tasks. All participants had the same amount of time to complete the design task in their own working or living environment, and they all received the same pre-recorded instructions. After the participants finished the concepts, they answered a short survey. The concepts were assessed separately by two brand design experts.

The results indicate that designers who received examples that communicated a brand personality generated concepts with a higher personality coherence but a similar level of originality as designers who were not provided with any examples. Also, visual examples

(i.e. a mood board and an image of a dissimilar TP) increased visual coherence. These results indicate that examples that are closely related to the brand identity can stimulate attention allocation, improving the quality of styling tasks. Interestingly, the results also suggest that textual inspiration (i.e. a sentence) seems to be equally as effective as visual inspiration in fostering personality coherence. In contrast, the participants overwhelmingly preferred the mood board (55% for personality coherence and 51% for originality) over the sentence (8% for personality coherence and 17% for originality).

To conclude, designing and maintaining an integrated BE is a complex process. Its complexity lies in the large number of various types of TPs and multiple design disciplines involved. The findings from this research provide designers and managers with a quick understanding of their challenges through the tension fields and awareness of the different mindset required in BE design. Furthermore, the structure of the three levels of complexity can be applied broadly across various types of TPs; it is a new way to analyse TPs that can engage multiple disciplines within an organisation. When designing different types of TPs, inspiration examples can support designers' creativity in the design process. Lastly, the desired outcomes and the styling criteria enable designers and managers to evaluate the design outcomes specifically in relation to brand management. Based on the results of the evaluation, designers and managers can formulate concrete goals and identify actions to achieve positive brand-related consumer outcomes.

The primary contribution of this research lies in providing a broader understanding of how BE can be purposefully designed and effectively managed in line with an organisation's brand management. More specifically, it contributes to marketing communication and brand management literature by revealing BE design practices that help communicate brand identity to a design team, facilitate the design of various types of TPs, and support brand renewal. It provides empirical evidence on how designers and managers holistically navigate challenges across multiple types of TPs. Second, the primary styling criteria, criteria for generating inspiration examples, and the influence of the examples provide new knowledge to support the creative process of styling tasks. Lastly, three different routes are presented in Chapter 6, illustrating how practitioners can apply the findings of this research in practice.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift rapporteert de bevindingen van een doctoraal onderzoeksproject dat de visuele aspect van merkbeleving onderzoekt. Merkbeleving wordt gedefinieerd als subjectieve, interne consumentenreacties die worden opgeroepen door interactie met aan het merk gerelateerde contactpunten. Het ontwerpen van merkbeleving omvat zowel creatieve als management activiteiten die betrekking hebben op meerdere soorten contactpunten. Deze activiteiten zijn bedoeld om strategisch merk management te ondersteunen en een concurrentievoordeel te creëren voor organisaties. Sinds de introductie van de experience economie heeft merkbeleving aanzienlijke belangstelling gekregen van zowel onderzoekswetenschappers als praktijkmensen. Merkbeleving leidt tot een grote verscheidenheid aan consumentenresultaten gerelateerd aan een merk, zoals merkwaarde, consumenten houdingen ten opzichte van het merk en koopintentie. Het is dan ook niet verrassend dat de uitgaven aan merkbeleving in organisaties snel zijn gegroeid, en merkbeleving wordt erkend als het nieuwe tijdperk van marketing in diverse industrieën. Echter, eerder onderzoek heeft zich vooral gericht op de conceptualisering en gevolgen van merkbeleving vanuit een merkmanagement- en consumentenperspectief, maar niet op het ontwerpen van merkbeleving. Verschillende relevante literatuurstromen onderzoeken bepaalde soorten contactpunten in gescheiden onderzoeksgebieden. Aangezien het meeste onderzoek naar het ontwerpen van beleving een gebruikersgerichte benadering neemt, ontbreekt vaak het merkperspectief. Daarom is er een onderzoekskloof onstaan in ontwerpkennis die kan worden toegepast op verschillende soorten contactpunten in lijn met strategisch merk management. Als gevolg hiervan, gaat dit onderzoek om de volgende hoofdvraag: *Hoe ontwerp je betekenisvolle merkbeleving die organisaties helpt gunstige consumentenresultaten te behalen in lijn met strategisch merk management?*

Deze onderzoeksvraag wordt vanuit drie perspectieven benaderd. Het eerste perspectief richt zich op ontwerpkennis. Het gaat dieper in op ontwerpactiviteiten die plaatsvinden op zowel tactisch als strategisch niveau, waarbij actoren betrokken zijn die niet beperkt zijn tot professionele ontwerpers, maar iedereen die ontwerpvaardigheden of design thinking en design management praktijken toepast. Het tweede perspectief is het aspect van ervaringen. Het benadrukt verschillende soorten contactpunten waardoor merkbeleving wordt gevormd. Dit onderzoek is beperkt tot merkeigen en partner-eigen contactpunten die (deels)ontworpen kunnen worden door de organisatie. Het derde perspectief draait om strategisch merkbeheer. Dit betreft doelstellingen van strategisch merkbeheer die bijdragen aan het succes van de organisatie.

De filosofische wereldvisie die dit doctoraal onderzoek vormgeeft, is de pragmatische wereldvisie. Het biedt een filosofisch fundament gericht op de hoofdvraag van het onderzoek. Om dit onderbelichte domein optimaal te verkennen, kies ik voor een verkennende sequentiële mixde-onderzoeksbenadering. De eerste studie is een kwalitatieve multicase-studie, waarmee een diepgaande verkenning van het ontwerpen van merkbeleving mogelijk is. Vervolgens

neemt de tweede studie een kwantitatieve benadering aan, met als doel het begrip van een specifiek onderwerp binnen het domein van het ontwerpen van merkbeleving te verdiepen. Dit onderzoek bouwt voort op theorieën uit verschillende vakgebieden, waaronder merkbeheer, geïntegreerde marketingcommunicatie, service ontwerpen, productontwerp en innovatie, en design onderzoek.

De eerste studie begon met een literatuuronderzoek dat het ontwerpen en beheren van verschillende contactpunten verkende. Meer specifiek werd gekeken naar verschillende soorten contactpunten , één specifiek type contactpunt en het visuele aspect van een contactpunten. Omdat contactpunten aanzienlijk van elkaar verschillen, kan het ontwerp van een bepaald type contactpunten specifieke ontwerpvaardigheden en benaderingen vereisen die verschillen van die voor een ander type. Aangezien verschillende soorten contactpunten onder verschillende disciplines binnen een organisatie vallen, is coördinatie nodig om de diverse denkwijzen te overbruggen en samenwerking te bevorderen. Met de ongekende uitbreiding van het aantal contactpunten is de behoefte aan een meer integratieve benadering groter dan ooit. Om de scope van dit onderzoek te beperken, kies ik ervoor me te richten op de visuele aspecten van contactpunten. Het visuele uiterlijk van contactpunten speelt een belangrijke rol bij het vormen van de perceptie van consumenten van de merkidentiteit, wat van invloed is op merk gerelateerde resultaten en merkwaarde creëert. In vergelijking met gebruikersinteractie via producten is het effect van visueel uiterlijk substantiëler in het communiceren van specifieke merkidentiteiten. Bovendien hebben meerdere contactpunten een gecombineerd effect op percepties van een merkidentiteit, wat van invloed is op de merkbeleving van consumenten. Op basis van dit literatuuronderzoek wordt de eerste onderzoeksvraag daarom geformuleerd als volgt: *Hoe kan het visuele uiterlijk van verschillende contactpunten worden ontworpen om strategische doelen voor merkbeheer te ondersteunen?*

Om de huidige stand van zaken te bestuderen en nieuwe inzichten te bieden voor onderzoekers en praktijkmensen, maakt de onderzoeksmethode van deze eerste studie gebruik van een multicase-studie. Deze keuze wordt geleid door de aard van de onderzoeksvraag, het niveau van controle dat een onderzoeker kan uitoefenen op gedragsevents, en de nadruk op hedendaagse versus historische gebeurtenissen. In de eerste fase van gegevensverzameling werden vier cases geselecteerd volgens theoretische steekproeven. De selectie is gebaseerd op combinaties van twee factoren: grote organisaties vs. kleine en middelgrote ondernemingen en interne vs. externe ontwerpcapaciteit. Onlangs voltooide ontwerpprojecten van contactpunten met betrokkenheid van verschillende ontwerpdisciplines werden geselecteerd om de diversiteit van contactpunten aan te pakken. Ik heb informanten gerekruteerd met twee verschillende rollen in het ontwerpen van merkbeleving volgens de literatuur. De tweede fase van gegevensverzameling omvat interviews met experts en medeonderzoekers. Deze fase helpt om onderzoeksvooroordeel, verkeerde interpretaties te vermijden en diepere bevindingen

te identificeren. Vijf ontwerp- en onderzoeksexperts zijn geïnterviewd om de voorlopige bevindingen te consolideren.

De resultaten tonen aan dat het ontwerpen van de merkbeleving een uitgebreid scala aan contactpunten omvat. Om het visuele uiterlijk van verschillende contactpunten te ontwerpen, letten praktijkmensen op de invloeden tussen contactpunten onderling en de invloeden tussen contactpunten en het merk. De resultaten zijn gestructureerd volgens drie niveaus van complexiteit van het ontwerpen van merkbeleving: (1) individueel contactpunt, (2) een portfolio van contactpunten en (3) generaties van contactpunten. Omdat de uitdagingen per niveau verschillen, gaan ontwerpers and managers om met verschillende spanningsvelden en streven ze naar overeenkomstige resultaten. Deze spanningsvelden omvatten *consistentie* versus *originaliteit* op het niveau van een individueel contactpunt, *consistentie* versus *aanpassing* op het niveau van een contactpunten portfolio, en *consistentie* versus *relevantie* op het niveau van contactpunten generaties. De bijbehorende gewenste resultaten zijn de *onderscheidendheid* van een individueel contactpunt, de *coherentie* van een contactpunten portfolio en *continuïteit* tussen de contactpunten generaties. Twee verschillende soorten praktijken, *creatie* en *coördinatie*, zijn essentieel om de gewenste resultaten te bereiken. Creatiepraktijken benadrukken het ontdekken en ontwikkelen van nieuwe mogelijkheden voor het ontwerpen van contactpunten, zoals een nieuwe vorm van een display of een nieuw logo. Ze omvatten *inspireren*, *begeleiden* en *leren* praktijken. Coördinatiepraktijken richten zich op het optimaliseren van efficiëntie of effectiviteit, zoals beslissingen over de investering van een specifiek contactpunten, en omvatten *prioriteren*, *regeren* en *reguleren* praktijken. Bovendien hebben deze praktijken in alle geanalyseerde cases geleid tot positieve resultaten, variërend van gunstige consumentenreacties en een sterke positionering van het merk op de markt tot een toename van de verkoop en interne ondersteuning voor deze merkbeleving-ontwerppraktijken. Deze empirisch afgeleide praktijken bieden aanvankelijke inzichten in hoe ontwerpers en managers met succes uitdagingen op het gebied van het ontwerpen van merkbeleving kunnen overwinnen en gunstige consumentenresultaten kunnen bevorderen.

De resultaten van Studie 1 wezen op het belang van inspiratievoorbeelden in het ontwerpen van merkbeleving. In dit proefschrift worden ontwerptaken die betrekking hebben op de visuele aspecten van een contactpunten om een gewenste merkidentiteit te communiceren, aangeduid als *stylingtaken*. Tot nu toe hebben studies aangetoond dat inspiratievoorbeelden ontwerpers kunnen ondersteunen bij algemene probleemoplossende taken. Echter, er is weinig bekend over hoe ze creativiteit in stylingtaken kunnen stimuleren. Om deze onderzoekskloof aan te pakken, onderzoek ik de volgende onderzoeksvraag in de tweede studie: *Hoe kunnen inspiratievoorbeelden de kwaliteit van stylingtaken in het merkbeleving-ontwerpproces beïnvloeden?* Om deze vraag te beantwoorden, heb ik de tweede studie uitgevoerd. Het begon met een literatuurstudie die een reeks primaire criteria identificeerde die ontwerpresultaten van

stylingtaken kunnen beoordelen. Deze criteria omvatten persoonlijkheidscoherentie, visuele coherentie en originaliteit. Ten tweede richt de literatuurstudie zich op ontwerponderzoek om criteria te identificeren voor het genereren van inspiratievoorbeelden die potentieel voordelig kunnen zijn. Deze criteria omvatten inspiratie-eigenschappen, inspiratiebronnen en hun representatievormen.

De tweede studie gebruikte een verkennend experiment dat een deelnemersgroep zonder voorbeelden vergeleek met drie groepen die elk een verschillend voorbeeld ontvingen. Om de generaliseerbaarheid te vergroten, gebruikte ik twee ontwerpopdrachten voor verschillende producten. De ontwerptaak vroeg deelnemers om een concept te ontwikkelen, hetzij zonder enig voorbeeld, hetzij met een voorbeeld (bijvoorbeeld een zin, een moodboard of een afbeelding van een ongelijksoortig product). Deze voorbeelden werden specifiek voor de ontwerpopdracht gemaakt door twee masterstudenten. Tweehonderdtweeënvijftig bachelorstudenten gaven toestemming om deel te nemen. Ze werden willekeurig toegewezen aan een van de acht ontwerptaken. Alle deelnemers hadden dezelfde hoeveelheid tijd om de ontwerptaak in hun eigen werk- of leefomgeving te voltooien en ontvingen dezelfde vooraf opgenomen instructies. Nadat de deelnemers de concepten hadden voltooid, beantwoordden ze een korte enquête. De concepten werden afzonderlijk beoordeeld door twee merkontwerpexperts.

De resultaten geven aan dat ontwerpers die voorbeelden ontvingen die een beoogde betekenis communiceerden (bijv. merkpersoonlijkheid) in vergelijking met ontwerpers die geen voorbeelden ontvingen, concepten genereerden met een hogere persoonlijkheid-scoherentie, maar met een vergelijkbaar niveau van originaliteit. Ook verhoogden visuele voorbeelden (bijv. een moodboard en een afbeelding van een ongelijksoortige product) de visuele coherentie. Deze resultaten geven aan dat voorbeelden die nauw verwant zijn aan de beoogde betekenis de aandachtstoewijzing kunnen stimuleren, waardoor de kwaliteit van stylingtaken verbetert. Interessant is dat de resultaten ook suggereren dat tekstuele inspiratie (bijv. een zin) even effectief lijkt als visuele inspiratie wat betreft persoonlijkheidscoherentie. In tegenstelling tot dit, gaven de deelnemers overweldigend de voorkeur aan het moodboard (55% voor persoonlijkheidscoherentie en 51% voor originaliteit) boven de zin (8% voor persoonlijkheidscoherentie en 17% voor originaliteit).

Samenvattend is het ontwerpen en onderhouden van een geïntegreerde merkbeleving complex. De complexiteit ligt in het grote aantal verschillende soorten contactpunten en de betrokkenheid van meerdere ontwerpdisciplines. De bevindingen uit dit onderzoek bieden ontwerpers en managers een snel begrip van hun uitdagingen door de spanningsvelden en het bewustzijn van de verschillende mindset die vereist is in het ontwerpen van merkbeleving. Verder kan de structuur van de drie complexiteitsniveaus breed worden toegepast op verschillende soorten contactpunten, en het is een nieuwe manier om de contactpunten

te analyseren die meerdere disciplines binnen een organisatie kunnen betrekken. Bij het ontwerpen van verschillende soorten contactpunten kunnen inspiratievoorbeelden de creativiteit van ontwerpers in het ontwerpproces ondersteunen. Tot slot stellen de gewenste resultaten en de stylingcriteria ontwerpers and managers in staat om de ontwerpresultaten specifiek in relatie tot merkbeheer te evalueren. Op basis van de resultaten van de evaluatie kunnen ontwerpers en managers concrete doelen formuleren en acties identificeren om positieve merkgerelateerde consumentenresultaten te bereiken.

De primaire bijdrage van dit onderzoek ligt in het bieden van een verbreed begrip van hoe merkbeleving doelbewust kan worden ontworpen en effectief beheerd in lijn met het merkbeheer van een organisatie. Meer specifiek draagt het bij aan de literatuur over marketingcommunicatie en merkbeheer door merkbeleving-ontwerppraktijken te onthullen die helpen bij het communiceren van merkidentiteit aan een ontwerpteam, het faciliteren van het ontwerp van verschillende soorten contactpunten en het ondersteunen van merkvernieuwing. Het biedt empirisch bewijs over hoe ontwerpers en managers holistisch de uitdagingen navigeren over meerdere soorten contactpunten. Ten tweede bieden de primaire stylingcriteria, criteria voor het genereren van inspiratievoorbeelden en de invloed van de verstrekte voorbeelden nieuwe kennis ter ondersteuning van het creatieve proces van stylingtaken. Tot slot worden in Hoofdstuk 6 drie verschillende routes gepresenteerd, waarin wordt geïllustreerd hoe praktijkmensen de bevindingen van dit onderzoek in de praktijk kunnen toepassen.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 A little anecdote about brand experience

When I left Shanghai in 1993, the word ‘Lego’ wasn’t even in my vocabulary. It took a staggering 16 years before the brand found its way into my world. My first encounter with Lego was on my son’s fourth birthday, coinciding with the start of his primary school journey. Among the gifts he received was a Lego truck. In the days following his birthday, I found myself helping him sort different bricks into coloured bowls, meticulously assembling them step by step, guided by the instructions. As the pieces clicked together to form a truck, I briefly pondered, ‘Is this truly a gift? What kind of enjoyment does it bring?’ Little did I know that this would mark the beginning of my brand experience with Lego. After just a few years, Lego had become our family’s first choice for toys and entertainment. Our living room had been transformed into a Lego planet with railways, buildings, cars, animals, and even a practical grocery store. As if that was not enough, we also immersed ourselves in the Legoland resort on our summer holidays and went to the premieres of the Lego movies. Fast forward to the year my son completed primary school. The importance of Lego reached a new level – I became a passionate part-time weekend coach for his Lego League team. Comprising seven enthusiastic boys, their mission was to construct Lego robots to tackle predefined tasks themed around ‘animal allies’ This was a serious adventure for the boys – and especially for the parents. Hackathon pizza sessions we held to generate ideas on Friday evenings streched into the midnight hours. Looking back, it was an unforgettable experience (Figure 1 shows our journey from the first Lego truck to the Lego League event). My attitude towards the Lego brand underwent a real transformation: from a total lack of knowledge to dedicated fanhood. What really compelled me throughout all these years, as a designer, is the question: what is the role of design in creating such engaging and meaningful brand experiences like Lego?

This anecdote illustrates how my experiences with the Lego brand were formed through their products and related events over the years. It is this experience that changed my attitude towards the brand. Throughout this thesis, the term ‘brand’ refers to an ‘offering that consumers may seek information about so that they can make a choice’ (Batra & Keller, 2016, p. 122). As such, it encompasses brands owned by commercial organisations like Lego and also those of nonprofit organisations like Greenpeace. Brand experiences (BEs) are not only meaningful to consumers, but they are also vital for brands. Research shows that BE can affect consumer satisfaction, brand loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009), and many other brand-related consumer outcomes (for an overview, see Khan & Rahman, 2015). Like Lego, many brands and organisations are keen to create memorable BEs and engage with customers. However, research on BE creation is rare (Motta-Filho, 2021). This thesis investigates the role of design in creating BEs that can result in positive consumer outcomes for a brand.

Figure 1: From the first Lego truck to the Lego League event

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. It starts with an introduction to experience consumption and then narrows the focus on BE and its importance. Subsequently, it explains the conceptualisation of BE and the formation of BEs on different levels through touchpoints. Next, it discusses the influence of design on consumers' BEs. Lastly, this chapter presents the purpose, approach, and outline of the thesis.

1.2 The importance of the experience economy and brand experience

Twenty-five years ago, in their famous book, *The Experience Economy*, Pine and Gilmore (1998) postulated that our society has evolved from a product- and service-based economy to an experience-based one. Based on 'economic distinctions', they distinguished four types of economic offerings provided by an organisation: commodities, goods, services, and experiences. For example, coffee beans, as unprocessed ingredients, are commodities;

capsules containing ground beans are goods. When you grab a cappuccino at the Coffee Star on the university campus, it is freshly made by a barista; that is a service. When you have a leisurely coffee at a cosy coffee bar on a Saturday afternoon, you are buying an experience. The economic value of an organisation's offering increases when it becomes more relevant to what a consumer truly wants. In this case, it can be a ready-to-drink beverage or a shared moment with a friend. As a commodity, beans have less immediate relevance to the consumer's need for coffee; therefore, the market for them is less differentiated, and the price is lower. A cappuccino in a café is more relevant to the consumer's need for social interaction; the market is more differentiated, and the price is more premium. These four economic offerings differ in the sense that commodities are fungible, goods are tangible, services are intangible, and experiences are memorable.

In this experience-based economy, understanding how to create experiences is vital for organisations because 'those businesses that relegate themselves to the diminishing world of goods and services will be rendered irrelevant. To avoid this fate, you must learn to stage a rich, compelling experience' (Pine and Gilmore, 1998, p. 25). From a consumer perspective, an experiential purchase yields several essential benefits compared to purchasing goods (Chevtchouk et al., 2021). An experiential purchase leads to a higher level of happiness and satisfaction and is more conducive to an individual's well-being (Carter & Gilovich, 2010; Howell & Hill, 2009). Experiential consumption also inspires a higher level of gratitude, and reflection on experiential consumption makes an individual more generous towards others (Walker et al., 2016). Not surprisingly, academic interest in the experience phenomenon underwent remarkable growth: more articles on experiences were produced between 2016 and 2018 than in the thirty preceding years, and *Forbes* alone published 50% more articles on this topic in 2019 than it did between 2010 and 2018 (Chevtchouk et al., 2021).

One of the most influential concepts of the experience phenomenon in the marketing and branding literature is BE. Numerous studies have shown that organisations can harness BE to achieve strategic brand management goals that enhance brand-related consumer outcomes. Brakus et al. (2009) demonstrated that BE affects consumer satisfaction and loyalty both directly and indirectly through brand personality associations. Subsequently, other scholars have investigated the consequences of BE and found that BE results in a variety of positive consumer outcomes related to a brand (for a review, see Khan & Rahman, 2015), including brand equity (e.g. Schmitt et al., 2014), brand attitude (e.g. Chang & Chieng, 2006; Fransen et al., 2013), brand recall (e.g. Baumann et al., 2015), and purchase intention (e.g. Gabisch, 2011).

BE has not only gained a remarkable amount of attention from researchers but has also been recognised as the new era of marketing for practitioners (Freeman, 2017; Khan & Rahman,

2015). It is applied widely in different industries, including retail, fast-moving consumer goods, luxury goods, tourism, hospitality, and service (Schmitt & Zarontanello, 2015). Freeman's global study among 1,000 marketers shows that 33% of Chief Marketing Officers expect to invest 21-50% of their budgets to enhance BE. Across all regions, marketers anticipate that higher budgets will be allocated to BE development. According to another industry estimate, BE spending in the USA alone was more than $700 billion in 2017, exceeding spending on traditional advertising, public relations, and digital advertising combined (Davey et al., 2023). It is not surprising that BE has emerged as a focal area of interest in the marketing world and has been identified as the foundation of the marketing paradigm for the third millennium (Davey et al., 2023). To conclude, BE is essential for marketing and branding research and practitioners.

1.3 Brand experience conceptualisation

This section introduces two BE topics. It first presents the conceptualisation and several characteristics of BE. Subsequently, it elaborates on the three levels on which BE can occur.

BE was first conceptualised by Brakus et al. (2009) as 'subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments' (p. 53). The conceptualisation of BE can be explained using the example of a visit to Starbucks. In this setting, the experience is meticulously staged, and branded experiential elements are carefully designed and seamlessly incorporated. As consumers step into the environment, they might be greeted by specific music, watch the barista working as a passionate artist behind the bar, receive their coffee with their names misspelt on the cup, or appreciate the beauty of latte art. Once seated, the experience extends beyond the coffee itself – the customers are invited to enjoy the interior design of the café and perhaps even immerse themselves in its warm ambience, surrounded by other visitors.

This example can be used to illustrate several essential characteristics of BE. First, BEs are unique combinations of subjective impressions and feelings developed in the mind of a consumer (Brakus et al., 2009). BEs can vary in strength, intensity, valence, and duration depending on the differences among the individuals. Let us return to the example of a visit to Starbucks. The chain is famous for using music to set the ambience of its cafés and even has its own music label that has launched Grammy award-winning music from Ray Charles, Joni Mitchell, and Paul McCartney (Gains, 2014). However, a visitor's response to the music is based on his/her own interests, motivation, or the consumption context. If the music at Starbucks aligns with the visitor's preferences, (s)he may promptly recognise it,

enjoy it during his/her entire visit, and cultivate positive emotions or recall pleasant moments associated with the music. Conversely, if a visitor dislikes the music, it may lead to feelings of annoyance. Both feelings of enjoyment and annoyance can be strong but different in valence. Alternatively, in some instances, a visitor may hear the music but does not actively listen to it or even pay any attention to it.

Second, these impressions and responses are triggered by direct or indirect interaction with brand-related stimuli such as the interior design of Starbucks, the barista, latte art, or music (Brakus et al., 2009). This interaction can be both expected and unexpected. Furthermore, BEs occur not only during consumption but also in other stages of a customer journey, such as pre- or post-consumption (Chevtchouk et al., 2021). For instance, if consumers share a photo of their Starbucks visit with their friends, they do so in the post-consumption stage. Moreover, BEs do not presume a motivational state; BEs can occur even when consumers are not interested in or connected to a brand (Brakus et al., 2009).

Third, BE is different from several related brand constructs, such as brand attitude, brand association, and brand personality (Brakus et al., 2009). BEs include specific, actual sensations, feelings, cognitions, and responses triggered by brand-related stimuli. Thus, they are not general evaluative judgements about the brand, such as brand attitude. Moreover, BEs are not associations (Keller, 1993) or brand personalities (Aaker, 1997) that consumers project onto the brand.

As BE is determined by the totality of the interaction between a consumer and the brand-related stimuli, it is useful to distinguish three levels of BE on which BE can occur because it 'may provide a greater scope for dynamic approaches to brand experience design' (Chevtchouk et al., 2021, p. 1308). The three levels are: subconscious, immediate, and consummatory. For a visitor who can hear but does not pay attention to the music in the coffee bar, the BE occurs on the level of the subconscious. This foundational level only allows for primary consumer outcomes such as brand awareness. When an experience is noticed, it occurs on the second, immediate level. On this level, individuals can form preferences, achieve goals, and attach meaning, resulting in active and affective symbolic relationships with the stimuli. This relationship provides a basis for instinctual or conditioned behavioural responses and habits. For instance, if the visitors have enjoyable positive impressions of their experience, they may revisit Starbucks. Building on the immediate experience, BE may occur on the third and the highest level: consummatory experience. At this level, there is a sense of unity between the individual and the stimuli. The experience contains deliberate culminations that occur when the consumer senses fulfilment. This level can lead to self-brand connections. In this case, consumers may feel immersed in the experience, a sense of contentment and a connection to the brand. Sometimes, they may even derive part of their identity from the brand.

1.4 Introduction to touchpoints

This section first defines what touchpoints are. Then, it elaborates on how touchpoints influence consumers' BEs on three different levels.

1.4.1 What are touchpoints?

The formation of BEs involves diverse brand-related stimuli, as outlined by Brakus et al. (2009). These stimuli encompass brand design and identity elements (e.g. name, logo, signage), packaging, and marketing communications (e.g. advertisements, brochures, websites), and environments in which the brand is marketed or sold (e.g. stores, events). It is notable that this definition does not include products or services. Due to their central role in brand strategy (Keller, 2013), consumer experiences with products and services are integral to their BEs. For instance, in Brakus's study, the description of Apple BEs includes product-related sensations, such as the colours and design of Apple products. Therefore, 'brand-related stimuli' appear insufficient in capturing consumers' full BEs. Recognising the need to comprehensively explore the role of design in BE, this thesis adopts the concept of a touchpoint introduced by Neumeier (2005). This concept extends beyond 'brand-related stimuli', encompassing a broader spectrum of consumer interactions with a brand, including products and services.

A touchpoint (TP) is defined by Neumeier (2005) as 'any place where people come in contact with a brand, including product use, packaging, advertising, editorial, movies, store environments, organisation employees, and casual conversation' (p. 178). It can include marketing mix TPs, such as product, service, packaging, and retail design, and marketing communication TPs, such as websites, advertisements, or brochures. Furthermore, consumers are not exposed to the brand's elements (e.g. name, logo, signage) in isolation (McWilliam & Dumas, 1997). According to the Gestalt theory, consumers perceive brand elements as an integral part of the brand's TPs. For instance, consumers perceive the Apple logo as part of its product package and form a holistic impression of the package. Therefore, this thesis regards a brand's design and identity elements as an integral part of TPs.

There are different types of TPs. Lemon & Verhoef (2016) distinguish four categories that help to define the scope of this research: brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned, and social/external/independent. Brand-owned TPs are designed and managed under the organisation's control. Examples are brand-owned websites and any attributes of product, packaging, or service. Partner-owned TPs are jointly designed, managed, or controlled by the organisation and its partners. For example, as Lego's distribution and communication partner, Toys XL can influence Lego's BE. Customer-owned touchpoints consist of customers' own actions. They include, for instance, consumers' own thoughts that are not controlled by the organisation, its partners, or other consumers, but also TPs that are co-created by the

consumers and the organisation. For example, fans can submit new ideas for a Lego set at www.ideas.lego.com. Lastly, social and external TPs represent the solicited or unsolicited influence of others, such as casual conversations among children about the Lego movies. This thesis explores the role of design in creating meaningful BE. It focuses on TPs that a brand can design, manage, control, or influence. The scope of the research is, therefore, brand-owned and partner-owned TPs.

1.4.2 Influence of touchpoints on brand experience

The anecdote shows how Lego TPs influence my brand experiences on different levels, as conceptualised by Chevtchouk et al. (2021). The bright colour of the Lego brick attracted my attention and created brand awareness on the subconscious level of BE. Building a Lego truck formed the immediate level of BE, leading to a preference for the Lego brand over other toy brands. Lastly, I reached the consummatory level of BE during my visits to the Legoland resort.

Indeed, studies show that TPs influence BE on all three levels. For example, Toyota and Volvo cars use specific shapes that make them easily recognisable by consumers (Karjalainen, 2007; Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010), creating brand awareness on the subconscious level of BE. Secondly, consumers can form preferences, achieve goals, and attach meaning based on their interaction with a TP at the intermediate level of BE. For instance, product and packaging design can influence symbolic associations (Creusen & Schoormans, 2005). Consumers associate a package that has a naturally designed appearance with a sincere brand personality (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008). Conversely, when the design is more contrasting, it is associated with an exciting brand personality. Another example is that when the design of a website incorporates cultural differences, it is considered more trustworthy (Snelders et al., 2011). Lastly, at the consummatory level, consumers can have a sense of deep personal connection between the TPs and themselves. One example is Stylenanda's pink hotel flagship store, where consumers immerse themselves in its 'Instagrammable' environment, inducing a sense of belonging (Paik & Lee, 2021) that leads to the consummatory BE.

Through multiple interactions with the brand over the years, I, as a consumer, developed a deep connection with the Lego brand. It has become not only a part of my living room but also a part of my memory. Thinking about all those Lego moments gives me a sense of happiness and fulfilment as a parent. However, not everyone will have the same BE as mine. As introduced in the preceding section, it is crucial to address the fact that each consumer's response to a brand's TPs depends on their personal context. As their personal context differs, a brand can partially influence consumers' BEs through various TPs but not entirely control them (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). BEs are phenomenological events (Helkkula, 2011) in

the sense that they cannot be designed but only be designed for (Kimbell, 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

1.5 What is brand experience design?

Studies show that many of the brand-related consumer responses can be attributed to the properties (e.g. colour, shape) of the TPs (Luchs & Swan, 2011). All Lego products in their line for young children consistently use a limited number of bright colours to enhance recognisability. To capitalise on their distinctive modular system, Lego reinforces the shape of the brick through many product categories ranging from lunch boxes to the Lego museum. To inspire and engage with teenagers, Lego blends imagination and play into every theme of its products and events (e.g. animal allies for the Lego League). The Lego example illustrates that well-designed TPs can form meaningful BEs, resulting in a high level of consumer satisfaction and thereby contributing to the success of the Lego brand and its organisation. Indeed, design has long been recognised as a powerful means of gaining competitive advantage for organisations and maximising value for consumers (e.g. Borja de Mozota, 2002; Brown, 2008; Celaschi et al., 2011; Kolter& Rath, 1984; Trueman & Jobber, 1998). As the goal of this thesis is to investigate the role of design in creating meaningful BEs, it is important to provide a definition for 'design' that sets its scope. However, there are multiple definitions of design, and it remains tricky to define what design is. This section defines the scope of 'design' based on the key definitions and dimensions presented below.

One useful definition of design by Kolter & Rath (1984) is 'design is the process of seeking to optimise consumer satisfaction and organisation profitability through the creative use of major design elements (performance, quality, durability, appearance, and cost) in connection with products, environments, information, and corporate identities' (p. 17). Fifteen years later, Trueman and Jobber (1998) proposed a framework that allows organisations to gain a competitive advantage through design. They identified four dimensions where designers can play an active role: value, image, process, and production. Value creation refers to defining relevant product attributes that meet consumer needs. Secondly, design can create or improve the image of a product and the organisation, contributing to the creation of strong brands. Thirdly, design can influence the product development process in multidisciplinary teams. Lastly, design can optimise the production process, reduce costs, and save time.

Decades later, the design field has become more complex and challenging, and the role of a designer has expanded to management areas. The Design Management Institute defines design management as 'the ongoing processes, business decisions, and strategies that enable innovation and create effectively designed products, services, communications, environments,

and brands that enhance our quality of life and provide organisational success' (Design Management Institute, n.d.). Thus, design can include exploration and exploitation as two different natures of activities. Exploration activities involve 'search, variation, risk-taking, experimentation, play, flexibility, discovery' (March, 1991, p. 71), resulting in differentiation and innovation, while exploitation activities involve 'refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation and execution', leading to efficiency and quality (March, 1991, p. 71). Moreover, on a strategic level, design can involve the application of 'principles, tools and methods to influence strategic decision-making within an organization' (Calabretta et al., 2016, p. 9). Design thinking practices play an essential role at the intersection between design activities and strategic brand management. Practices such as abductive reasoning, iterative thinking and experimentation, holistic perspective, and human-centredness can help brands deal with enduring tensions and both sustain and grow brands without undermining their essence (Beverland et al., 2015). Today, designers are starting to play a more significant role in not only designing an artefact but also engaging in management beyond design activities, and even making decisions across the business, thereby impacting society (Meyer & Norman, 2019).

As the Lego example (see section 1.1) shows that design can play an essential role in creating meaningful BE and fostering brand-related consumer outcomes for an organisation, this thesis adheres to the view that design is a powerful tool to create competitive advantage for organisations (Kolter & Rath, 1984; Trueman & Jobber, 1998). Therefore, the aim of BE design is to provide organisational success through the creation of meaningful BE. Second, with respect to the dimensions where designers can play an active role (Trueman & Jobber, 1998), this research focuses on the second dimension related to creating images of TPs contributing to the creation of strong brands. Third, as BE can encompass various TPs that are related to the brand strategy, this research implies that BE design encompasses multiple types of design and design-related activities on different levels of the organisation. BE design can occur on both the tactical and strategic level in an organisation. Therefore, different actors can be involved in BE design – for example, a packaging designer creating a new pack or a brand manager or CEO of an SME interpreting the test results of their new campaign. These actors can work not only in-house, but also outside the organisation, for instance as a design agency or a freelancer. Fourth, the term 'design' refers to exploration activities such as developing TP concepts using skills related to various design disciplines, including interaction design, graphical design, or product design. The term 'design' also refers to exploitation activities on a managerial and/or strategic level that involve the practices of design management and design thinking in the creation, decision-making, and implementation process of BE. These practices are not limited to specific functions within an organisation, such as brand manager or designer.

To summarise, the term 'design' is used throughout this thesis to refer to all types of activities outlined above. The term 'creation' is used to emphasise exploration activities, while the terms 'management' or 'coordination' have a stronger focus on exploitation activities.

1.6 Purpose of this thesis

Since the introduction of the experience economy, BE has gained significant interest from both research scholars and practitioners (Chevtchouk, 2021; Davey et al., 2023). However, past research has primarily focused on the conceptualisation and consequences of BE from a brand and consumer perspective (Chevtchouk, 2021; Khan & Rahman, 2015). Even though experience design has a long tradition dating back to the early 1990s (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994), research on BE from a design perspective is rare (Motta-Filho, 2021). Consequently, there is a lack of knowledge to support designers and non-designers in their (co-) designing process. This thesis uses the term 'design knowledge' to refer to a collection of cognitive artefacts, including visions, proposals, and tools (Manzini, 2009). Furthermore, existing literature streams that provide valuable insight into how to design for experiences are compartmentalised according to specific types of TPs. For instance, scholars have studied product experience design (e.g. Desmet & Hekkert, 2007), service design for customer experience (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010), design of communication TPs (e.g. Snelders et al., 2011), and retail experience design (e.g. Kent & Stone, 2007; Kirby & Kent, 2010; Paik & Lee, 2021). These literature streams examine particular types of TPs in unconnected research fields. However, design knowledge that can be applied across various types of TPs that collectively form BE is missing. Lastly, most experience design research (e.g. product experience) takes a user-centric approach. Design knowledge from a brand perspective is limited. In sum, the research gap can be summarised with three elements: (1) design knowledge, (2) which can be applied across various types of TPs (3) in line with strategic brand management. The aim of this thesis is, therefore, to explore the following main research question:

How could meaningful BE be designed to help organisations achieve favourable consumer outcomes aligned with strategic brand management?

This thesis addresses the research gap outlined above from three perspectives. The first perspective centres on design. As outlined in Section 1.4, it delves into design activities occurring at both tactical and strategic levels, involving all those who apply design skills or design thinking and design management practices, instead of being limited to professional designers. The second perspective is the experiential aspect. It emphasises various types of TPs through which BE is shaped. The scope of this research is limited to brand-owned and partner-owned TPs that can be designed. The third perspective revolves around strategic brand

management. This research investigates BE design to attain strategic brand management objectives that contribute to organisational success. Figure 2 offers a visual representation of how BE design will be explored in this research based on the three perspectives.

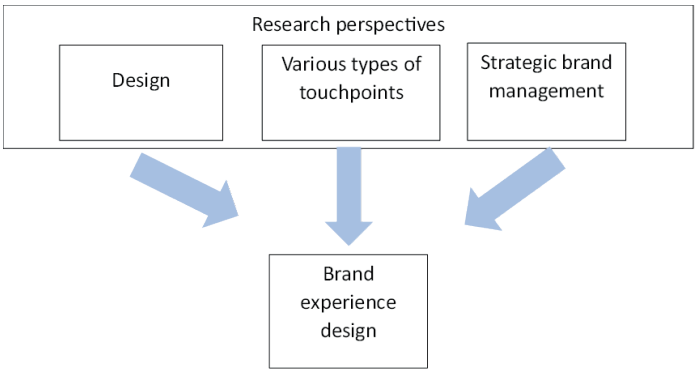

Figure 2: Research perspectives

1.7 Research approach and thesis outline

The research approach is shaped by the philosophical worldview guiding the researcher (Creswell, 2014). This doctoral research is shaped by the pragmatic worldview. Pragmatism, grounded in actions, situations, and consequences, emphasises research problems over methods. It employs diverse approaches to gain understanding. It provides a philosophical foundation centred on the main research question, allowing mixed research methods (Creswell, 2014). As highlighted in the earlier sections, there is a scarcity of knowledge on BE design. To optimally explore this under-researched domain, I choose an exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2014), incorporating two studies. The first study is a qualitative multiple-case study, allowing for an in-depth exploration of BE design. Subsequently, the second study adopts a quantitative approach, aiming to deepen the understanding of one specific emerging topic within the realm of BE design. The remainder of this section introduces the outline of the thesis and elaborates on how the three perspectives (i.e. design, various types of TPs, and strategic brand management) introduced in the previous section are incorporated through the literature reviews and the research design of both studies.

Figure 3 outlines the structure of this thesis. First, I provide a theoretical background connected to the perspectives of this research in Chapter 2. It starts with an explanation of how TPs can yield positive brand-related consumer outcomes, delving deeper into the connection between TP design and brand management. Then, it introduces a number of literature streams that provide valuable insight into the design and management of specific

types of TPs. Lastly, this chapter narrows down the scope to the visual aspects of TPs and formulates the research question for the first study. The three perspectives are incorporated as follows. First, the design perspective is examined through challenges and design approaches and practices in the literature, recognising that identifying challenges is a pivotal step in the design process. Second, in alignment with the experiential perspective, the literature review consolidates findings from the design and management of different types of TP, such as communication TPs, service TPs, and products that together shape consumers' BEs. Third, the perspective of strategic brand management is addressed through the desired outcomes from these literature streams that contribute to brand management success.

Chapter 3 presents the research method and findings from the first study. This study aims to answer the research question derived from the literature review (Chapter 2) and it encompasses all three perspectives of this research. It is defined as follows: How could the visual appearance of various TPs be designed to support strategic brand management goals? To answer this question, I employed a multiple-case study followed by expert interviews. The results reveal a set of essential creation (i.e. inspiring, guiding, and learning) and coordination (i.e. prioritising, governing, and regulating) practices that help designers and managers to resolve specific tension fields and achieve desired outcomes. This study contributes to the research streams at the intersection of marketing communication, brand management, and product design by exploring the design of the visual appearances of various TPs. It offers marketing, brand managers, and designers valuable insights on translating brand identities into various TPs to form distinctive, coherent, and continuous BEs.

Following the exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2014), Chapters 4 and 5 elaborate on one specific topic that emerged from the first study and seek to deepen the understanding of a particular creation practice: inspiring. The goal is to develop a better understanding of how to stimulate a designer's creativity in BE design. Chapter 4 starts with a literature review that identifies several primary styling criteria (i.e. personality coherence, visual coherence, and originality) to evaluate the design outcome. Next, it explores properties that make inspiration examples beneficial for designers. Lastly, this chapter identifies potential beneficial examples for BE design. Chapter 5 reports the methods and results of the second study. The results indicate that designers who received near-field inspiration examples that communicated an intended brand identity generated concepts with a higher personality coherence but with a similar level of originality as designers who were not provided with any examples. Also, near-field visual inspirations increase visual coherence. The three perspectives are reflected in the goal of the second study, which is to stimulate designers' creativity, the styling criteria consistent with brand management goals, and the various types of TPs explored in the study.

I conclude the thesis with Chapter 6. It summarises the insights collected from both studies conducted for this research project. Moreover, the chapter interprets the research findings, highlighting the theoretical contribution as well as the implications for designers and managers. Finally, the chapter discusses the limitations of this research and outlines opportunities for further research.

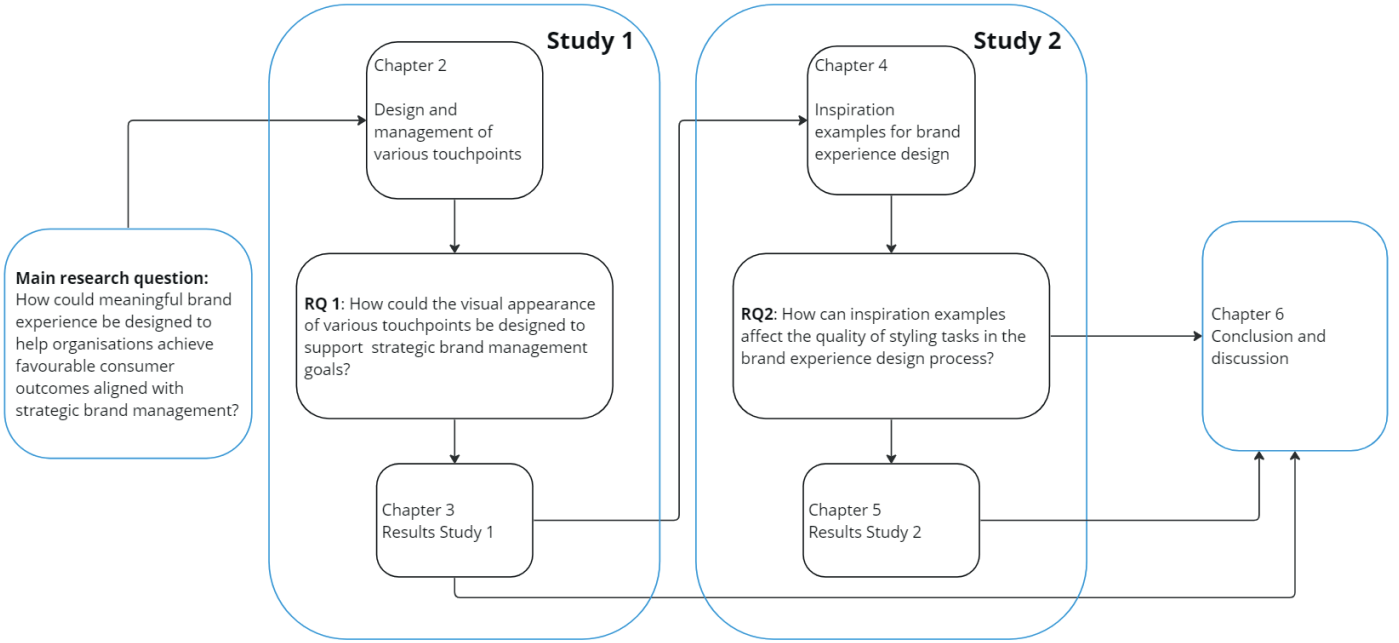

Figure 3: Outline of the thesis

Chapter 2

Design and management of various touchpoints

This chapter provides an overview of findings relevant to the purpose of this thesis, which is to explore how to design meaningful BE that helps an organisation achieve favourable consumer outcomes in line with strategic brand management. As outlined in the purpose of this thesis, the three perspectives of this research are: design, experiential aspect, and strategic brand management. Guided by these perspectives, three relevant topics emerge for the literature review. The first topic delves into the alignment between design and strategic brand management, aiming to explore the desired outcomes contributing to an organisation's strategic brand management. The second topic seeks to reveal the challenges related to design, recognising that identifying challenges is a pivotal step in the design process. The final topic explores approaches and practices studied in the relevant literature, offering valuable insights into BE design.

Regarding the three perspectives for BE design, the relevant literature streams are integrated marketing communication (IMC), service design, and product design for brand recognition. These literature streams are found to be insightful for two reasons. First, they address various TPs, aligning with the experiential aspect. IMC and service design focus on different types of TPs, while product design for brand recognition involves multiple TPs of a specific type. Secondly, these literature streams present approaches associated with the broad definition of design as outlined in Section 1.5. This literature review shows how diverse disciplines engage in these practices to establish competitive advantages for both the brand and the organisation.

This chapter is structured as follows: Section 2.1 lays the foundation, explaining how TPs can yield positive consumer outcomes, which helps to understand the desired outcomes reported in the following sections. Building upon this explanation, Section 2.2 focuses on various types of TPs, while Section 2.3 centres around one specific type of TP. Then, Section 2.4 delves into design practices that communicate a brand identity, which is essential to fostering favourable consumer outcomes. Lastly, Section 2.5 summarises the key findings of this chapter and Section 2.6 specifies the research gap and defines the research question for the first study. Figure 4 outlines the structure of this chapter.

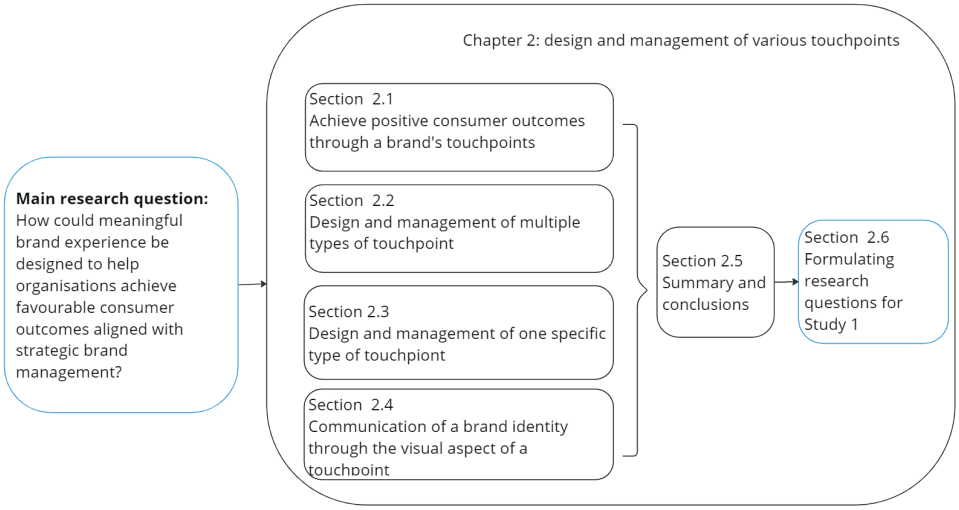

Figure 4:Structure of this chapter

2.1 Achieve positive consumer outcomes through a brand's touchpoints

Organisations can foster favourable brand-related consumer outcomes through the interaction between consumers and a brand's TPs (e.g. Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Luchs & Swan, 2011). This section uses a consumer-based approach (Keller, 1993, 2003) to explain how a brand can achieve these outcomes through the design of its TPs. This is the dominant approach in today's brand management research. It emphasises consumer perception and is based on cognitive psychology and informational processing models of choice (Heding et al., 2016). This approach is appropriate for this research because its underlying premise is that the design of a brand's TPs can partly influence consumer responses.

The impact of a brand's TPs on consumer outcomes is explained in Keller's (2013) concept of consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) and consumers' associative network. CBBE is 'the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumers' response to the marketing of that brand' (p. 69). A positive CBBE is when consumers respond more favourably to the TPs of that brand. Positive CBBE brings many favourable brand-related consumer outcomes that include, for instance, improved perceptions of product performance, greater loyalty, less vulnerability to competitive actions, additional brand extension opportunities, and many others.

CBBE is a result of consumers' knowledge about the brand, that is, what 'they have learned, felt, seen, and heard about the brand as a result of their experiences over time' (Keller, 2013, p. 69). In other words, consumers develop their brand knowledge based on their BEs, that is, their interaction with a brand's TPs over time. Brand knowledge exists in the associative network memory of consumers. It consists of two components: brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness is related to a consumer's ability to recognise a brand (i.e. brand recognition) and recall a brand from memory (i.e. brand recall). Brand image is consumers' perception of the brand, reflected by brand associations. For example, consumers associate the Apple brand with innovativeness or user-friendliness. A strong brand awareness and a favourable brand image are key to creating positive CBBE (Keller, 2013).

Establishing strong brand awareness means enhancing familiarity with the brand through repeated exposure to the brand's TPs (Keller, 2013). Brand knowledge is stored in the memory as a schema. It is a relatively stable mental framework for organising knowledge in complex structures that consist of feelings, cognitions, and experiences (Esch, 2008). Schemas are developed through repeated exposure and experience within a domain. Thus, BE is stored in the memory as a schema. Regular exposure to TPs with repeating familiar themes and elements facilitates information processing, thereby enhancing the development of schemas, and it can even lead to a feeling of liking (Philips et al., 2014). If different TPs have recurring design elements, the more a consumer interacts with these TPs, the higher the chance that (s)he will develop schemas and register the brand in the associative network memory, leading to higher brand awareness. To conclude, consistent design elements among different types of TPs are essential for positive CBBE and, hence, for organisations to foster favourable consumer outcomes.

Crafting a positive brand image requires TPs that can induce strong, favourable, and unique associations in the minds of consumers (Keller, 2013). These associations can be related to the features of TPs or the personal value and meaning that consumers attach to these features. This includes both descriptive and evaluative information about the brand (Keller, 2003). There are different ways to capture the characteristics or the spirit of the unique set of brand associations that an organisation desires to create. It can be termed as 'brand essence', 'core brand promise', or 'brand mantra' (Keller, 2013). Aaker (1997) used brand personalities to describe the personal traits that consumers attach to these associations. He found that US brands obtain five main brand personalities: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. Philips et al. (2014) defined the term *brand identity* as a set of 'characteristics and attributes of the brand that cohere into the unique set of associations that an organisation aspires to create and maintain'. It can be, for instance, 'magical' for Disney or 'safety' for Volvo. Through the process of brand positioning, the organisation decides on which set of brand associations (i.e. brand identity) it would be desirable to achieve sustainable competitive

advantages. The intended brand identity of an organisation can be different from the brand image perceived by a consumer. This gap between brand identity and brand image is termed as the brand gap (Neumeier, 2005). Creating TPs that are consistent with the desired brand identity is vital to enhance the strength and favourability of brand associations (Keller, 1999), closing the brand gap and achieving positive consumer outcomes.

To summarise, an organisation can achieve favourable brand-related consumer outcomes through positive CBBE. A strong brand awareness and a favourable brand image are two essential components for positive CBBE. As the brand identity determines what kinds of brand associations a brand aspires to create in the minds of consumers, it has a determinant role when designing TPs for BE. The subsequent sections explore desired outcomes, challenges as well as considerations and practices in relation to brand awareness, brand image, and brand identity.

2.2 Design and management of multiple types of touchpoints

As discussed in Section 1.4, interaction with multiple TPs forms consumers' BEs. This section presents findings related to the creation and management of various types of TPs. It starts with a brief introduction to the relevant literature streams and then presents findings on the topics of desired outcomes, challenges, and considerations and approaches. A summary of these sections is provided in Table 1 in Section 2.5.

With respect to marketing and communication TPs, current research focuses on consumers and how marketing and brand managers can optimally combine all available TPs and design the communication programme to achieve short-term sales and long-term brand building goals (Luo & Donthu, 2006; Osinga et al., 2011; Reid et al., 2005). The literature is mainly concerned with communication TPs, such as TV ads or websites. Some essential TPs of BE are not considered to constitute communication TPs. The following quote exemplifies this limitation: 'Although the notions of IMC [integrated marketing communication] are applicable to all the touch points through which a marketer communicates with the targeted consumer—including the implicit communication that takes place through product features and design, employee service, and retail environments—we do not cover such non-media-related consumer touch points for brands' (Batra & Keller, 2016, p. 124). To provide a comprehensive examination of relevant findings on the creation and management of various types of TPs, this literature review also encompasses product and service design literature where retail environments are considered as part of the service TPs.

According to Lemon and Verhoef (2016), the design of service TPs takes a holistic approach, considering the entire system of various types of TPs to deliver a seamless user experience. For example, Greenwheels car sharing includes the physical cars for sharing, administration via a website, billing through mailing systems, and handling customer questions through a service desk employee. In contrast to product design, it emphasises a long-term view because it may involve long-lasting interactions between the provider and the user and value is only co-created with the user during the usage. Building on many other types of design fields (e.g. interaction design, product design, or architectural design), service design does not have 'a single clear set of methods (or terms) yet' (Van Boeijen et al., 2014, p. 33).

2.2.1 Desired outcomes

For communication TPs, there are several different possible brand-related outcomes based on consumers' interaction with a brand's TPs (Batra & Keller, 2016). These outcomes depend on the characteristics of the TPs, consumer, and context involved (for more details, see the next section). They can have varying importance to the brand in question. The first set of outcomes relates to brand awareness and the communication of detailed brand information. For example, through interaction with a website, consumers can become aware of the brand and the product or service it offers with more detailed information about features and benefits. The second set of outcomes is related to brand image, such as communicating brand personality and user or usage imagery, eliciting desired emotions. TV ads can, for instance, communicate user- or user context-related information that helps to form associations with a certain brand. Other scholars have shown that well-designed and integrated communication TPs can also lead to the enhancement of brand equity (Duncan, 2002; Šerić, 2017) and customer brand engagement (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016).

While communication TPs have more specific brand-related outcomes, for service TPs, consumer satisfaction and purchase intention are two important consumer outcomes (Helkkula, 2011). In general, the design of service TPs does not focus on strategic brand management. An exception is the work of Clatworthy (2012) and Motta-Filho (2012, 2021). These authors investigated how to design service TPs that are aligned with the brand promise. An exception is the work of Clatworthy (2012) and Motta-Filho (2012, 2021). These authors investigated how to design service TPs that are aligned with the brand promise. For brand-orientated design research on service TPs, the desired outcome is the congruence between brand strategy and service experience, as perceived by the consumers (Clatworthy, 2012).

2.2.2 Challenges

This section introduces challenges that emerged from the design of various types of TPs. The main challenge lies in 'the explosion of touch points and the increasing complexity of the customer journey' (Vernuccio et al., 2022). I first discuss the large number and diversity

of TPs and explain why this is considered to represent the main challenge. Then, I present the challenge from a very different angle, namely, consumer differences and how they influence interaction with TPs. The third challenge is more specific. It deals with translating the brand identity to design teams. The last challenge concerns management and organisation barriers to TP integration.

Challenge 1: A large number of different types of touchpoints
In today's rich communication environments, consumers interact with an increasing number of different types of TPs. Integrating traditional (offline) and new (online) media, Batra & Keller (2016) clustered TPs into eight main communication platforms: TV advertisements, promotions, events, PR, social media, website, search ads, display ads, mobile ads, direct mailing, and personal selling. These TPs can vary on the number of modalities, such as sight, sound, and motion, and on the nature of modalities, such as static, dynamic, interactive, and customised (Keller, 2001). For example, personal selling can convey more customised information in a more interactive way than promotions.

While the categorisation of service TPs according to ownership (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, as discussed in Section 1.3.3) helps to define the scope of this thesis, an alternative categorisation by Bolton et al. (2018) is more appropriate to illustrate the differences of TPs and, hence, the implication for design. These authors distinguish three types of TPs from the digital, physical, and social realms. TPs from the digital realm are characterised by innovative digital technologies, such as virtual reality, digital twins, blockchains, or AI. These technologies enable organisations to deliver highly personalised and immersive environments, resulting in high interactivity and rich information exchange (Parise et al., 2016). The physical realm represents TPs such as furnishings, equipment, and spatial arrangements such as retail environments. Together with ambient elements and cultural resources (e.g. signs and symbols), physical TPs enhance a sense of convenience and engagement (Bitner, 1992). The social realm involves interactions between customers, employees, and partners. It helps customers fulfil utilitarian, social, and psychological needs. For example, customer-to-customer interactions, such as reviews, can influence customers' behaviour, impacting customer acquisition and attachment (Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011). These traits of the three realms show that TPs can vary substantially from each other in terms of their forms, the technology involved, and the different consumer needs they can fulfil.

Taken together, the existing literature shows that (1) the number of TPs is large and still increasing, and (2) the differences among different types of TPs can be substantial. Designing various types of TPs may require collaboration between multiple disciplines (e.g. design, communication, brand management) and coordination among different departments within

an organisation or with external agencies. Therefore, dealing with a multitude of TPs is still considered one of the most critical challenges (Bolton et al., 2018; Keller, 2001).

Challenge 2: Consumers' individual context influencing interaction with touchpoints
Differences among consumers' characteristics and the individual and social context lie at the heart of another challenge when designing a whole system of various types of TPs to achieve strategic brand management goals. It is generally acknowledged that consumers' characteristics influence their interaction with brands' communication TPs. Consumers' motivation, ability, and opportunity affect both the intensity and direction of their information processing. Consequently, different outcomes occur (Batra & Keller, 2016). Consumers will be more motivated to interact with communication TPs and process incoming information when it seems that this would be helpful for choosing between different brands. The motivation increases when the perceived risk level is higher, there are greater information needs on the category level, or consumers are more deeply involved in the search process. Furthermore, contextual factors may also potentially affect consumers' emotional state or mood and motivation to engage with communication TPs. Next, consumers vary in their ability to process information. The degree of familiarity and the amount of brand/category knowledge are two of the many factors that influence their interaction with TPs and the outcome. For instance, consumers who are in an early stage of category search – and who thus have low familiarity or limited brand knowledge – might not be able to process in-depth attribute-level brand information. Lastly, consumers' opportunities to interact with TPs and process information are influenced by time, place, and the media type of a TP. The anecdote in the previous chapter is a good example here. Before my first encounter with the Lego truck, I did not need to make any purchase decisions for toys targeted at four-plus-year-old children. My motivation to interact with any communication TPs from Lego was near zero – in fact, I had hardly even heard about one of the most famous brands on earth for almost 16 years. If we had not been influenced by many of my friends who are Lego fans as a contextual factor, we would not have even had the idea to join the Lego League event.

For service TPs, the majority of the existing research investigated the individual and social context of a consumer that influences his/her interaction with a service TP (De Keyser et al., 2020.). Context 'comprises all factors that are particular to a certain time and/or place' (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2019), and it is typically 'transitory in nature' (De Keyser et al., 2020). Similar to consumers' opportunity, but defined more broadly, the individual context refers to the temporary personal state of a consumer at various TPs along the customer journey (Sandström et al., 2008). Every consumer is inherently subjective and informed by his/her own way of thinking. Individual context includes emotional state factors, momentary cognitive factors, normative factors, and physical and economic factors (De Keyser et al., 2015; Helkkula, 2011). For example, consumers in a good mood are more open to new services

compared to those in a bad mood. Individuals in a bad mood are more likely to stay with familiar brands and are more receptive to negative cues in their surroundings (Puccinelli et al., 2009). Next, social rules and norms can also influence consumer responses (e.g. Bolton et al., 2018; Helkkula, 2011). The individual and social context of a customer can to a great extent determine customer responses (De Keyser et al., 2020). They are recognised as one of the three building blocks and an essential element to consider when designing service TPs.

To conclude, consumers' needs and responses to TPs vary according to their individual and social contexts. Therefore, designing TPs to satisfy the demands of a vast group of consumers and triggering intended responses and associations is demanding.

Challenge 3: Translating the brand identity to the design team
A study by Forrester Research found that only 18% of organisations integrate the brand identity into customer experience strategy. This result may indicate a missing link between brand management and service design (Munchbach, 2014). So far, three studies have been identified that have specifically explored how to translate a brand identity to service design teams.

Clatworthy (2012) posits that the brand must be clearly articulated and adequately communicated in the service design process. Otherwise, an excessively strong focus on customer experience will potentially cause brand dilution. However, the usability of brand manuals for the design of service experiences seems to be problematic, as they do not inform the experience a brand seeks to deliver (Motta-Filho, 2012). Indeed, a more recent study by the same author indicates that the main challenge for service design with a brand orientation is to find the right ways to express the brand identity, and it is essential that design teams have proper brand input (Motta-Filho, 2021).

Challenge 4: Management and organisation barriers to touchpoint integration
On a management and organisation level, a recent study (Vernuccio et al., 2022) reveals that the challenges of integrating multiple types of TPs are related to three aspects: resource and capability, organisation, and mindset and culture. Some organisations have inadequate resources and capability to perform integrated communication planning and related measurements (Luxton et al., 2017). Regarding the organisation structure, the absence of cross-functional teams working in an integrated way (Porcu et al., 2017) and a leadership role for new media (Ots & Nyilasy, 2017) can pose problems to the integration of TPs. Lastly, in relation to the mindset or culture, inadequate top management involvement can form another barrier (Porcu et al., 2012, 2017). Most importantly, the lack of an overall commitment to integrate multiple TPs seems to be an underlying factor that diminishes the effect of communication TPs (Vernuccio et al., 2022).

2.2.3 Considerations and approaches

The preceding section highlighted several primary challenges in designing various types of TPs. This section introduces several approaches that help address these challenges. Three key topics have emerged from the literature. The first pertains to the interrelationships among TPs and how understanding these connections can facilitate the design of various TP types. The second topic focuses on translating brand identity into service TPs. The last topic involves organisation culture.

Optimising interrelationships among touchpoints along the customer journey

Understanding the customer journey is essential when dealing with different consumer characteristics and types of TPs. Consumers have a particular 'state of mind' regarding their information processing; hence, they have specific needs and wants at each stage of the customer journey (Batra & Keller, 2016). According to these authors, there are 12 stages of the expanded consumer-decision journey: needs/wants, knows, considers, searches/learns; likes/trusts, willing to pay, commits, consumes, satisfied, loyal, engages, and advocates. Each stage on the journey is probabilistic, and consumers may backtrack, skip steps, or even reject the brand at any stage. Their interactions with communication TPs are nonlinear and dynamic. Concerning service TPs, it is generally agreed that customer experience is formed over time throughout all stages of a customer journey in a dynamic way (Bolton et al., 2018; Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Furthermore, there are distinct stages throughout the customer journey where consumers have specific needs and wants. Three stages are often distinguished in the service design literature: pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase.

Once the consumer needs are identified per stage, TPs can be selected, designed, and organised per stage along the customer journey according to their modality (Batra & Keller, 2016). Each TP is more or less appropriate to communicate a specific brand message and satisfy a specific consumer's need. The type of a TP and its location on the customer journey influence what kind of message it can communicate. For example, billboards – to which the consumer is exposed for a relatively short time – are less suitable for conveying detailed information than print ads. Online video or TV ads are more effective in enhancing brand perceptions with emotions and images. Consistency, complementarity, and cross-effects are the three most important considerations regarding the interrelationship for communication TPs (Batra & Keller, 2016). Consistency refers to the (re-)inforcement of the same message across different TPs to create a desired brand image. As each TP has a different modality, they can be complementary to each other, addressing different brand communication objectives based on their strengths and weaknesses. 'Cross-effects' refers to the idea that a consumer's prior experience with one TP can influence their experience with another TP. For instance,

several studies show that coordinated TV/radio and TV/print campaigns result in more favourable attitudes (Edell & Keller, 1989; Naik & Raman, 2003).

To design well-integrated TPs for brand communication, Batra & Keller (2016) proposed to use a 'bottom-up" matching model combined with a 'top-down' optimisation model. The first model identifies the TP options with the strongest ability to satisfy consumer needs at different stages of the customer journey. The second model evaluates all proposed TPs for effectiveness and efficiency to ensure maximal collective effects of all communication TPs. To design service TPs for optimal customer experiences, De Keyser et al. (2020) proposed a four-step approach. It starts with determining desired experience qualities based on customers' needs and the importance of each quality along the customer journey. There are five qualities that can be considered in service design: participation level (passive vs. active), dimensionality (e.g. sensory, cognitive, emotional), time-flow (i.e. subjective judgement of the duration of an event), valence (positive, negative, or neutral), and level of ordinariness (e.g. everyday trip vs. bungee jump). With this elaboration, designers can more deliberately decide on the desired quality of TP and customer interaction. Next, an organisation needs to assess what kind of contextual data should be collected as input to allow specific qualities to occur. The third step is to assess what types of TP constellations (i.e. combinations of TPs) are optimal to promote the desired qualities. In this step, an organisation decides which TPs should be added, adapted, or removed. Lastly, through an iterative process, firms can experiment, assess, and iterate on their service design to enhance the customer experience.

In summary, several key insights emerge when engaging with the first two challenges described in Section 2.2.2. The challenges are related to a multitude of diverse types of TPs and unique consumers' individual contexts. The first insight is the importance of establishing clear goals for TP design. This can involve deciding what message to convey or specifying interaction quality. The second insight involves gathering information on consumer needs throughout the customer journey and recognising that consumers have unique needs and wants for each stage of the journey. The third insight is the necessity of aligning the capabilities of each TP, thereby crafting the most effective combination that collectively achieves the set goals. In conclusion, it is crucial to optimise the interrelationships between different types of TPs.

Expressing abstract brand identity in multiple forms to design teams

This section delves into a more specific challenge related to the translation of brand identity to a design team. Investigating the design of multiple types of TPs for a brand, Clatworthy's (2012) study looks at three main topics: the relationship between brand strategy and customer experience, the transformation of a brand strategy into customer experiences, and the design process of cross-functional teams. The study shows that although there is a strong need to

align the behaviour of all service TPs with the brand identity, there is a gap in both research and practice between the brand management and design teams.

To address this gap, Clatworthy developed a three-stage experience-centric process through iterations over a three-year period with design teams from service providers in Norway. This process aims to enhance brand alignment in service design projects. It is based on semantic transformation for products with the premise that abstract brand associations can be transformed into product features through design (Karjalainen, 2004). The process starts with summarising brand identity through text, image, desired TP behaviours and interactions, organisational culture, and experience heritage. The second step explores the meaning of the brand identity from Step 1 and develops a service personality, represented through words, images, and analogies. Several sources of inspiration are useful. Designers can look at successful examples of TPs from other services that have managed to convey the desired brand identity. They can also use analogies between the existing TPs and the service to be designed or analogies from situations that give similar emotional experiences, such as the smell of cut grass on a summer day. Lastly, they can also use brand personalities described in words (Aaker, 1997). The last stage includes a series of experience prototyping sessions that mainly employ role-playing to enact and refine each service TP.

The evaluation of this process through seven semi-structured interviews with design team members reveals several meaningful insights (Clatworthy, 2012). An early-stage focus on brand-related characteristics seems to enhance the congruence between the brand and customer experience evaluated by team members. The transformation of a brand identity into a service personality enables the evaluation, adjustment, and re-evaluation of the service design. Some interviewees found the process most useful to enact interactions that entail human behaviour and tone of voice. However, others considered this process time-consuming and found that applying it to each TP is ‘overkill’. Therefore, it is more pragmatic to focus on fine-tuning one generic TP and then use the understanding developed throughout this process as a target for the design of other TPs (e.g. digital TPs). In conclusion, this process helped to establish a shared understanding within a cross-functional design team.

Building on this process, Motta-Filho (2021) proposed a BE manual through practice-based design research. In other words, the manual is an artefact resulting from four design iterations with master’s degree students as leading designers. It focuses on translating brand identity into experiential expressions, equivalent to the second step in Clatworthy’s (2012) process. The manual consists of three supplementary components: the relationship metaphor, the service principles, and the service moments. The relationship metaphor is an analogy for the relationship a brand, represented by a character, seeks to develop with customers, represented by a customer persona (Dumas, 1994). The service principles are prescriptive actions that

designers should consistently enact throughout the design process. The service moments are narratives of fragments on the customer journey across different use contexts, illustrating how the customer experience could be.

To summarise, the existing literature provides several essential findings that deal with the challenge of translating the brand identity to design teams. Inspired by diverse sources, the brand identity can be expressed in various ways, including text, images, and analogies. However, relying solely on metaphors as one specific form of expression proves insufficient to capture the entirety of a brand identity. Supplementary components are deemed indispensable. These findings indicate that an abstract brand identity may need multiple ways of expression to create a shared mental model of the brand identity that can guide the design process effectively.

Enhancing participation and brand orientation

This section presents managerial and organisational approaches that can overcome barriers towards the integration of TPs. First, organisations can provide actors with 'a systematic stimulus to participate, e.g., through self-managing work teams and common process rules' (Vernuccio et al., 2022, p. 523). Furthermore, 'it is essential for organizations to remain responsive and sensitive over time, moving toward a potentially flexible and open integration approach in communications' (Vernuccio et al., 2022, p. 523). Thus, these scholars advocate enhanced participation in the design and development process of multiple types of TPs and a more flexible and open approach as opposed to the traditional view of the 'top-down' approach or the 'one voice' phenomenon that emphasises consistency in all communication TPs (Kitchen, 2017).

Regarding the aspect of mindset and culture, other scholars assert that organisations with a brand identity-oriented culture are more successful in communication TPs (Madhavaram et al., 2005). These scholars propose employing a brand identity strategy that 'informs, guides, and helps develop, nurture, and implement the firm's overall communication' (p. 69). It is based on the idea that brand orientation can be considered as an approach in which diverse processes within an organisation are centred around the creation, development, and protection of brand identity in an ongoing interaction with target audiences to gain sustainable competitive advantages through brand management (Urde, 1999). Moreover, there are two distinct roles involved in this process. The first one is the brand strategist, such as a brand manager. They ensure the alignment between the business strategy and the brand strategy. The second role is the brand steward, responsible for aligning a brand identity and creative execution when developing and implementing TPs. They can be an external packaging designer or an internal marketing communication manager. For the implementation of the brand identity in communication TPs, top management support is essential – this ensures that all actors responsible for the communications are effectively managed and, more specifically,

that all actors have a thorough understanding of the intended brand identity. Based on this, actors can develop and implement synergistic and effective communication TPs. Lastly, the responsibility for aligning brand identity and TP implementation can be assigned to a single person or team in the organisation, supported by top management (Joachimsthaler & Aaker, 1997; Madhavaram et al., 2005).

In conclusion, one key insight advocates enhanced participation from diverse disciplines, promoting an open and flexible approach. Another crucial aspect is emphasising an organisational culture supported by top management and guided by brand identity. The last insight highlights the importance of assigning distinct responsibilities for aligning business strategy with brand strategy and ensuring consistency between brand identity and collaboration in creative execution.

2.3 Design and management of one specific type of touchpoint

The previous section (2.2) presented findings on *multiple types* of TPs. This section explores how to create and manage *one specific type* of TP, namely a product, in relation to a brand. The focus is on the product portfolio and product generation. The relevant literature streams are design for brand recognition and design for strategic renewal. This section starts with a presentation of findings on the desired outcomes (2.3.1) and challenges (2.3.2). Subsequently, Section 2.3.3 addresses considerations and approaches, covering three topics: design philosophy, achieving brand recognition in relation to product portfolio, and different product generations. A summary of these findings is presented in Table 1 in Section 2.5.

2.3.1 Desired outcomes

In a highly competitive market, consumers face an increasing number of new products, new information, and new brands. As a consequence, creating, managing, and sustaining recognition of the products as part of the brand becomes critical for organisations to achieve positive brand-related consumer outcomes through strong brand awareness and a favourable brand image, as presented in Section 2.1. So far, many brands have managed to create and sustain brand recognition through combinations of products and communication TPs. A good example is the Lego brand, as illustrated in the Introduction chapter. However, existing research on brand recognition mainly focuses on products, thus excluding communication TPs.

Brand recognition is a key desired outcome for product design. It is important to notice that brand recognition is discussed differently in the product design literature than in the branding literature. In the product design literature, recognition is defined as ‘both conscious (declarative) and unconscious (implicit) knowledge of a product, about both what the product

is and what one can do with it' (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010, p. 7). According to these authors, this definition is broader than recognition, as studied in advertising and marketing research related to communication TPs. In those studies, recognition is merely regarded as declarative knowledge about a specific product when a consumer reports having noticed it. In this thesis, brand recognition refers to consumers recognising a product (e.g. a car) as a part of the brand (e.g. BMW). This means that consumers can derive meaning, such as speed and power, from a BMW car and connect it to the brand identity of the ultimate driving machine. To make this connection, consumers need to have sufficient brand knowledge and be aware of what the brand stands for (i.e. brand awareness) and also be able to develop those associations of speed and power based on their perception of the car, and subsequently link those associations to the brand identity (i.e. brand image). Therefore, brand recognition as the desired outcome refers to establishing brand awareness and communicating an intended brand identity.

2.3.2 Challenges

The existing literature does not address the challenges an organisation or a designer may encounter when seeking to achieve brand recognition directly. The main concern of both literature streams is how organisations can strategically employ design. One challenge faced in achieving brand recognition may be that the product appearance does not always remain the same. Product design evolves through periods of stability followed by short episodes of radical change (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010; Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005). For example, after a long period of stable car styles, Volvo introduced their new model (S60) with a number of new features in response to the changing market situation and consumer needs and successfully established a more dynamic image consistent with its existing brand identity of safety and Scandinavian design. After the introduction of the S60, these features were used to varying extent in all models for a number of years. Other changes are more radical. A notable example is the renowned Alessi product line, 'family follows fiction' (Verganti, 2008). This product line, consisting of products like 'dancing' corkscrews, is a series of playful, colourful, and metaphorical kitchenware. It represented a significant shift in the meaning of kitchenware and the brand itself, transforming it from mere tools to 'transitional objects' in people's lives.

The next section presents considerations and approaches to deal with these challenges. I first present findings on a design philosophy that provides the basis for brand recognition. Then, I present practices related to a 'period of stability'. During this period, the intention is to design multiple products across a portfolio using a consistent set of features enhancing brand recognition. Lastly, I focus on the moment of change, discussing relevant practices that support the design of a new generation of products that have new features or shapes but still ensure brand recognition.

2.3.3 Considerations and approaches

Design philosophy as a strategic basis for brand recognition

A design philosophy serves as a strategic basis for brand recognition, and it can be related to both product portfolio and product generation. Ravasi and Lojacono (2005) are among the first to connect design activities with an organisation's strategies. Their research indicates that a design philosophy can provide the strategic basis for a consistent visual identity, enhancing brand recognition. An organisation can regain or reinforce competitive advantage when a design philosophy is tightly connected to strategic intent, core (technical) capabilities, and brand values. An interesting example from their study is the furniture brand Kartell. Established in 1949 as a plastic equipment producer for the car industry, it soon started to experiment with and develop innovative plastic technologies. As the brand extended to household products, it connected its design philosophy to the core capability of innovative plastic technologies. As a result, the brand produced furniture with plastic as the core material and with sophisticated textures and finishes. The aesthetic quality of Kartell's products was exceptionally high. The brand gained a robust competitive advantage over its competitors and established itself as a high-quality furniture brand with a distinctive visual identity in the industry.

As a design philosophy depends on the particular situation of an organisation, Karjalainen and Snelders (2010) further explored the key drivers of design philosophy and how organisations can strategically employ design to create and enhance brand recognition. They studied Volvo and Nokia as two brands that were successful in terms of brand recognition but differed significantly in their design philosophies. Volvo used a more consistent strategy with explicit cues, while Nokia used a more flexible approach with implicit cues. By studying the differences between the two brands, the authors reveal six drivers behind the design philosophy. These drivers are divided into internal and external ones. The internal drivers stem from past and present brand management strategies. They include brand position, portfolio width, brand heritage, and design history. The external drivers are related to the product category a brand belongs to. They include the life-cycle stage of the industry and the renewal cycle of product models. Person et al. (2007) proposed considering similarities or differences with the existing product portfolio, the succession of product generations, and competitors' products.

To summarise, on a strategic level, when a design philosophy is connected to the organisation's strategic intent, capabilities, and brand, it can enhance an organisation's competitive advantage. Furthermore, an organisation can distinguish different drivers that influence its design philosophy. More specifically, three dimensions proposed by Person et al. (2007) can be considered for decisions about product visual appearance.

Practices to achieve brand recognition across the product portfolio

When a design philosophy is consistently applied across the product portfolio, a distinctive visual identity is established throughout the whole product portfolio – consumers can then recognise these products as members of a particular brand. According to Ravasi and Lojacono (2005), a design philosophy consists of two related components: a set of core design principles and a stylistic identity. The core design principles are explicit guidelines for designers that shape the design process. Examples of Apple's core design principles are user-friendliness, elegant simplicity, and emotional appeal (p. 74). These principles do not provide prescriptive design features but rather offer a direction. They push Apple designers to create products with distinctive conceptual and functional features. Stylistic identity refers to a unique combination of shapes, colours, patterns, and materials that characterise a brand's products, differentiate them from other brands, and make them immediately recognisable by consumers. An example of stylistic identity for Bang & Olufsen is captured in 'sober, elegant shapes, satin, matte surfaces, and anodised zinc and aluminium' (p. 74). Furthermore, these authors also promote a consistent policy for selecting and evaluating new product ideas to extend the product portfolio. Management decisions based on a consistent product portfolio policy ensure strategic alignment of new ideas and coherence among products under the same brand.

Another way to achieve brand recognition is through lead products. Karjalainen and Snelders (2010) found that products in the present and historic product portfolio contribute to brand recognition in different ways, to different extents, or at different times. In particular, strong brand recognition can be created through lead products. Most brands have pivotal products in their portfolio that best reflect the brand identity (Kapferer, 1992). Therefore, the embodiment of brand identity can be strategically organised through lead products. One example from their study is the Volkswagen Golf. Several key features of this model have even become part of the authentic brand heritage.

In summary, consistently applying a design philosophy can enhance brand recognition. A second finding is to establish brand recognition through lead products.

Practices to achieve brand recognition across product generations

Radical changes in product design can involve the renewal of an existing product (e.g. Volvo S60 or Alessi kitchenware) or the emergence of an entirely new product category, like the iPod. Through these changes, a brand can acquire new meanings in relation to its existing identity (Verganti, 2008). A well-known illustration of this phenomenon is the Swatch brand, which revolutionised the concept of a watch from a timekeeping device to a fashion accessory by introducing its distinctive colourful plastic appearance. Although the literature focuses on product innovation that is not limited to the brand recognition of products, it nevertheless

provides valuable insights on this topic. Several useful insights about product renewal as well as design and management practices are presented below.

There are various factors driving these product renewals, such as technological innovation, evolving market and consumer needs, organisational or brand strategy, and sociocultural context shifts (Beverland et al., 2010; Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005; Verganti, 2008). It is important to note that the design process of a radically new product often involves experimentation. For example, the colourful Nokia 2110 mobile phone is an experimental product without a strategic intent (Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005). An essential ingredient is the willingness to question existing assumptions, such as the definition of product categories (Beverland et al., 2015). Designers may ask themselves questions like, 'What if a dishwasher had a different shape?' (p. 599). These questions can inspire designers to develop products that deviate from the category standard. Furthermore, radically new products can benefit from collaboration with a network of external partners that continuously investigate the broader sociocultural context and develop visions and new meanings (Verganti, 2008). This collaboration can foster a new understanding of a product and, consequently, an entirely new product appearance.

The explorative nature of product renewal frequently leads to a product design that significantly diverges from existing ones. Consumers might struggle to identify a product as belonging to an existing brand when it extends into a new category or undergoes substantial design changes across different product generations. To sustain brand recognition, product renewal should serve as a bridge linking the brand's heritage with its future direction (Beverland et al., 2015). In this process, tangible or symbolic features are carefully identified and selected for their ability to introduce new, non-conflicting associations with the brand's existing identity or to accentuate previously underemphasised aspects. Accordingly, the design of such new products departs to some extent from the current design philosophy, introducing new shapes or features (Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005). It is essential to preserve a connection with the heritage of the organisation or brand, historical products, or the vision of a chief designer (e.g. Jacob Jensen at Bang & Olufsen). It is remarkable that sometimes organisations use 'image-builders' or 'flagship' products to explore consumer responses to bold new design elements or gain market knowledge. Learnings from these products are then applied in a less radical form to achieve wider commercial success and sustain brand recognition. Lastly, managers can play several different roles during product renewal (Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005). For example, Nokia appointed a chief designer as vice president for design to establish the strategic relevance of design. At other organisations such as Kartell, Artemide, or Alessi, top managers have personally served as design managers, stimulating and protecting autonomous idea generation.

Swatch's distinctive and colourful appearance has established a distinctive new brand identity associated with fashion. Product renewal is often intertwined with the development of a renewed brand identity. As Ravasi and Lojacono (2005) put it: 'design philosophy and strategic intent seemed to co-evolve as designers and managers collaborated to shape a new strategic course' (p. 65). Furthermore, product renewal can initiate the development of a new design philosophy, including new design features or elements. Accordingly, a crucial management responsibility involves embedding this new philosophy across the entire organisation, extending its influence even to peripheral actors like retailers and distributors. The design philosophy and principles are formalised in documents, guiding designers to align their work with others responsible for the brand identity and communication content. Insights obtained through product renewal are consolidated to ensure consistency in future product ranges, establishing the new brand identity (Beverland et al., 2015).

In summary, product renewal is driven by various internal and external factors of an organisation. Due to its explorative nature, product design undergoes radical changes during product renewal. To sustain brand recognition between different product generations, product renewal must appropriately link the brand's past and future when introducing new features or new meanings. This implies that design philosophy co-evolves with brand strategy. Lastly, managers can play a crucial role in embedding the new design philosophy together with the new brand identity in the organisation.

2.4 Communication of a brand identity through the visual aspect of a touchpoint

Sections 2.2 and 2.3 above discussed the design and management of various types of TPs and products as one specific type of TP. This section narrows down the focus to the visual aspect of a TP.

The visual aspect of a TP holds significant importance in BE design. Numerous research findings show that the visual appearance of a product can influence how consumers categorise products and brands and form their associations (Berkowitz, 1987; Bloch, 1995; Kreuzbauer & Malter, 2005; Karjalainen, 2007). For example, the large size of a hair dryer can be associated with powerfulness related to the functionality of the product, while angular forms are associated with dynamism and masculinity as symbolic meanings (Creusen & Schoormans, 2005). More importantly, products with specific design features can evoke symbolic associations that reflect a brand's identity (Creusen & Schoormans, 2005; Kreuzbauer & Malter, 2005). A package with a natural appearance is associated with a sincere personality, while a contrasting appearance is associated with an exciting personality (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008). Also, the

visual aspect of store design can influence brand identity perceptions (Kirby & Kent, 2010). For example, The Body Shop influenced the perception of the brand through the colour of its interior design (Kent & Stone, 2007). As part of the visual appearance of a TP, brand elements (e.g. logo, type font, and colour) can also influence brand perceptions (Lieven et al., 2015). To summarise, the visual appearance of a TP plays a significant role in establishing a strong visual brand identity and brand recognition to create brand values (Borja de Mozota, 2004; Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010; Schmitt & Simonson, 1997; Stompff, 2003).

As the visual appearance of products is key to determining consumer responses and offers opportunities for organisations to foster competitive advantage and achieve market success, it is no surprise that it has received much attention from design and marketing scholars. In its initial definition, only those design tasks associated with the communication of meanings through product design are termed styling tasks (Person et al., 2016). Throughout the remainder of the thesis, I broaden this definition, extending it from products to encompass all types of TPs. Furthermore, its meaning is associated with a user's affective and sociocultural needs (Verganti, 2008). It is seen as 'a system of values—a personality and identity—that may easily go beyond style' (p. 440). In the context of BE design, brand identity refers to the intended meaning, which is a set of associations an organisation aspires to convey (Phillips et al., 2014). To summarise, styling tasks in BE design are concerned with the design of visual aspects of TPs aiming to convey a brand identity.

The remaining part of the section is organised as follows. Section 2.4.1. introduces desired outcomes in styling tasks. Section 2.4.2 highlights the challenges, and section 2.4.3 presents relevant considerations and approaches.

2.4.1 Desired outcomes

Styling is vital for brand recognition, and it is essential to the success of design-oriented brands such as Alessi, Kartell, or Dyson (Person et al., 2016). Take the bubble-shaped VW Beetle, for example. During the 1960s, the Beetle became a symbol of the carefree hippie era. Many consumers now desire to own the new model. Based on focus interviews with industry design experts and a review of styling in design and marketing literature, Person et al. (2016) identified three desired outcomes of styling in a commercial setting that include attention drawing, establishing recognition, and creation of symbolic meaning. These desired outcomes are 'intermediary' because they are instrumental in making the new product a commercial success. The fourth desired outcome is related to the expression of the designer, which is not directly related to the brand identity; therefore, this outcome is not addressed further in this thesis.

Attention is a primary condition for consumers to derive information from a product and to remember the information. To enable this process, a product's visual appearance is key to drawing and maintaining the attention of consumers (Schoormans & Robben, 1997). More specifically, consumers tend to pay more attention to novel and unexpected products, and unexpected information can elicit surprise, leading to a positive product evaluation by consumers (Vanhamme & Snelders, 2003). Next, the visual appearance of products offers consumers cues so that they can relate one product to another that belongs to the same period, lifestyle segment, or brand (Kreuzbauer & Malter, 2005; Pugliese & Cagan, 2002; Underwood, 2003). Although drawing attention through novel design and establishing recognition through repetition of existing cues are seemingly conflicting processes, they both contribute to the attractiveness of a product. Therefore, organisations need to balance these desired outcomes carefully to achieve optimal consumer evaluations. The last desired outcome is the creation of meaning. Consumers attribute functional and symbolic meaning to the appearance of products (Creusen & Schoormans, 2005; Crilly et al., 2004). It is important to note that designers are not in full control of what kinds of meanings consumers will attribute to the product. In fact, the symbolic meanings consumers attribute to products can be personal and based on a cultural context (Zaltman, 2003).

2.4.2 Challenges

Regarding these desired outcomes, the challenge for designers when dealing with a styling task is the embodiment of a brand identity in the visual appearance of a product (Blijlevens et al., 2009). Products are often developed based on designers' intuitive judgement and educated guesses (Crilly et al., 2004). It is not surprising that new designers at companies such as Nokia and Volvo spend up to one or two years learning how to apply the brand's design philosophies to styling tasks (Karjalainen, 2004, as cited in Person et al., 2007). Other scholars have noted that training and a substantial amount of experience are required to acquire the skills and intuition to successfully style new products (e.g. Wetlaufer & Arnault, 2001, as cited in Person et al., 2007).

Also, organisations often struggle with styling tasks. Managers encounter challenges in managing the creative process. According to Endrissat et al. (2016), management studies have revealed tensions of creativity versus integration that are prevalent in the creative industries. Styling tasks need differentiation to attract attention from consumers – and thus the creative autonomy of designers is essential. On the other hand, product design must also adhere to the design philosophy of a brand, and this means that the integration of various product designs is critical. Designers may view coordination attempts as controlling, managerialist, or even constraining their artistic expression, often resulting in resistance rather than collaboration.

To summarise, the challenge for designers is to create the expression or embodiment of a desired brand identity, whereas managers often deal with tensions between creative freedom and the consistent expression of a brand identity.

2.4.3 Considerations and approaches

Evoking brand associations through the semantic transformation process

The semantic transformation process serves as the basis for understanding how to create design features that elicit desired brand associations among consumers. The relationship between product design and brand identity is established through semantic transformation (Karjalainen, 2004), which originates from the theory of signs (Peirce, 1955). Semantic transformation is based on the idea that the qualitative brand identity in the language domain can be associated with various design features in the physical domain. Brand associations are constructed through the triadic interaction between (1) a design feature with its specific properties (e.g. form, shape, colour), (2) a value as part of the brand identity to which the design feature refers, and (3) the context of the interpretation by a consumer (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010).

These authors highlighted three aspects of the semantic transformation process that need to be taken into account. First, it is essential to notice that some associations evoked by design features are affected by existing brand knowledge and others not. An organisation has only partial control over this process. Secondly, there are explicit features that consumers immediately recognise and implicit features that consumers only recognise subconsciously or intuitively. The last aspect is the complete vs. partial attribution of the brand values. Complete attribution is inherent to human nature or a specific culture, while partial attribution can only be recognised by a limited group of consumers.

Based on the understanding of the semantic transformation process, a product can be intentionally designed by an organisation to communicate brand identity to its target group of consumers (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010). In this sense, a product, with its design features, is a ‘persistent and nonarbitrary reminder’ of a brand’s identity (p. 8). This finding is also supported by Kreuzbauer and Malter’s (2005) study, which shows that consumers recognise products as members of a brand based on the associations evoked by the product. Furthermore, the design for brand recognition literature stream has mainly investigated two topics: (1) how to identify the link between existing design features and a specific value as part of a desired brand identity; and (2) how to use these features in generating new products’ visual appearance. The following section introduces semantic transformation (Karjalainen, 2004) and shape grammar (McCormack & Cagan, 2004) as two essential design approaches that can enhance brand recognition.

Design approaches for brand recognition

The section introduces semantic transformation (Karjalainen, 2004) and shape grammar (McCormack & Cagan, 2004) as two essential design approaches that can support brand recognition. In Karjalainen's (2007) study, the design process of semantic transformation started with the analysis of a wide range of the brand's current and historical TPs in order to capture the intended brand identity in words. The participants analysed web pages, product dealers, popular press, brochures, and other TPs of the brand. Next, explicit features used by the brand were collected and the important ones were selected. The third step used design format analysis (DFA) (Warell, 2001) to develop a systematic overview of the chosen products and features – DFA offers insights into which product feature has the highest occurrence and which specific product consists of the most features. In this way, the participants identified the explicit design features that the brand is recognised for and the most typical products of that brand. As implicit features are less obvious to consumers and are embedded in a variety of features, another method, the semantic differential method (Osgood et al., 1957; Krippendorff, 2005), was used to discover these features. This method explores the relationships between different features and a set of brand identity values and determines the strength of those relationships. As implicit features are less product category-specific, they can be applied to generate shapes for a new product category. In the study by Karjalainen (2007), the participants mainly used implicit features, defined as keywords, derived from the car brands' identity to generate drink containers, watches, etc.

In another study, McCormack and Cagan (2004) used shape grammar to create product shapes that are consistent with the brand identity. They started with a systematic analysis of the front view of historical Buick vehicles. Through extensive analysis, they extracted characteristic features and representative shapes. Subsequently, they generated a set of shape grammars to encode the Buick identity. These grammars fall into two categories: feature creation and feature modification. Designers can first use feature creation rules to create a shape that can then be modified using feature modification rules. This approach supports designers in generating a large range of various forms while still ensuring that these forms are consistent with the brand identity.

To conclude, semantic transformation and shape grammar support designers in identifying key features that convey the brand identity. The starting point of both approaches is an extensive analysis of either different types of TPs (Karjalainen, 2007) or generations of products (McCormack & Cagan, 2004). The emphasis of both approaches is the analysis of TPs and the consistent application of features and rules to secure brand recognition.

2.5 Summary and conclusions

This section briefly summarises findings from the literature review. The previous sections first explained how the design of multiple TPs leads to favourable consumer outcomes through brand awareness and brand image based on the CBBE model (2.1). Second, I synthesised several different literature streams and presented findings related to the design and management of various types of TPs (2.2) and one specific type of TP in terms of product portfolio and product generation (2.3). Lastly, Section 2.4 unpacked design approaches based on the semantic transformation process for communicating a brand identity through the design of a product's visual appearance. All these sections are structured in a consistent manner, each presenting three key topics: desired outcomes, challenges, and approaches. Table 1 gives an overview of relevant literature findings in this chapter according to this structure.

Regarding desired outcomes, brand awareness and a favourable brand image consistent with the brand identity emerged from all literature streams. For various types of TPs, the main challenge is rooted in 'the explosion of touch points' due to the advancement of innovative digital technology (Vernuccio et al., 2020). One theoretical approach to address this challenge is to match the specific abilities/characteristics of each TP to the different consumer needs according to the distinct stages of a customer journey and subsequently identify the optimal set of TPs to achieve desired outcomes (Batra & Keller, 2016). Another approach is to establish a brand identity oriented culture and establish brand strategists and brand stewards as two different roles at the interfaces between strategy and implementation (Madhavaram et al., 2005). A more specific challenge concerns informing design teams of a desired brand identity (Clatworthy, 2012; Motta-Filho, 2021). The empirical finding suggests that designers can use relationship metaphors, service principles, and service moments. For multiple TPs of one specific type (i.e. product portfolio or generation), scholars have mainly investigated how an organisation can employ design strategically to create visual brand recognition (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010). The main challenge is maintaining brand recognition across a product portfolio as well as during product renewal. Studies have revealed factors and dimensions that influence the design philosophy and decision-making (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010; Person et al., 2007). Lastly, an organisation can adopt managerial practices to support brand recognition during strategic product renewal (Beverland et al., 2015; Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005).

Table 1: Literature findings on the design and management of various TPs

	Design and management of various types of TPs	**Design and management of one specific type of TP (product)**	**Design and management of the visual aspect of a TP (styling)**
Desired outcomes:	Brand awareness; the communication of detailed brand information; brand equity (Duncan, 2002; Šerić, 2017); customer brand engagement (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016).	Brand recognition (i.e. brand awareness and the communication of an intended brand identity) (Karjalainen, 2007; Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010; Keller, 2013)	Attention drawing, establishing brand recognition, and creation of symbolic meaning (Person et al., 2016)
	Consumer satisfaction, purchase intention (Helkkula, 2011); congruence between brand strategy and service experience (Clatworthy, 2012)		
Challenges:	Dealing with a multitude of TPs (Bolton et al., 2018; Keller, 2001)	Achieve brand recognition across product portfolios and product generations (Karjalainen, 2007; Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010; Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005)	Embodiment of a brand identity in the visual appearance (Blijlevens et al., 2009; Crilly, 2004)
	Consumers' individual context influences interaction with TPs (Batra & Keller, 2016; De Keyser et al., 2020).		Styling task requires a substantial amount of training (Person et al., 2007)
	Translating the brand identity to the design team (Clatworthy, 2012; Motta-Filho, 2012, 2021; Munchbach, 2014)		Managing creativity versus integration in creative process (Endrissat et al., 2016)
	Management and organisation barriers to TPs integration (Vernuccio et al., 2020)		
Considerations and approaches	Optimising interrelationships among TPs along the customer journey (Batra & Keller, 2016; De Keyser et al., 2020).	Strategically employ design philosophy which mediates between strategic intent, core (technical) capabilities and brand values (Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005); key drivers for a design philosophy (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010); three dimensions for design decisions (Person et al., 2007)	Three aspects of semantic transformation process (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010)
	Expressing abstract brand identity in multiple forms to design teams (Clathworthy, 2012); the BE manual with the relationship metaphor, the service principles and the service moments (Motta-Filho, 2021)	Consistent product portfolio policy (Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005) and use of lead products (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010)	Semantic transformation, explicit cues (visual) and implicit cues (keywords) (Karjalainen, 2007); analysis of design features: design format analysis (DFA) (Warell, 2001) visual; the semantic differential method (Osgood et al., 1957; Krippendorff, 2005); shape grammar (McCormack & Cagan, 2004).
	Enhancing participation and brand orientation (Vernuccio et al., 2020). A brand identity–oriented culture, two distinct roles (brand strategist and brand steward), top management support (Madhavaram et al., 2005)	Deviation from existing TPs through experimentation, naïve questioning, and collaboration with external partners (Beverland et al., 2015; Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005; Verganti, 2008); linking a brand's past and future (Beverland et al., 2015); co-evolve and embed the (new design) philosophy (Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005).	

2.6 Formulating the research question for Study 1

This section identifies the research gap and formulates the research question for the first study. As introduced in Section 1.6, this thesis aims to explore how to design meaningful BE that helps organisations achieve favourable consumer outcomes aligned with strategic brand management. The extensive literature review offered valuable insights. However, as existing literature discusses communication TPs, services, and products in an unconnected fashion, empirical knowledge of how to create and manage various types of TPs is scarce. There are several reasons why this research gap exists.

First, due to the substantial differences among the TPs, existing knowledge may not be directly applicable across the literature streams. For instance, consider the difference between a physical and a digital TP. When designing a product, a designer can use its three-dimensional shape, form details, material, and specific colour to evoke desired brand associations (Creusen & Schoormans, 2005; Keller, 2013; Schmitt & Simonson, 1997). In comparison, a website, as a communication TP, is two-dimensional and communicates through rich images, videos, and detailed textual information. As designers work with distinct design features (shape of a product vs. textual information on a website), it may indicate that the design of one particular TP type (e.g. website) may require specific design skills and approaches that are different from those for another TP (e.g. product). Second, as different types of TPs fall under separate disciplines within an organisation, coordination is needed to bridge the different mindsets and stimulate collaboration. The marketing and brand management discipline, often responsible for the communication TPs, tends to engage in exploitation activities that favour consistency (Beverland et al., 2015). In contrast, the product design discipline is more likely to engage in exploration activities in the pursuit of diversification. Third, with the unprecedented expansion in the number of TPs, the need for a more integrative approach is stronger than ever before. For example, due to the large number of digital and social TPs, it may be demanding for an organisation to create and manage them. Differences among the communication TPs alone has already lead to specialisation in the creative industry (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2010). A recent study by Vernuccio et al. (2022) asserts that integrated creative ideation and strategic planning of various TPs remain understudied (Bruhn & Schnebelen, 2017) and have not yet been fully embraced by practitioners. To conclude, there is a lack of sufficient knowledge regarding the desired outcomes, challenges, and approaches that holistically support the creation and management of diverse types of TPs.

To address this gap adequately, the scope of this research needs to be narrowed down. As discussed in Section 2.4, studies have shown that the visual appearance of TPs plays a major role in forming consumers' perception of brand identity, affecting brand-related outcomes and creating brand value (Borja de Mozota, 2004; Creusen & Schoormans, 2005;

Luchs & Swan, 2011). Moreover, compared to user interaction through products, the effect of visual appearance is more substantial in communicating specific brand identities (Desmet et al., 2008). Lastly, multiple TPs have a combined effect on perceptions of a brand identity, influencing consumers' BEs. For example, package design combined with in-store activities can determine brand salience (Van der Lans et al., 2008). In conclusion, given the significance of visual aspects in shaping consumers' BEs and their impact on brand-related consumer outcomes, the research question for the first study is formulated as follows:

How could the visual appearance of various TPs be designed to support strategic brand management goals?

Aligned with the literature review, I consider three aspects that are particularly interesting for further investigation: the desired outcomes for BE design, specific challenges, and creation and management practices.

Chapter 3

Study 1: Brand experience design practices

Chapter 2 presented desired outcomes, challenges, and approaches for the design and management of multiple types of TPs, one specific type of TP, and the communication of a brand identity through the visual appearance of products. These findings drew on several related literature streams: integrated marketing communication, service design, and product design for brand recognition. However, a crucial insight gained from this literature review was the inadequacy of existing knowledge dedicated to BE design. Recognising this shortfall, there arises a clear need to enhance the understanding of desired outcomes, challenges, and practices specific to BE design. Thus, the primary focus of this chapter is to explore the following research question:

How could the visual appearance of various TPs be designed to support strategic brand management goals?

I employed a multiple-case study design to answer this research question to provide empirical evidence of practices that help companies design integrated BEs. The results of the study identify specific BE design challenges on three levels with their typical tension fields and desired outcomes and a set of creation and coordination practices that designers and managers can employ to overcome challenges and achieve integrated BEs. The results of this study contribute to research at the intersection of marketing communication, brand management, and design. Furthermore, the results help practitioners like marketing managers, brand managers, and designers better understand related problems, prioritise goals, and identify proper actions.

The rest of this chapter is structured as follows. I first introduce the multiple-case study, data collection methods, and analysis procedures in Section 3.1. The results section (3.2) presents the desired outcomes, challenges, and practices for BE design. Next, the conclusion and discussion section (3.3) highlights the implications of this study for marketing and design practices, suggesting future research directions. Lastly, Section 3.4 addresses the implications for the second study[1].

3.1 Method

This section explains the choice of a multiple-case study as a research method, guided by three conditions outlined by Yin (2009). First, the selection of a research method depends on the nature of the research question. Given the limited existing knowledge in this domain,

1 Part of this chapter is an adaptation of: Bakker-Wu, S., Calabretta, G., & Hultink, E. J. (2017). How is brand experience designed in practice? Results of a multiple-case study. In *The Design Management Academy 2017 International Conference: Research Perspectives on Creative Intersections* (pp. 1213-1225). The Design Research Society.

the first study aims to explore and address an open research question formulated as follows: 'How could the visual appearance of various TPs be designed to support strategic brand management goals?' The second condition considers the level of control a researcher can exert over behavioural events. As the aim is to reveal BE design practices, this study does not seek to influence the phenomenon of BE design itself, and thus behavioural events are not manipulated. The final condition revolves around the emphasis on contemporary versus historical events. To study the current state of the art and provide novel insights for researchers and practitioners, the focus is placed on contemporary events. In conclusion, the decision on the choice of case study aligns with Yin's assertion that when asking 'a "how" or "what" question about a contemporary set of events, over which a researcher has little or no control' the case study as a research method holds a distinct advantage (Yin, 2009, p. 14).

When considering the two variants of case study methodology outlined by Yin (2009), a preference was given to the multiple-case design over the single-case design for two reasons. The primary reason is that 'the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust (Herriotte & Firestone, 1983)' (Yin, 2009, p. 57). Another reason relates to the aim of this study, which is to uncover insights applicable across various types of organisations. Focusing exclusively on a single, unusual, or extreme case, which is the rationale for opting for a single-case design, may limit the practical relevance of the findings. Regarding the number of cases, an appropriate number of cases in a general research context is four or more (Eisenhardt, 1989). This view is supported by a study investigating the quality of case studies in product innovation publications. Goffin et al. (2019) found that studies with four or more cases seem to be associated with higher-quality research. Moreover, studies with four to six cases offer the potential to explore contrasting results but with anticipatable reasons (Yin, 2009).

Lastly, the review and validation of evidence is another important aspect of a high-quality case study (Goffin et al., 2019). Independent reviews of the evidence can lead to unexpected findings (Gioia et al., 2012). More specifically, reviews with fellow researchers who are not involved in the primary data collection can help avoid researcher bias and misinterpretations. They also allow researchers to identify deeper findings (Miles et al., 2014). Therefore, I interviewed design and research experts to consolidate the preliminary findings. Thus, the data collection consisted of two stages. In the first stage, data was collected from practitioners from the selected cases. In the second stage, design and research experts were interviewed.

3.1.1 Case and key informants selection

Theoretical sampling is essential to strengthen the quality of the study (Goffin et al., 2019). Accordingly, I selected organisations that are (1) experienced with BE design and (2) are different from each other based on factors that can influence BE design activities. The first

factor is the company size. Large organisations (LOs) have different approaches than small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Berthon et al., 2008; Krake, 2005). For example, directors of SMEs may make more decisions on brand management and design than those of LOs due to organisational structure differences (Krake, 2005). The second factor is the source of design capability that can affect the design outcome. Abecassis-Moedas & Benghozi (2012) found that when design capability is internal, designers are more familiar with the brand values. As a result, they can achieve shorter lead times and reduced development costs, and the integration of different disciplines is easier than if an external design capability were to be used – external designers need extra time to familiarise themselves with the brand. However, the advantage can be that external designers may generate more fresh new ideas.

I selected four cases based on the combination of these factors: LO vs. SME and internal vs. external design capability. Cases A and B represent two SMEs in the fashion and sports industry; cases C and D represent two established LOs in aviation and consumer electronic goods. To address the diversity of TPs, I selected recently completed TP design projects involving different design disciplines (e.g. product design and website design). Table 2 presents an overview of the cases.

In Stage 1, I selected informants with two different roles in BE design according to the literature. The first role is the brand strategist, who ensures the alignment between the business and brand strategies. The second role is the brand steward, responsible for aligning a brand identity and creative execution of the TPs (Madhavaram et al., 2005). I first recruited key informants who had been assigned the responsibility of being brand strategists. Based on their suggestions, I recruited informants who served as brand stewards and worked on the preselected projects. As the project and organisation scales increased for LO cases, I recruited additional informants who played crucial roles as either brand strategists or brand stewards based on the recommendation of the key informants. In Stage 2, I selected and interviewed five design and research experts whose expertise areas are closely related to the main topics that emerged in the preliminary results from Stage 1. Tables 3 and 4 present the informants and experts with their job descriptions, BE design roles, and expertise areas.

Table 2: Case details

Case	Firm size	Brand started in	Source of design capability	Touchpoint design project: Tangible vs. digital
A	SME	1997	internal	In-store display
B	SME	1995	external	Website
C	LO	1966	external	Website
D	LO	1891	internal	Product, packaging

Table 3: Informants' details

	Stage 1: Informants	Case nr	Brand strategist	Brand steward
1	Company founder	A	X	
2	Junior designer	A		X
3	Company creative director	B	X	
4	Creative director of design agency F	B		X
5	Senior brand communication manager	C	X	
6	CEO of design agency D	C	X	
7	Senior designer of design agency D*	C		X
8	Creative director of design agency M	C		X
9	Head of design of brand, communications and digital	D	X	
10	Creative director product design	D		X
11	Global creative lead	D		X

Table 4: Experts' details

Stage 2: Experts	Expertise area
1	Design techniques, especially tools and techniques for the early phases of design. Early concept prototyping and context mapping
2	Design for emotion and subjective well-being; measuring user experience; conceptual design.
3	Design research, design DNA, conceptual design
4	Integration of design skills and methods in the strategic process
5	Director of global design, activation, and sustainability, responsible for brand experience design for a successful global brand in one product category

3.1.2 Data collection

Conducting a pilot study is another way to enhance the quality of a case study (Goffin et al., 2019). Accordingly, the data collection in Stage 1 started with a pilot interview with an interviewee who had many years of working experience as a design manager in a LO. His experience in many BE projects helped to test the questions and subsequently improve the interview guide. The next step involves the selection of TP project(s) in collaboration with the key informants, and desk research to collect secondary data about the company's brand and TPs. After this preparation, I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with the brand strategist and brand steward separately for each case. During the interviews, I used the preselected projects as the starting point to explore the interplay between the TPs and the brand. The interview guide was adapted where necessary, but the main topics and questions remained the same. The four interview topics were: BE design practices in the company; the preselected TP design project and how it is related to other TPs; the influence of the brand on the project and other TPs; and the evaluation of the outcome. Appendix A shows the interview guide used in the main data collection. The interview length varied between 60 to 90 minutes. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and checked.

I analysed the data collected from Stage 1 and developed a preliminary overview of challenges and practices for BE design. In Stage 2 of the data collection, I conducted semi-structured interviews with experts. During each interview, I first presented the initial results and then encouraged the experts to discuss these findings in relation to the research question and their expertise area. These interviews were aimed to (1) identify similarities, differences, or links between the finding and their knowledge and (2) explore any new insights or uncover relationships that had not been represented yet in the Stage 1 results. Each expert interview took an hour on average.

As the data collection relied on retrospective interviews, I took several measures to increase reliability, as suggested by the literature (Miller et al., 1997). First, I asked informants to select recently completed projects that contained rich information concerning the research question. All interviews were conducted in the daily work environment of the informants. Secondly, it is essential to use multiple data sources to increase the internal and construct validity of research (Yin, 2009). I triangulated the interview data by using the interview guide with the same topics and questions for both brand strategists and brand stewards. In addition to the interviews, secondary data from different sources were collected. These sources included websites, news articles, visits to online and offline stores where products were sold, and details of products or services discussed during the interviews. Lastly, I also looked for conceptual TP design or other materials related to the BE design process. For instance, I asked informants to show different versions of the particular TP or the design guidelines used in the design process. For confidentiality reasons, these data were not documented.

3.1.3 Data analysis

To analyse the data from the first stage, I adopted the process of building theory from case study research (Eisenhardt, 1989). The data analysis consisted of two phases. Phase 1 was concerned with within-case analyses, while Phase 2 focused on cross-case analysis. Phase 1 started with initial line-by-line coding, using a mix of several coding methods, such as descriptive, in vivo, and simultaneous coding (Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2015). During this process, codes were not only created but also revised where necessary (Miles et al., 2013). The first cycle of coding resulted in more than 1,800 codes for the four cases. Altogether, these codes represented the case information in great detail. In the second cycle of coding, pattern codes were used to group the initial codes into a smaller number of themes. These pattern codes are a kind of 'meta-code'; they 'are explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation' (p. 86). Information from various informants within the same case was cross-referenced and compared with secondary data to ensure consistency and corroboration. As the last step, a diagram was developed to explore the relationship dynamics (Spradly, 1979) between the themes (Miles et al., 2014).

In the second phase, the cross-case analysis was conducted to 'deepen understanding and explanation' (Miles et al., 2013, p. 101). During this phase, comparisons were made across the four cases with the aim to discover underlying similarities and differences. Based on the pattern codes from individual cases and the cross-case analysis, nine theoretical categories were developed as preliminary results to answer the research question.

In the second stage of data collection, I presented and discussed the initial results from Stage 1 with design and research experts. This process facilitated the refinement of insights and interpretations. For example, the term 'flexible' was initially used to describe the modification of TPs to suit local market needs, in contrast to the notion of maintaining consistency of TP design everywhere. During a discussion with Expert 3, who has a research background in design DNA, it was suggested that 'adaptation' was a more fitting term, aligning better with existing literature. These adjustments contributed to the final presentation of the results.

3.2 Results

The results show that BE design encompasses an extensive range of TPs. TPs can be tangible or intangible. Some of them can be designed by the organisation (logo, brochures); some of them can be co-created with consumers (an event); and some of them can only be created by consumers (casual conversation among consumers about a specific brand). The interviewees mainly discussed physical TPs such as product, packaging, in-store display, and website as digital TP. To design the visual appearance of various TPs, practitioners pay attention to

the influences among TPs and the influences between TPs and the brand. When analysing the challenges of designing integrated BEs, I was able to cluster them into three levels of complexity: (1) individual TP, (2) portfolio of TPs, and (3) generation of TPs. As each level poses different challenges, I found that designers and managers deal with different tension fields and strive to achieve corresponding outcomes. Further analysis revealed two types of practices to achieve the desired outcomes. The first type of practice involves discovering and developing new possibilities for TP design (e.g. a new shape of a display or a new logo), which I labelled as *creation practices*. The second one concerns optimising efficiency or effectiveness (e.g. decisions on investment), labelled as *coordination practices*. In the next section, I present the results according to the complexity levels and types of practices. Each section starts with a tension field followed by the desired outcome. Then, I provide creation and coordination practices. Table 5 presents an overview of the main findings.

Table 5: Overview of results

	Individual touchpoint	TP portfolio	Generations of touchpoints
Tension fields:	Consistency vs. originality	Consistency vs. adaptation	Consistency vs. relevance
Desired outcome:	Distinctiveness	Coherence	Continuity
Creation practices:	Inspiring	Guiding	Learning
Coordination practices:	Prioritising	Governing	Regulating

3.2.1 Individual touchpoint

Consumers form BEs through interactions with various TPs. In all cases, the designers and managers sought to create TPs with original visual appearances that stood out from existing solutions to catch the attention of consumers and enhance differentiation from competitors. Furthermore, the visual appearance of a TP must be consistent with the brand identity, which may not be entirely new. For example, in case A, the brand identities of 'intuitive' or 'robust' may already exist in other categories (e.g. smartphones), communicated through existing design solutions or features (Karjalainen, 2007; Orth & Malkewitz, 2008). The quotes below exemplify the tension field of *consistency* with a non-original brand identity versus *originality* of a TP's visual appearance.

> *We see [it] in every touchpoint – it has to be intuitive, it has to be robust (...) especially a website must be simple, clear, and comprehensible. That is also what we want with our customer service, what we want with our website, with our product, with our packaging, with our display.*

But take, for example, our new website. We don't want to imitate someone else's website. We want to have something of our own. It has to be something [unique], we want to serve as the example for other websites. That's not easy, right? (Case A, company owner)

The desired outcome that emerged from the data is *distinctiveness*. It refers to a unique combination of original and existing visual elements consistent with the brand identity. In case A, a distinctive visual appearance of a product is achieved by combining two types of existing materials that express the brand identity.

We don't want to be trend followers but to be trendsetters. That is, of course, never entirely true. Because we do leather, people do leather. It [leather] is now being rediscovered. But we do leather in combination with aluminium, so we're very unique in that respect. The mix we make must be very unique – the end result must be very unique. (Case A, owner)

Inspiring

Designers need inspiration to create distinctive TPs. *Inspiring* entails practices of selecting and using inspiration that supports the creative process to achieve distinctiveness. Designers study existing TPs to extract key visual design features that define a brand. They also analyse the organisational culture, business strategy, market, and user context to gain rational inspiration. Lastly, brand values can be an essential source of rational inspiration. In case B, the distinctiveness of the motorcycle sportware catalogue was achieved through a cinematographic style that created a 'dream world' for the customers. The inspiration for this specific photographic style was derived from the brand identity (i.e. inspiring people to ride) through logical reasoning:

If you want to inspire people, then we also have to present an image that in itself is a dream world, where you say, I want to do this, I'm motivated. [We] always create a kind of cinematic world. Because I believe that people in themselves do want to escape from something – and then I prefer to present an ideal image rather than the ordinary, normal image. (Case B, company creative director)

Furthermore, feelings and emotions emerged as a second source of inspiration. I label inspiration gained through affective processes as *emotional inspiration*. They can be found in texts and visuals that direct a designer's search for solutions. Examples are a short phrase (i.e. the 'leading principle') that evoked the desired consumer emotion in case C, or visuals that elicited the feeling of friendliness in case A. It is noticeable that emotional inspiration is not directly related to the design of a specific TP, such as a display in case A.

What has helped me a lot is looking at what evokes the feeling of friendliness in me when I look at either people, or nature, or buildings, or products. To take pictures of that and then see what's so typical about that thing that makes it friendly. So I learned it mainly by looking, by looking around me, mainly at shapes, colours, and details. (Case A, junior designer)

Both rational and emotional inspirations are essential. However, emotional inspiration often seems to end up being overlooked. Ideally, it plays an equally important role as rational inspiration right at the beginning of a design process.

But we always try to make content and emotion or ratio and emotion go hand in hand. We're convinced (...) if that is a kind of chemical analysis and then comes the department of 'feeling', that's not good. The feeling must then be expressed in some way in the language used in the debrief. (...) because that's where the colour of the project and the character of the project are actually expressed, and that's usually what is overlooked. Then people feel what we mean – instead of you describing everything neatly, strategically, and rationally (...) You have to put that feeling in there (...) And then, if you already have that feeling in it, then you also get a much richer load in the design process than [just] a kind of math formula with 'this must be it' strategically. (Case C, creative director D)

Prioritising

Our data reveals that some TPs have a more significant impact on consumers than others. I label those as *leading TPs*. The type of a leading TP differs per case; remarkably, they are not necessarily the primary offer to consumers. It can be a display (case A), a product catalogue (case B), a website (case C), or a product (case D). Designers and managers take a pragmatic approach whereby they mainly invest in the leading TPs. For example, in case C, the website replaced travel agencies as the main distribution channel due to digitalisation. The design and implementation of the new website were crucial for communicating the brand identity and differentiating it from competitors. *Prioritising* refers to selecting and implementing leading TPs to establish a distinctive BE.

Managers and designers can use the customer journeys to discover consumers' information needs at different points (Batra & Keller, 2016), but also to identify leading TPs through careful observation of consumers' interaction in a holistic way.

Yes, you have to look at where you want to make a difference. And that's why it's so important to observe. Because if you're going to observe, you have to say (...) you have those 'micro-moments' where you can make a difference. You can then bet on that. If you have a customer journey and all of those micro-moments, you'll zoom in on something that is meaningful for your brand. (Case C, creative director agency M)

3.2.2 Portfolio of touchpoints

BE is an accumulation of a customer's interactions with all TPs of a brand. This section extends the complexity level from a single TP to a portfolio of TPs. A certain level of visual consistency across the TP portfolio is considered a prerequisite for a strong and recognisable brand. However, it is inevitable that TPs will be adapted due to their various communication roles on a customer journey (Keller, 2001); market and culture differences (Snelders et al., 2011); or TP-specific design rules, such as conventions of a website layout. Lastly, as TPs differ in modality (Keller, 2001), their visual appearance must be adapted to the characteristics of the particular type of TP while still eliciting the same desired brand associations.

Then it's not that they [touchpoints] all have to be identical because consistency is often confused with things having to be identical – it's 'dead in a jar', but that's just boring. You have to specifically bring it to life. So the machine looks like this, and the product, the packaging, the online presence all have to exhale the same spirit. (Case C, CEO design agency D)

The quotes below exemplify the tension field of *consistency* across a TP portfolio (i.e. micro-moments) versus *adaptation* of a specific TP (i.e. an advertisement) to a particular situation.

But what I fundamentally believe in is that if you do the one micro-moment right, you just need to make enough micro-moments in the right way to create a larger sense of brand experiences. The only way that you can influence it is by creating a set level of consistent brand experiences across all of your touchpoints.

So how to portray celebrities in our advertising? That is so different from what we do in Europe. And, also, celebrities in China, they want to be treated differently than how we treat [people] like Jamie Oliver in, for example, Europe. Very different. They have very different rules of the game. There are very different things [involved]. So basically, we said that we'll fly there and work together with you and we'll make it work. As long as, at the end of the day, not only it works for us as a brand but also in terms of brand perception [so that it] is in the same spirit as what we wanted to be in the Netherlands, in Europe, in Western countries. (Case D, head of design)

Coherence across a TP portfolio emerged as the desired outcome. It refers to all TPs fitting naturally together as a whole to collectively communicate the desired brand identity to consumers while allowing differences among them.

All the touchpoints are becoming consistent and then coherent and cohesive in a way that if someone starts (...) with this customer decision journey, goes through all those loops and cycles, it's like, they really recognise [the brand name] everywhere as being the same company delivering those different touchpoints and experience. (Case D, creative director)

Guiding

Creating an extensive range of diverse TPs that jointly deliver a coherent BE can be challenging. *Guiding* refers to generating and providing guidelines to steer the creation of the entire TP portfolio towards one direction. These guidelines consist of elements and examples of the desired visual appearances of TPs. Some elements are prescriptive, such as applying specific graphical features or TP-specific rules (e.g. website layout). Others are descriptive or inspirational, such as visuals or phrases that evoke a desired brand association. Altogether, these guidelines stimulate designers' creativity within a predefined 'loose framework' to ensure consistency while leaving room for necessary adaptation.

And then we have what we call the envisioned brand experience. But the way we do it, is by showing examples of the principles for how it should be. We can't go to a market and say 'you have to make it look exactly like this!' (...) because India doesn't have the same amount of money that maybe Germany has. So what we do is we make examples and say 'try to make it look as much as possible like this' (...) So that's why we talked about 'envisioned', because it's trying to project [our] vision without saying: 'You have to make it like this!' (Case D, head of design)

The LO cases employed an inclusive and multidisciplinary approach to devise guidelines. In case D, designers initiated a series of workshops where experts from various disciplines

shared information, formed a unified vision, and translated the brand strategy into TP design guidelines.

> *When you're in create direction modality, then it's about inclusiveness. It's about bringing all these competencies together, making sure that we're [working] together with product designers, UI designers, communication designers (...) but [we] even pick people in the business, marketers, salespeople. We work together to come up with this common ground of understanding about what the brand means in [different categories] and together we formulate that point of view. That is for me step one. It's the most important step. That everybody who works for this asset has the same mindset, the same view on what the brand is. (Case D, head of design)*

As a brand identity at an organisational level with multiple categories can be too abstract when creating a BE for a specific product category, designers operationalise it by 'trickling down' the overall brand identity to the particular user context.

> *We take the brand values, we take the business strategy of this specific category, and we translate that into what does this bit mean for the expression of the brand in this category. What does caring mean for a 20-year-old male who is looking to find solutions for shaving? And what does caring mean for a young mother who is expecting a baby and is looking for products that feel right for her newborn child? And we're looking at these brand values and putting them into context. (Case D, head of design)*

Lastly, the affective process plays a considerable role next to the cognitive process. It helps designers to assess crucial information about a brand identity that is not documented but needs to be 'felt'. In case C, designers used their senses to 'read' the organisation and 'breathe in' what they 'feel' about the company to devise a guideline.

> *That's not the same as the written briefings, but [information] comes in another way. We try to touch a nerve by asking: What is actually the personality of the brand? What is the emotional side of the brand? I think that always sounds a bit heavy, but we actually always try to merge content and emotion or rationale and emotion. (Case C, creative director agency D)*

Governing

The implementation of the guidelines is characterised by a top-down approach. *Governing* involves the practices of a small group of people who take responsibility for the deployment of the guidelines and the execution of all TP designs to realise a coherent BE. A prerequisite

for *governing* is top management-level commitment to these guidelines. In all cases, the full responsibility for *governing* is centrally located in the organisation, but it is not always fulfilled by a marketing manager, as suggested in the literature (Madhavaram et al., 2005). In case D, the creative director emphasised that keeping 'control over the brand expression' was the job of designers, but not the marketers. A central design team carried out this responsibility.

> *We have a government model that says before the final asset is implemented there is a mandatory brand sign-off. So all of these assets, they need to be sent back to global [team] where we have basically a big help desk team that receives all of these assets. We do the review, we check them, and we send them back for correction or approval. (Case D, head of design)*

Managers provide training to embed the guidelines as standardised working procedures. Not only junior product designers (Person et al., 2007), but also everyone who delivers BE receives training to ensure flawless understanding and application of the guidelines.

> *(…) you need to keep training people and motivating them. And the most important is [to ensure] that, as much as possible, people have the right understanding of what the brand is and how to bring the brand to life. And what we cannot have, that's so difficult, you cannot have a group of 2,000 or 3,000 people who all have their own interpretation of what the brand is. You can't manage a brand in that way. You can't. You need to have one point of view on that brand. (Case D, head of design)*

Lastly, managers plan the execution of all TPs centrally. They make the planning based on the investment and the impact of each TP on the customer journey.

> *And of course, together with him [customer experience manager], we looked at which moments in that journey are impactful and important. In that way we looked like, ok, then we have to do this first, and then that is a logical next step. Then, for example, this thing would be 'nice to have', but it can also wait half a year, because it's a less important point in the journey. In this way, we've sketched the picture in time and in terms of the importance of the means. (Case C, company manager)*

3.2.3 Generation of touchpoints

BE is not static over time. In all cases, the organisations introduced new generations of TPs to establish new brand identities. This section extends the scope from the portfolio of TPs to generations of TPs. I focus on the transition between two successive generations of TPs. A certain level of consistency between the old and new generations of TPs is indispensable to ensure brand recognition over time. However, new identities are required for a brand

to stay relevant as market conditions evolve. TPs with renewed visual appearances are designed to communicate these new identities. The quote below exemplifies the tension field of *consistency* across generations of TPs (i.e. product) versus *relevance* of meeting changing market situations.

> *So whether it's about the quality of the product, that if when you hold it or squeeze it, it doesn't fit your hand; or that the level of MNF [a design feature] is lower. They [consumers] most likely will be disappointed. And you'll start getting more of what we call 'brand erosion'. So people will sort of move away from your brand because they're losing that connection and the expectations they had. You've let them down, essentially. And I think that's the part, that's the danger of course. And how we can manage that. And of course competitors are catching up quickly, so we need that cycle of refreshing that, of course. (Case D, creative director)*

Continuity emerged from the data as the desired outcome when developing a new generation of TPs. It refers to a balanced combination of old and new visual elements that enables brand recognition from a consumer perspective. In case C, the company integrated a renewed logo design in their new generation of TPs to secure a continuous BE:

> *... we have actually been around for fifty years, so it's not the case that you can turn an entire brand or a positioning 180 degrees – of course, you want to keep what was good and certainly not lose your existing customers in that process. What you do see coming back [in the new logo design] is that we still have the circle together with a small letter (...) but we also want existing customers to recognise themselves in us. So you recognise that. That's still green. We want to stick to the green. (Case C, communication manager)*

Learning

Designers do not start from scratch when designing a new generation of TPs. *Learning* refers to practices where designers gain knowledge from past experience or through experimentation to sustain the continuity between TP generations. The data reveals two types of learning practices: learning between various TPs and learning between the co-development of brand identity and TPs.

As all TPs are interrelated to convey a brand identity, there is a cross-learning effect between different types, that is, designers can apply learnings from one type of TP to create another. In case A, involving a new brand establishing its identity, designers applied learnings across different types of TPs.

... you have a lot of decisions to make. Once you have the examples, it's much easier to improve. We couldn't make the second display without the first display. So it's by definition an evolutionary process. There's no way you can say, I'm going to start a brand, I'm going to make the ideal display, website, product, packaging. No, there's a growth process involved. You don't know in advance which shops you'll visit, who you'll meet, and what you need (...) you learn from your brochure for your website, from your display for your website, from your product sales, you learn from your website, and everything is connected. (Case A, owner)

When developing new visual elements, designers and brand managers gain learnings through experimentation with multiple TPs design. In case D, the designers experimented with visualisations of two new TPs to help brand managers anticipate the consequences of the new visual elements and make more informed decisions.

Then you make a sketch of one touchpoint. At that point, we used a brochure cover and a package, for example, and we thought, hey, how is that going to work, do they match? So then you get the right feeling. (Case D, creative lead)

Creating mood boards is another form of learning through experimentation. In case D, the designers created mood boards with different aesthetic expressions or themes to explore the directions of new visual elements. These mood boards also facilitated the selection and optimisation of the visual directions with internal stakeholders through iterations.

So you have the strategy, then you make the mood boards, then you sketch a bit: will it work? You usually set out a few different directions. Two or three, four at the most, no more, to polarise a bit. You usually discuss this with your stakeholders. Or a presentation – like, look, it could go this way, or that way. You get a lot of feedback on that. Then you go back again. And then you pick out things, like, okay, but this is the right direction. Or that's it (...) let's explore that further. This way, you get further and further towards a more definite solution where people say: 'That's it!' (Case D, creative lead)

Lastly, BE creation activities can translate an abstract brand identity into tangible TPs, generating learnings for brand identity development. In case A, the brand identity was refined through the design of TPs.

Whatever you notice when making brand definitions, as long as it's abstract and just in words, it's hard [to judge it]. The moment you start translating [brand definitions] into a product, such as a display, brochure, or a website, it becomes more concrete, then you can easily say this material [fits the brand] or that material doesn't. This form does and that form doesn't. You engage in a kind of reverse engineering, from ok, then this is our brand, then this is our identity. (Case A, owner)

Regulating

Organisations create and launch new generations of TPs periodically; I label this as a *BE refreshment cycle*. In cases C and D, the refreshment cycle was tightly related to brand identity renewals when the organisations launched new brand logos and leading TPs. *Regulating* refers to practices that align TP and brand identity co-development activities to sustain a continuous BE. The first practice is synchronising the introduction of new TPs. The lifecycles of TPs differ widely based on their type (e.g. package versus electronic product) and product category (e.g. six months for headphones versus a year for televisions). Therefore, it is crucial to align the launch of various new TPs to avoid consumer confusion.

We know that when we launched our first [renewed] product, we had a phase of phasing in and phasing out of the old range. And we all want to manage that also in a way that we want to have a full window where the new brand expression is visible in the market. You can easily imagine that if we were to refresh it earlier, then you'd end up with three brand expressions in the market. (Case D, creative director)

Due to the pressure of business performance or competitors catching up, designers and managers tend to favour a shorter BE refreshment cycle. However, time is needed to implement new TPs and for consumers to see, understand, and interact with them. The second practice of *regulating* strives for an optimal refreshment cycle, balancing the need for refreshment and establishment. In essence, it is a balance between internal (e.g. business, brand strategy) and external (e.g. market, competition) drivers rather than considering them as individual drivers (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010).

You need to be patient. Because you can't force this. You know, recycle the entire range – you have that effect, a positive effect will require time also. You cannot just go from one day to another and implement it. Because it's physically not possible to completely phase out the old range and replace it. So time is really also a very, very important factor. (...) If you're not enabling it in terms of time then you'll also most likely fail, because it will be, let's say, just a spark of something and then it will sort of disappear again. (Case D, creative director)

3.3 Conclusion and discussion

Designing and maintaining an integrated BE is vital for organisations to build a strong brand identity and foster favourable brand-related consumer responses. Despite its importance in marketing communication and brand management literature and its increasing popularity among practitioners (Khan & Rahman, 2015), research on this topic has focused only on the consequences. Knowledge about the design of BE is limited. This gap may dilute brand-building efforts and hinder organisations from benefiting from favourable consumer responses. Both marketing and product design scholars have called for research on BE design (Batra & Keller, 2016; Luchs et al., 2016). In this study, I explored the design of the visual appearances of various TPs to form an integrated BE that communicates the desired brand identity.

This study contributes to the research stream at the intersection of marketing communication, brand management, and product design by revealing a set of practices that helps designers and managers to form an integrated BE. The results show that *inspiring*, *guiding*, and *learning (*as *creation* practices) as well as *prioritising*, *governing*, and *regulating* (as *coordination* practices) help designers and managers deal with specific tension fields. These tension fields include *consistency* versus *originality* on the level of an individual TP, *consistency* versus *adaptation* on the level of a TP portfolio, and *consistency* versus *relevance* on the level of TP generations. These *creation* and *coordination* practices are essential to achieve the corresponding desired outcomes that include the *distinctiveness* of an individual TP, *coherence* of a TP portfolio, and *continuity* between the TP generations. Furthermore, in all the cases analysed, these practices have yielded positive results ranging from favourable consumer responses and a strong brand positioning in the market to sales increase and internal support for the BE design practices. These empirically derived practices provide initial insights into how designers and managers can successfully overcome BE design challenges and foster favourable consumer outcomes. The findings extend current research on the role of brand identity in IMC strategy (Madhavaram et al., 2005) and the effect of IMC (Batra & Keller, 2016) and BE (Khan & Rahman, 2015) on consumer responses to integrating brand identity and TPs through design practices. These findings also contribute to research on the role of design practices in brand management (Beverland et al., 2015; Karjalainen, 2007) by revealing specific practices that support the translation of brand identity into various TPs and brand identity renewal.

Past research has shown that design approaches such as holistic perspectives, human-centredness, and experimentation can facilitate brand innovations (Beverland et al., 2015). In addition to these design approaches, the study provides specific *creation* practices that facilitate the design of TPs' visual appearances to communicate brand identity and

support brand identity renewal. Regarding the creation of an individual TP, previous studies have mainly investigated analysing and using product features to generate consistent visual appearances (Karjalainen, 2007). This approach is not yet sufficient when the desired outcome is a *distinctive* TP. The *inspiring* practices contribute to the literature on TP design in several ways. First, the results reveal how to gain rational and emotional inspiration through cognitive or affective processes, which has not been addressed before. Secondly, I highlight the importance of the often-overlooked emotional inspiration when designing various types of TPs. Textual or visual emotional inspiration is not feature-based or TP-specific. However, it can elicit the desired brand associations, allowing a higher degree of design freedom when designing diverse types of TPs to achieve distinctive visual appearances. This result is supported by the finding that a mood board with visual images can balance coordination and designers' creative freedom, connecting senses and emotions in a multidisciplinary design team (Endrissat & Noppeney, 2016). Lastly, I propose to use emotional inspiration – rather than written briefs – as a different way to communicate the brand identity to designers. Emotional inspiration can steer idea generation towards a particular direction without limiting designers' creativity and cater to a clear and rich brand identity definition that is often missing (Aaker,1997; Madhavaram et al., 2005; Motta-Filho, 2021).

Regarding the *guiding* practices, I contribute to the existing design literature by revealing inspirations as new elements in design guidelines, in addition to the descriptive and prescriptive elements (Karjalainen, 2007; Landa, 2006, p. 60; Motta-Filho, 2021; Farnham & Newbery, 2013, p. 96; Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005). Furthermore, I show that inclusive, multidisciplinary approaches can overcome specialisation challenges (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2010; Vernuccio et al., 2022) and create a shared understanding of how to design a coherent BE. Moreover, I provide evidence that guidelines on trickling down brand identity to a specific user context can help to close the gap between strategy and tactics (Holm, 2006) and deal with the tension field of consistency and adaptation. Lastly, I show the importance of the affective process in capturing essential information that is not documented but needs to be 'felt' when devising guidelines.

In addition to design practices that can destabilise current assumptions and define and develop brand innovations (Beverland et al., 2015), I offer several *learning* practices that facilitate the development of a new brand identity and a continuous BE. Cross-learning between different types of TPs can be a mechanism to support designers in brand renewal. Furthermore, experimentation with TPs and mood boards can facilitate the search for new visual directions and elements. Lastly, developing a new brand identity can benefit from learnings generated through TP design. This practice shows that the relationship between brand development and BE design is not always unidirectional, and that it can be reciprocal during brand renewal.

Regarding *coordination* practices, the existing literature on IMC supports the findings on *prioritising* and *governing*. Research has suggested several prerequisites for a successful implementation of the IMC strategy (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2010) and the design philosophy (Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005). They include strategic selection, top-down control over all communication TPs (McArthur & Griffin, 1997), and high-level management commitment (Madhavaram et al., 2005). The contribution of this study is a leading TP with a reference role similar to a lead product (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010; Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005). A leading TP is not necessarily a company's main offer but plays a crucial role in establishing a coherent BE. For brand renewal, synchronising TP introduction and optimising the refreshment cycle are *regulating* practices that can sustain the continuity of BE. These practices provide initial evidence of how a company can orchestrate various TPs to deliver messages synergistically from a single consistent brand strategy (Holm, 2006; Madhavaram et al., 2005) and achieve integration across TP portfolios (Batra & Keller, 2016) and between TP generations.

The *creation* practices correspond with exploration activities that involve 'search, variation, risk taking, experimentation, play, flexibility, discovery' (March, 1991, p. 71), resulting in differentiation and innovation that is vital for brand relevance (Beverland et al., 2015). On the other side, the *coordination* practices show some similarities with exploitation activities that involve 'refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation and execution', leading to efficiency and quality (March, 1991, p. 71), which are essential for brand consistency (Beverland et al., 2015). Tabeau et al. (2017) studied the interplay between both activities for the creation of original product appearances. They found that exploration and exploitation activities influence the market and process performance differently. For example, exploration activities enhance design innovativeness, resulting in better market performance; and when exploitation activities are high, design innovativeness leads to better process performance. Drawing on these findings, it seems that creation and coordination practices may require different mindsets and skills and can influence the outcomes of BE design differently.

This study has several limitations. First and foremost, this study is limited by the small number of cases. The evidence in the data may only partially represent the challenges and practices of BE design. A more extensive case study would possibly discover additional insights. Secondly, more research is needed to understand why these design practices might be useful and how they affect consumer responses. Thirdly, the data shows some initial evidence of the interplay between brand and TP co-development. Given the limited research on this topic, it would be interesting to gain more in-depth knowledge about how to effectively employ design to facilitate the development of a new brand identity. Lastly, it might be beneficial to investigate the interplay between creation and coordination practices and how they influence brand-related consumer outcomes for a more effective BE design process.

Designing and maintaining an integrated BE can be complex for practitioners. The complexity lies in the large number of various TPs and multiple design disciplines involved. The results break down the complexity into three levels that provide brand managers and designers with an orderly view of tension fields, desired outcomes, and corresponding practices. These findings provide practitioners with a better understanding of their challenges (through the tension fields) and help to identify goals (through the desired outcomes). Finally, the findings can support practitioners in planning BE design activities (through levels of complexity). For example, brand managers can start with a leading TP (through *prioritising*) and assess and optimise its distinctiveness (through *inspiring*). Then, they can establish a coherent TP portfolio (through *guiding* and *governing*) or a renewed BE (through *learning* and *regulating*).

3.4 Implications for Study 2

This study revealed several essential practices of BE design. As introduced in the first chapter, this doctoral research addresses the research gap from three perspectives. The first is the perspective of design, involving actors on a tactical and/or strategic level. The second is the experiential perspective, which is concerned with the interconnection of various brand-owned and partner-owned TPs that consumers interact with. The last perspective is strategic brand management. Relating these perspectives to the results from the first study, I made the choice to investigate how to support designers in the creation of TPs – and thus in the creation of an artefact that is more related to exploration activities. The remaining part of this section elaborates on this choice.

Current design approaches for brand recognition, semantic transformation (Karjalainen, 2007) and shape grammar (McCormack & Cagan, 2004), as outlined in Section 2.4, are approaches for a specific type of TP, namely products. The starting point of both approaches is an extensive analysis of either different types of TPs (Karjalainen, 2007) or generations of products (McCormack & Cagan, 2004). This analysis aims to identify key features that convey the brand identity. They support designers in the creative process by consistently applying key features or shape grammar. While existing approaches offer valuable insights into communicating brand identity through a product's visual appearance, they raise two issues related to the challenges identified in the context of BE design. Firstly, it remains uncertain whether these approaches are applicable to different types of TPs or, more critically, whether they can support the design of various types of TPs that collectively shape a consumer's BEs. This issue is related to the challenge of designing the various types of TPs identified in Section 2.2.2. The second issue is related to the challenge of managing the creative process identified in Section 2.4.2. The tensions of creativity versus integration are prevalent in the

creative industries, according to management studies (Endrissat et al., 2016). Designers often view coordination attempts as controlling or constraining their artistic expression, resulting in resistance rather than collaboration. With a heavy focus on the analytical aspects and the consistent application of features and rules, these approaches leave a gap in understanding how to reconcile this tension field and stimulate designers' creativity to achieve integration of brand identity in BE design.

The results from Study 1 indicate that inspiration examples hold significant importance in creation practices associated with styling tasks on all three levels of complexity in BE design. On the level of an individual TP, rational and emotional inspiration examples are selected and used. On the level of a TP portfolio, inspirational guidelines are devised to steer the design direction of various types of TPs. Lastly, on the level of TP generation, designers use one type of TP as an inspiration example to create another type of TP. Furthermore, inspiration examples appear in various modalities. The examples found in Study 1 can be texts or visuals. They can be drawn from different sources that include people, nature, buildings, products, or another TP from the same brand. As they are not restricted to any specific type of TPs or design feature, inspiration examples may provide a new way to engage in BE design, distinguishing themselves from existing approaches. Although the results of Study 1 did not reveal how examples are developed and how they can be useful, practitioners seem to benefit from them to create various types of TPs, achieving the desired outcomes of BE.

In conclusion, little is known about the role of inspiration examples despite their importance in BE design. Concerning the tensions prevalent in the creative industry, it becomes imperative to explore how to use inspiration examples to spark creative thinking in designers rather than restricting designers' creativity. This topic is explored in Study 2. Figure 5 shows the connection between the two studies.

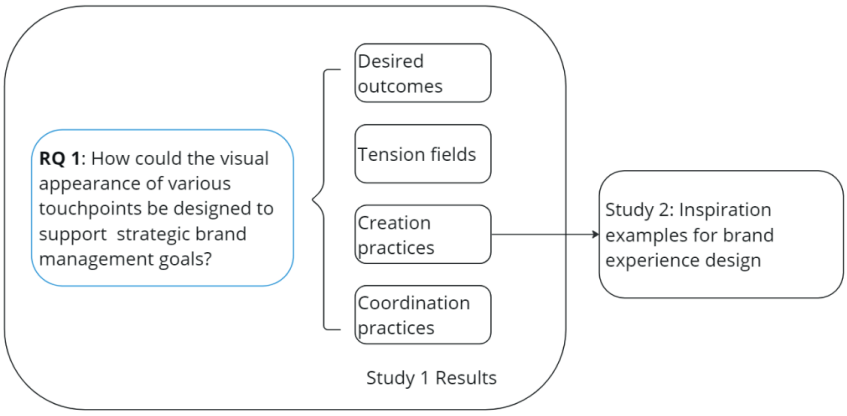

Figure 5: Connection between Study 1 and 2

Chapter 4

Inspiration examples for brand experience design

The results of Study 1 indicated the importance of inspiration examples for styling tasks in BE design. These styling tasks involve designing the visual aspects of various types of TPs to convey a desired brand identity. As concluded in Section 3.4, the second study in this doctoral research aims to explore how inspiration examples can affect the quality of styling tasks in the design process. In order to achieve this goal, this chapter aims to develop potentially beneficial inspiration examples for styling tasks based on several literature streams.

The remainder of the chapter is organised as follows. I first establish the need for more research on styling tasks and the essential role of inspiration examples in the general design process. Subsequently, a research gap is identified, and the research question for the second study is formulated. To answer the research question, I review existing literature to identify primary styling criteria that are needed to evaluate the outcomes of styling tasks (Section 4.2). Given that inspiration examples can take various forms, it is necessary to develop a good understanding of the aspects of examples that can enhance the quality of design outcomes. Therefore, I first present findings on inspiration properties and inspiration sources that seem to influence design outcomes in Section 4.3. Subsequently, I review styling-task literature and integrate the diverse literature streams to identify several criteria for generating inspiration examples (Section 4.4). Figure 6 illustrates the structure of this chapter[2].

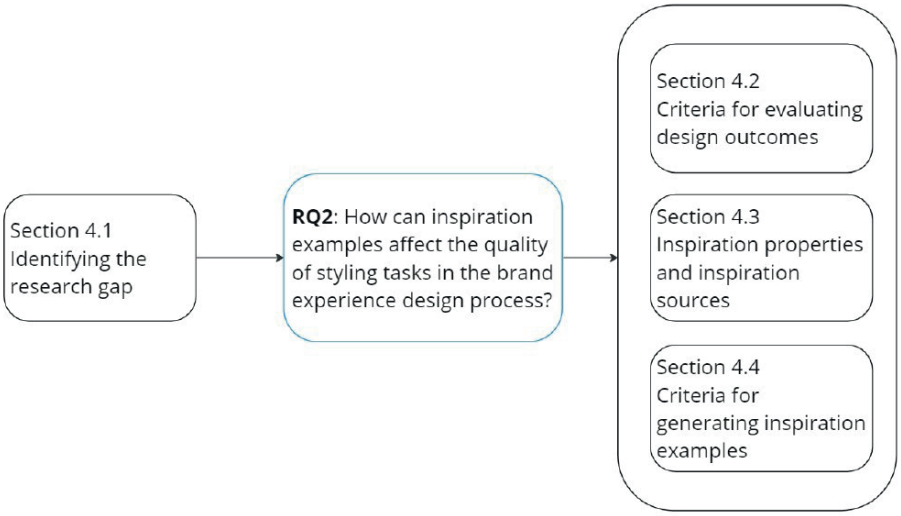

Figure 6: Structure of Chapter 4

2 Chapter 4 and 5 are an adaptation of : Wu, S., van den Hende, E., Hultink, E. J., & Calabretta, G. (2024). Inspiration for styling tasks. *Design Studies*, *91*, 101254.

4.1 Identifying the research gap

As presented in Section 2.4, styling is vital for organisations. The visual appearance of products is key to determining consumer responses and yields opportunities to foster competitive advantage and achieve market success (e.g. Heitmann et al., 2020). Styling contributes to an organisation's financial profitability and market visibility (Person et al., 2016). Additionally, research shows that it is also vital for designers (Person et al., 2016). Styling is a central capability and an essential rationale for their employment. It also contributes to designers' professional recognition. To summarise, it is considered strategically important for brands, organisations, and designers (Person et al., 2008; Person et al., 2007; Tonkinwise, 2011).

Despite its importance, styling tasks have been relatively neglected not only in the past, but also in recent studies (Crilly et al., 2009; Person et al., 2016). In practice, designers often face challenges in the embodiment of a brand identity in a product design (Blijlevens et al., 2009) and the visual appearance of products is often developed based on designers' intuitive judgements and educated guesses (Crilly et al., 2004). Many scholars have called for more research on styling tasks (Creusen, 2011; Jagtap, 2017; Person et al., 2016; Verma & Punekar, 2022).

One way to support designers in styling tasks is to use inspiration examples, as revealed in Study 1. Numerous design studies have shown that inspiration is vital in supporting designers in generating creative ideas (e.g. Sio et al., 2015). To create new ideas, designers turn to various sorts of inspiration, such as examples of solutions, visuals of products, and nature or everyday life objects (Cheng et al., 2014; Crilly et al., 2009). Scholars have found that suitable examples can facilitate the creative process, leading to higher-quality results from problem-solving tasks (Sio et al., 2015). However, this thesis does not focus on problem-solving tasks – instead, it focuses on styling tasks concerned with the communication of brand identity through the visual appearance of a TP. The differences between styling tasks and problem-solving tasks can be illustrated through the following example. Imagine a device that is meant for picking up books from a shelf: the design of its functionality is a problem-solving task (Cardoso & Badke-Schaub, 2011), whereas designing the visual appearance of the device to express playfulness is a styling task.

To conclude, although styling tasks are considered to be part of the broader creative problem-solving design activities in new product development (Person et al., 2016), little is known about how inspiration examples can support designers in styling tasks (Jagtap, 2017) for BE design. To address this research gap, I explore the following research question in the second study:

How can inspiration examples affect the quality of styling tasks in the BE design process?

4.2 Criteria for evaluating design outcomes

Drawing attention, establishing recognition, and creating symbolic meaning are three desired outcomes for styling tasks (Person et al., 2016). These outcomes provide designers with a clear direction during the design process. However, to date, the literature has not offered any criteria for assessing the design outcome of styling tasks, hence the visual aspect of BE design (Gemser & Barczak, 2020). These criteria are needed to better understand the influence of inspiration examples on the design outcome. This section builds on the desired outcomes as presented in Section 2.4.1 and further identifies a set of primary styling criteria. Accordingly, I review the literature stream concerning the communication of brand identity through product visual appearance. Three main research streams emerged: (1) creating coherence with a brand identity (Karjalainen, 2007; Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010; McCormack et al., 2004); and (2) creating coherence among the visual elements of a product (McCormack et al., 2004; Phillips et al., 2014); and (3) creating an original appearance (Hekkert et al., 2003; Mugge & Dahl, 2013; Phillips et al., 2014; Rompay et al., 2009). Below, I discuss the findings of each research stream and define three styling criteria based on them.

The primary purpose of styling tasks is to communicate a brand identity (Person et al., 2016). The visual appearance of a product can trigger cognitive and affective consumer responses (Bloch, 1995; Brakus et al., 2009; Crilly, 2004). Consumers derive symbolic meaning from these responses (Rompay et al., 2009), such as purity or cheerfulness. For brands, such brand identity reflects brand characteristics that constitute a brand's personality (Aaker, 1997; Keller, 2013). To foster favourable consumer responses, it is essential to firmly establish the brand identity in the visual appearance of products (e.g. Keller, 2013). Therefore, it is strategically important for organisations to intentionally transform brand personalities in the visual appearance of products (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010). Personality coherence emerges as the first criterion for evaluating the coherence between a brand identity and a product's visual appearance.

When a consumer confronts a product, (s)he integrates the meanings connoted across various visual elements – such as logo, shape, and colour – into an overall impression. Based on the theory of process fluency, higher coherence among various visual elements helps consumers to form their impressions more easily, thereby contributing to positive consumer response towards the product and brand (Phillips et al., 2014; Rompay et al., 2009). On the other hand, when consumers receive mixed signals – for example, when the product shape

conveys 'purity' while the typeface connotes 'artificiality' – they tend to evaluate the product negatively (Rompay et al., 2009). Visual coherence emerges as the second criterion that assesses the coherence of the visual elements of a product's visual appearance.

An original product appearance can draw consumers' attention. This is considered to be a precondition for consumers to derive meaning and recognise the brand (Person et al., 2007; Schoormans & Robben, 1997). Originality is the first of the principles of a good design claimed by the iconic industrial designer Dieter Rams (Swan & Luchs, 2011). However, consumers do not always prefer radically new product appearances (Mugge & Dahl, 2013). When a product's appearance is exceptionally original compared to existing ones, consumers may have difficulty categorising it, or it can evoke too much arousal, leading to frustration and dissatisfaction (Hekkert et al., 2003). According to the 'most advanced yet acceptable' principle (Hekkert et al., 2003), an optimal level of originality is essential to fulfilling changing consumer needs and allows brands to differentiate from their competitors (Bijlevens et al., 2011; Keller, 2013). As originality plays an important role in consumer perception and responses to a product's visual appearance, it emerges as the last criterion for styling tasks. To conclude, in line with these relevant research streams, I use personality coherence, visual coherence, and originality as three primary criteria for assessing the outcome of styling tasks.

4.3 Inspiration properties and inspiration sources

This section first presents findings on inspiration properties from the problem-solving task literature in order to explain why examples are beneficial. Then, it discusses findings on inspiration sources from the literature stream on design for product visual appearance.

Scholars have found that examples can trigger associative thinking and activate related ideas in the memory of designers (Eckert & Stacey, 2000), leading to original solutions (Rietzschel et al., 2007). In a creative process, designers create a search space for relevant inspiration and then transform, combine, or adapt elements of the examples to generate a solution (Sio et al., 2015). When presented with an example, a designer's search strategy may benefit from attention allocation. That is, instead of searching broadly and randomly, an example can allocate a designer's attention to a related domain, narrowing down the search space and facilitating a more in-depth exploration (Sio et al., 2015). For instance, past studies show that designers derive more benefit from images of various objects, sketches of products (Goldschmidt & Smolkov, 2006), and inspirational texts (Goldschmidt & Sever, 2011) in creating more original concepts than they would when working without any examples. However, not all examples have positive effects (Sio et al., 2015), and some can even prevent designers from exploring new ideas, resulting in limited originality and design fixation (e.g.

Chryisikou & Weisberg, 2005). The next paragraphs discuss how examples can support or hinder the design process.

Modality and conceptual distance emerge as two essential inspiration properties in supporting the creative design process in problem-solving tasks. Regarding modality, visual and textual examples can benefit or impair design outcomes for different reasons. Empirical evidence shows that exposure to visual examples may increase creativity (e.g. Goldschmidt, 2015). Designers find useful 'clues' in images to serve as 'triggers' or 'jumping boards' to new solutions (Goldschmidt & Sever, 2011). In general, they have developed a high level of ability (Goldschmidt, 2015) and a preference for visual ways of information processing and communication (Hanington, 2003; Keller et al., 2006). It has been demonstrated that a rich collection of images enhances the quality of solutions even when designers are not explicitly instructed to use them (Casakin & Goldschmidt, 1999). However, visual examples can also have negative effects. Images of solutions that are too closely related to a problem domain often provide a higher degree of features and details than textual examples (Chan et al., 2011). Looking at such visual examples is likely to cause designers to become too attached to them, leading to inadequate or excessive repetition of the features or details presented (Cardoso & Badke-Schaub, 2011), and sometimes even the inclusion of inappropriate features from the solution examples (Jansson & Smith, 1991; Perttula & Liikkanen, 2006).

On the other hand, textual examples that are either closely related or unrelated to the problem domain can enhance the originality of solutions (Goldschmidt & Sever, 2011). These authors assert that words are versatile 'vessels' of ideas that can be interpreted in many ways and 'the contemplation of words and phrases leaves a wider manipulation space in the process of translation into visual images' (p. 144). For example, the word 'car' can be associated with a Volvo, a sportscar, an antique, or a toy with entirely different design characteristics and features. Without presenting overly specific references to solutions, words offer designers room for their own interpretations, extend the search space, and may help avoid design fixation (Gonçalves et al., 2012; Nagai & Noguchi, 2002). However, one disadvantage of text compared to an image is that textual information is generally less efficiently communicated to designers. Therefore, more cognitive effort is required to access, store, transmit, and infer information from text than from images (Sarkar & Chakrabarti, 2008; Ware, 2008, p. 107). For instance, abstract keywords that describe a meaning (e.g. soft or humorous) must be complemented with more concrete phrases so that designers can retrieve a corresponding visual image (Nagai & Noguchi, 2002). Lastly, both modalities seem to have their own strengths depending on the design problem, as some ideas or concepts can be expressed in words but cannot be represented through images, and vice versa (Goldschmidt & Sever, 2011).

Next to modality, conceptual distance is another property that affects the design outcomes. The conceptual distance is determined by the number of shared surface features between an example and a problem domain (Fu et al., 2012). For instance, when creating an 'automotive dining' product, the problem domain is dining equipment (Dahl & Moreau, 2002). In this sense, a cup holder and a tray table are near-field examples because they are closely related to the problem domain, sharing many surface-level attributes (i.e. surface features) with dining equipment, such as a circle-shaped indentation or a ring to place a cup. In contrast, a dentist's lamp is a far-field example because it is distantly related to the problem domain and shares no or few surface features with dining equipment. Regarding styling tasks, a real-life example is the design of a Volvo car that communicates 'safety' (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010). The problem domain of a styling task is creating the visual appearance of a new product that conveys a brand identity.

The conceptual distance influences the originality of ideas. Dahl & Moreau (2002) asserted that when surface features are mapped and transferred from near-field examples to the solution, the solution is likely to exhibit similarities with the existing ones, resulting in lower originality. As a far-field example does not share many surface features, designers would have to invest more cognitive effort to discover potential similarities of relational structures between the example and the problem domain (Chan et al., 2015). A far-field example is likely to lead to high originality (Goucher-Lambert & Cagan, 2019), but only if designers successfully turn such structures into new designs (Gonçalves et al., 2012). However, given the design problem variation, the findings on conceptual distance are somewhat inconsistent. Chan et al. (2015) found that seeking exclusive support from examples that are too distantly related may be detrimental to creativity. Their results showed that too-distant examples may involve very high initial processing costs that hinder the design process.

As the present study focuses on the visual aspect of products, I turn to the literature on product visual appearance to identify beneficial inspiration sources for styling tasks. Inspiration examples can be found in almost everything. Crilly et al. (2009) suggested four common categories of inspiration sources: similar products (i.e. products from the same category); dissimilar products (i.e. products from a different category); historical products; and non-products such as art, natural or everyday life objects. A survey has revealed that design professionals more often prefer similar and dissimilar products than works of art and historical products (Jagtap, 2017). Other scholars have found that natural or everyday life objects are valuable inspiration sources for styling tasks (Eckert & Stacey, 2000; Endrissat et al., 2016). To conclude, similar and dissimilar products and natural and everyday life objects can be useful inspiration sources for styling tasks.

4.4 Criteria for generating inspiration examples

Many scholars have studied how examples affect the design outcome. Most empirical studies stem from diverse disciplines such as architecture (Cai et al., 2010; Casakin & Goldschmidt, 1999), engineering (Christensen & Schunn, 2007; Fu et al., 2012; Howard et al., 2011; Jansson & Smith, 1991; Wilson et al., 2010), and product (system) design (Cardoso & Badke-Schaub, 2011; Chrysikou & Weisberg, 2005; Goldschmidt & Sever, 2011; Gonçalves et al., 2012; Smith et al., 1993; Tseng et al., 2008). To date, studies have not as yet focused on styling tasks. To close this gap, I first present beneficial inspiration sources for styling tasks. Subsequently, I identify criteria for generating inspiration examples. Lastly, I propose expectations concerning the effects of these examples on the styling criteria.

Research on styling tasks shows that similar products benefit personality coherence and visual coherence through design features that refer to brand identity. Studies show that shape grammar (McCormack et al., 2004) and design cues (Karjalainen, 2007) can be repeatedly applied to support consumers' recognition of the brand identity and the membership of a product portfolio. A shape grammar is a set of design rules that translates the key elements of a brand into a design 'language' (McCormack et al., 2004). Design cues include geometry (e.g. headlights with wide-open eyes for Toyota cars) or structure (Karjalainen, 2007). For example, the strong shoulder line of the Volvo cars implemented throughout the entire product portfolio helps the company to communicate 'safety' as a brand identity (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010).

Furthermore, practitioners use dissimilar products under the same brand as examples in styling tasks. A dissimilar product depicts features representing specific design solutions that refer to a brand identity. Designers can efficiently identify them and benefit from a 'cross-category' learning effect (Bakker-Wu et al., 2017). The results of the first study indicate that a brochure or a display can be inspirational to the design of a new website that communicates the intended meaning and ensures visual coherence with the other products. However, if these features are too product-specific, they can become less flexible for integration into a new product. For instance, the defining features of a car cannot be directly applied to other products, such as drink containers (Karjalainen, 2007). Therefore, dissimilar products with features that are flexible for modification could be beneficial for styling tasks.

Next, natural and everyday life objects referring to a brand identity are also commonly used in styling tasks. For instance, a leaf can be a useful example to convey naturalness due to its features, such as its green colour or organic shapes. When integrated properly into a product, these features can evoke the desired feeling of naturalness (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008). Relatedly, Endrissat et al. (2016) showed through their case study that a mood board

with images of natural and everyday life objects can be composed to introduce a specific theme (i.e. a feeling of trust) to the design teams. They found that the mood board enables the creation of various products consistent with the predefined theme, supporting personality coherence and visual coherence.

Lastly, both modalities can support styling tasks. The qualitative results of an education project (Karjalainen, 2007) indicate that keywords (e.g. value for money) that describe a brand personality (e.g. in the case of Toyota, affordable) can potentially help to achieve higher personality coherence and visual coherence. Furthermore, creative directors typically employ a short phrase (e.g. a leading principle, presented as text) summarising the brand identity to establish a design direction in styling tasks (Bakker-Wu et al., 2017). To conclude, similar and dissimilar products and natural and everyday life objects closely related to a brand identity could be useful to support personality coherence and visual coherence in styling tasks. As these examples all share some surface features with the problem domain, they are considered to be sources of near-field inspiration based on how conceptual distance is determined (Fu et al., 2012).

For originality, design research reveals that both textual (e.g. Goldschmidt & Sever, 2011) and visual examples (e.g. Malaga, 2000) can stimulate the creative process, leading to more original ideas. Regarding conceptual distance, far-field examples are more likely to help generate original ideas (Dahl & Moreau, 2002; Goucher-Lambert & Cagan, 2019) if the initial processing cost is not too high (Chan et al., 2015). Concerning styling tasks, it could be useful to rely on examples that are far-field to the product being designed. Therefore, the inspiration sources included in the study are dissimilar products and natural and everyday life objects.

To connect with design practice (Crilly, 2019), I choose representation forms commonly used by professionals. Studies reveal that inspirational sentences (hereinafter referred to as sentences) (Bakker-Wu et al., 2017; Jagtap, 2017), mood boards (Eckert & Stacey, 2000; Endrissat et al., 2016), and images (Jagtap, 2017) are widely used by practitioners. For this study, I use sentences and mood boards to represent natural and everyday life objects and images to represent dissimilar products. A mood board is a selection of objects that refer to a brand identity in various ways and depict potentially useful surface features (e.g. green colour or organic shapes of a leaf) that need to be identified, developed, or combined into a design solution. Compared to an image of a dissimilar product with specific design features, a mood board offers more flexibility for selection, adaptation, and integration. As a textual example, a sentence carries ideas that allow for the designer's own interpretation (Gonçalves et al., 2012) and it can be translated into various visual images of objects (Goldschmidt &

Sever, 2011). Furthermore, a sentence is considered a far-field example for visual coherence because it does not provide any visual features.

To summarise, two inspiration properties seem to be essential in supporting the creative design process: modality and conceptual distance. For modality, both textual and visual examples are valuable for enhancing personality coherence. Next, conceptual distance indicates how closely an example relates to the design problem. For personality coherence and visual coherence, the preference lies in closely related examples. On the contrary, more distantly related examples prove more effective for originality. Regarding inspiration sources, products dissimilar to design problems and natural and everyday life objects all have the potential to support styling tasks. Lastly, I have chosen representation forms that practitioners commonly use to ensure relevance and practical application in the creative industry. Table 6 specifies how three examples for styling tasks will be generated for the following explorative study. Their composition is based on representation forms, inspiration sources, and inspiration properties (i.e. modality and conceptual distance).

Based on the literature review and the theoretical underpinning of the generated examples, I expect examples from both modalities (i.e. textual or visual) to contribute to a higher personality coherence, because of their near-field conceptual distance. A mood board and an image may help designers achieve more visually coherent concepts, being near-field, while the far-field sentence cannot achieve this. Moreover, I expect all generated examples to enhance the originality of the design outcome, as they are all far-field. Without any examples, designers may not benefit from attention allocation; therefore, I expect lower-quality design outcomes for all styling criteria when no example is provided.

Table 6: Criteria for generating inspiration examples for styling tasks

Example's representation form	***Inspiration source***	***Modality***	***Conceptual distance***		
			Personality coherence	*Visual coherence*	*Originality*
Sentence	Natural and everyday life	Textual	Near-field	Far-field	Far-field
Mood board	Natural and everyday life	Visual	Near- field	Near-field	Far-field
Image	Dissimilar product	Visual	Near-field	Near-field	Far-field

Chapter 5

Study 2: Influence of inspiration examples on the design outcomes

The previous chapter developed the research question for Study 2 based on the overarching research question and the findings of Study 1. It centres on how inspiration examples influence the quality of styling tasks in the BE design process. Next, a literature review was conducted, identifying a set of primary criteria that can assess design outcomes of styling tasks. These criteria include personality coherence, visual coherence, and originality. The research question is now refined, incorporating the styling criteria:

How do inspiration examples influence the design outcome on three styling criteria?

Furthermore, the previous chapter explored several key aspects of inspiration examples that include: inspiration properties, inspiration sources, and their representation forms. These aspects are important to make examples valuable for designers. Guided by the styling criteria, the criteria for generating inspiration examples were developed (see Table 6). The examples used in this study will be composed according to these criteria. The remainder of this chapter is organised as follows. First, I present the method employed in this study in Section 5.1. Then, I present the results in Section 5.2, followed by a discussion in Section 5.3. This section highlights the contribution of the study and reflects on the findings and implications for the research and practice of styling and problem-solving tasks. Lastly, Section 5.4 presents the conclusion.

5.1 Method

This section starts with an elaboration on the choice of this research method. In Chapter 4, several literature streams are brought together to identify the criteria for styling examples. While there has been research on the effects of inspiration properties on originality and the use of design features for personality coherence and visual coherence in product design, there is no empirical evidence on how inspiration examples influence the design outcomes of styling tasks. Guided by the pragmatic worldview, it is most meaningful and important for me to investigate whether these examples truly contribute to the creation of high-quality concepts. Therefore, an explorative experimental study is considered appropriate as it ‘seeks to determine if a specific treatment influences an outcome’ (Crewswell, 2014, p. 13). In an experiment, the researcher provides a specific treatment to one group and withholds it from another group. Then, both groups are scored on an outcome. By comparing the scores between the two groups, the researcher concludes whether the difference can be attributed to the treatment.

This study adopted the experiment design found in relevant design research literature, such as Gonçalves et al. (2012) and Goldschmidt and Sever (2011). The current study compared a participant group without any examples with three groups that each received a different example. To enhance generalisability, I used two design briefs for different products. The design task asked participants to develop a concept, either without an example or with an example (i.e. a sentence, a mood board, or an image) created for the specific design brief. Thus, participants were randomly assigned to one of the eight design tasks.

5.1.1 Participants

In line with the majority of design research studies (e.g. Sio et al., 2015), I selected design students as participants. Two hundred and fifty-two bachelor students consented to participate. The rationale for this selection of participants, as opposed to professionals, was based on the postulation that examples similarly impact novices and experts in that they can confine search fields and enhance the quality of ideas by stimulating more in-depth exploration based on a meta-analysis of 43 problem-solving tasks (Sio et al., 2015). Next, as experts may have specialised in different expertise areas, they are likely to have become competent in particular situations while being beginners in others (Gonçalves et al., 2014; Lawson & Dorst, 2009). This difference in expertise area may influence design outcomes, blurring the effect of the examples. On the other hand, bachelor students may have a more similar, homogenous level of design expertise regarding the styling tasks in the study compared to experts. In conclusion, bachelor students are considered suitable for the study, and the results are valuable for design professionals to understand the influence of the examples.

5.1.2 Material

I used styling tasks for a product display and a product packaging in the design briefs because they are considered essential visual communication vehicles for brand identity (Ailawadi et al., 2009; Karjalainen et al., 2010; Orth & Malkewitz, 2008). To stimulate participants to generate a concept based on their own creativity rather than copying from existing brands, I developed two non-existing brands with logos, names, and personalities, each in a different product category. The design requirements were personality coherence with the brand identity, visual coherence with the brand logo, and originality. For visual coherence, I required participants to design concepts with a similar graphical (i.e. graphical visual coherence) and three-dimensional (i.e. 3D visual coherence) style to the logo. Figure 7 shows the two design briefs.

To generate inspiration examples, I chose a website as a dissimilar product because it is highly effective in communicating brand identities (Keller, 2009). Therefore, an image of a website can consist of beneficial surface features for both briefs. Two master students developed the sentences, mood boards, and images of websites according to the inspiration

sources and properties specified in Table 6. Figure 8 shows the sentences and the websites used in this study. The mood board of the first design brief depicted a close-up image of green leaves, a jumping woman raising her arms in the sunset and an image of a green tea field with several tea pickers. The mood board of the second design brief depicted a close-up of an outdoor shoe outsole and images of a rock climber and a traveller facing mountaintops. Next, I evaluated the examples and concluded that they were near-field for personality coherence and visual coherence. This approach aligns with the existing studies where the researcher (Gonçalves et al., 2012) or PhD students (e.g. Chan et al., 2011) developed examples and evaluated the conceptual distance. Additionally, I administered a survey with 18 participants who had no experience with styling tasks. I asked them to indicate on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) to which extent they disagreed or agreed with the following statements: 'The inspirational sentence (mood board, website) and the brand seem to have a shared personality' and 'The mood board (website) and the brand logo appear to exhibit the same graphical and 3D design style'. As the sentences did not contain any visual design element, visual coherence was not applicable. Table 7 presents the mean values of personality coherence and visual coherence of the examples. T-tests were performed to test differences between the examples' mean values and the midpoint of the scale. The mean values were significantly higher than 4, suggesting that the examples were appropriate for the study.

Without clear guidance from the literature, I employed another pre-test to estimate the task duration. Fourteen design students who had not been involved before were asked to perform the design tasks with the examples. A duration of 17 minutes seemed sufficient for participants to develop a final concept that fulfilled the styling criteria. When working too long on a problem, the sunk cost effect is likely to occur, making the designer more reluctant to modify his/her solution (Sio et al., 2015). As extra time does not necessarily improve the quality of the concepts, I considered 17 minutes sufficient for the study. Lastly, follow-up interview results with the participants indicated they found the design tasks clear and the examples helpful.

5.1.3 Procedure

The study was conducted through three successive online sessions, with about 100 participants per session. All participants had the same amount of time to complete the design task in their own working or living environment and received the same pre-recorded instructions. At the start of the session, the participants were given a short introduction in which they were asked to read the design task carefully, generate as many ideas as possible, and develop the final concept based on their best ideas, ensuring that all design requirements were met. After that, they received an online Qualtrics survey link that randomly assigned them to one of the eight design tasks. After uploading a picture of the final concept, they answered a participant

survey about their personal preferences for the examples. Figure 9 shows a few concepts developed by the participants.

Design exercise

Design a display concept for the new dishwasher tablet brand 'Moment' (see picture on the right). A display is a three-dimensional object that supermarkets use to promote new products and it usually contains several products.

The following primary requirements apply. The display concept must...
1. be designed in a **similar graphical and 3D design style as the brand logo**.
2. express the brand personality: **natural, cheerful and relaxed**.
3. be **original**, to help the brand to differentiate from other supermarket displays.

Design exercise

Design a packaging concept for the new headphone brand 'Music'.

The following primary requirements apply. The packaging concept must...
1. be designed in a **similar graphical and 3D design style as the brand logo**.
2. express the brand personality: **adventurous, technical and outdoorsy**.
3. be **original**, to help the brand to differentiate from other headphone brands.

Figure 7: Design briefs for the participants: display (top) and packaging (bottom)

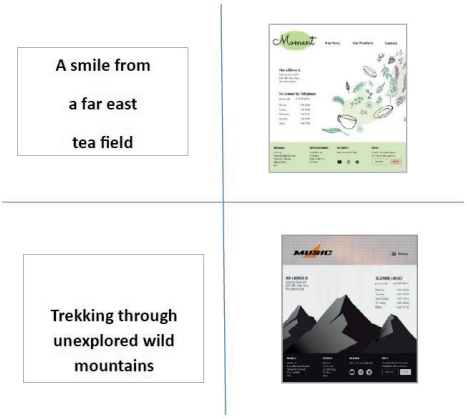

Figure 8: Some of the inspiration examples used in the study: sentence (left) and website (right) for design briefs display (top) and packaging (bottom).

Table 7: Mean values of personality coherence and visual coherence of the inspiration examples

	Sentence	*Mood board*	*Image*
Display design brief:			
Personality coherence	4.94 **(1.21)	5.33** (1.38)	6.33** (0.91)
Visual coherence:	n/a	4.61* (1.42)	6.11** (1.08)
Packaging design brief:			
Personality coherence	5.00**(1.33)	5.11**(1.28)	5.61**(1.09)
Visual coherence:	n/a	5.17**(1.25)	5.72** (1.18)

Standard deviation in brackets, one-tailed *p< .05; **p< .01

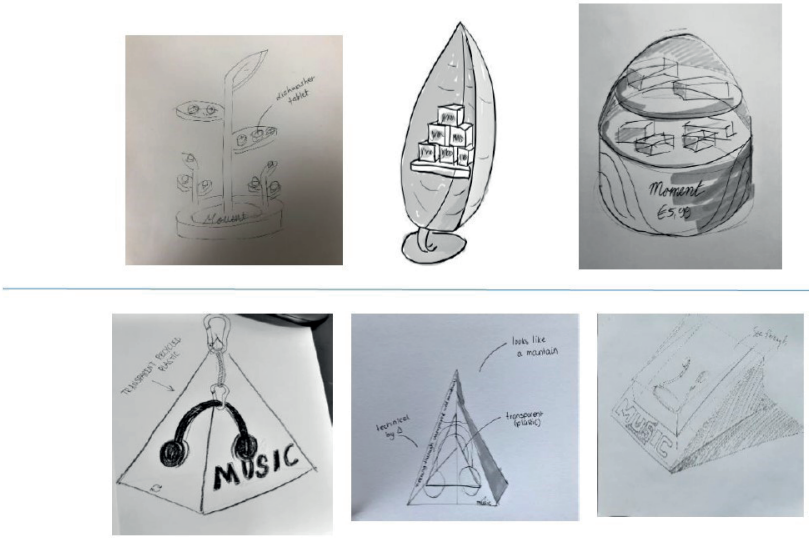

Figure 9: Examples of concepts developed by participants: display (top) and packaging (bottom).Permission obtained.

5.1.4 Assessment and survey

Expert's assessments

In line with similar studies (e.g. Cheng et al., 2014), two brand design experts who were not involved in the design task creation assessed the concepts developed by the participants according to the styling criteria of personality coherence, visual coherence, and originality. They both have master's degrees in industrial design engineering and more than five years of working experience as creative designers for brands. They are part-time lecturers, which makes them capable of assessing students' work for styling tasks.

To assess the concepts, the experts received the design briefs without examples and black-and-white prints of the concepts in a randomised order. Thus, they were blind to the

examples used by the participants. They assessed one criterion in each session individually to avoid a halo effect. After the assessment, the experts discussed and agreed on concepts that were disqualified as a display or packaging. These concepts were excluded from further analysis.

To assess the personality coherence and visual coherence, I used the following statements: 'this display (packaging) concept has the same personality as the brand' and 'this display (packaging) concept and the brand logo have a similar graphical (3D) design style'. Similar to prior studies on the effect of examples (Cheng et al., 2014; Goldschmidt & Sever, 2011; Goldschmidt & Smolkov, 2006), I asked the experts to assess the originality of the concepts according to the statement: 'This display (packaging) concept is original'. All scales ranged from 'strongly disagree (1)' to 'strongly agree (7)'. Instead of filling in a score on the prints of the concepts, the experts were instructed to make seven clusters of concepts (scored from 1 to 7). This approach encouraged them to compare the concepts within one cluster or between clusters more often, made modifications easier, and supported a more consistent assessment.

Participant survey

To further explore and understand which example was typically preferred from a designer's perspective, I asked participants to compare all examples after completing their individual design tasks. I asked, 'based on your design expertise, which inspiration would help you most in meeting the following design requirements (i.e. personality coherence, graphical visual coherence, 3D visual coherence, and originality)?'

5.2 Results

5.2.1 Expert assessment

The inter-rater agreement between the two experts was calculated with Pearson's correlation coefficients (see Table 8). As significant correlations were found for all items (all $r > .61$), the averages of the two expert scores were used to assess the concepts in terms of the styling criteria. To investigate the effect of the examples, I conducted two-way ANOVAs with design tasks (i.e. no example, sentence, mood board, and an image) and design briefs (i.e. display and packaging) as independent variables. A significant main effect of the design briefs was only found for originality; thus, no overall difference in personality coherence, graphical visual coherence, or 3D visual coherence was found between the two design briefs (all $F< .67$, $p > .05$). For originality, the packaging concepts were evaluated as more original than the display concepts ($F(1, 213) = 14.45$, $p < .01$, $M_{display} = 3.20$, $SD = 1.31$ vs. $M_{packaging} = 3.94$, $SD = 1.55$). No interaction effects were present between design tasks and design briefs (all $F <1.30$, $p > .05$), and thus similar patterns were observed for both design briefs on all

styling criteria. Table 9 presents the means and standard deviations of the styling criteria for the examples.

For personality coherence, the results showed a main effect for the design tasks ($F(3, 213) = 6.89$, $p < .01$). Post hoc tests revealed significant differences between the design tasks without or with an example (sentence: mean difference= -1.09, $p < .01$; mood board: mean difference = -1.14, $p < .01$; and image mean difference = -1.04, $p < .01$). The effect of the design tasks on graphical visual coherence was not significant ($F(3, 213) = 1.07$, $p > .05$). The results also showed a main effect of the design tasks on 3D visual coherence ($F(3, 213) = 4.11$, $p < .01$). A post hoc test only revealed significant differences between the design tasks without an example and design tasks with mood boards (mean difference = -0.78, $p < .05$) and between design tasks without an example and design tasks with images (mean difference = -0.83, $p < .05$). These results showed that participants who received design tasks with examples designed concepts with higher personality coherence than those who did not receive any examples. Secondly, the visual examples (i.e. mood board and image) helped to generate concepts with higher 3D visual coherence. For originality, the results showed no significant differences between the participant groups ($F(3, 213) = .92$, $p > .05$). All groups without or with examples designed concepts with a moderate level of originality (around 3.5).

5.2.2 Participant survey

Table 10 shows the percentages of participants who would prefer an example given a specific styling criterion. For personality coherence, 90% of the participants preferred either the mood boards (55%) or the images (35%). Regarding graphical visual coherence, the images (75%) were the most preferred option, while as for 3D visual coherence, the images (55%) were the first choice and the mood board (27%) the second. Lastly, for originality, the mood board (51%) and the images (23%), accounting for 74%, were still the most preferred examples. In general, participants seemed to prefer visual examples over textual examples or no inspiration for styling tasks, which is consistent with the literature (Keller et al., 2006).

Table 8: The inter-rater agreement between two design experts

Styling tasks criteria:	***r***
Personality coherence	0.69 [a]
Graphical visual coherence:	0.61 [a]
3D visual coherence:	0.63 [a]
Originality	0.67 [a]

[a] Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 9: Mean values of the styling criteria

Styling criteria:	***No example***		***Sentence***		***Mood board***		***Image***		***F-value***
Personality coherence	2.75	(1.55)	3.84	(1.53)	3.89	(1.60)	3.79	(1.46)	6.89 [a]
Graphical visual coherence:	2.86	(1.22)	3.07	(1.22)	3.20	(1.35)	3.27	(1.27)	1.07
3D visual coherence:	3.06	(1.28)	3.54	(1.36)	3.84	(1.61)	3.89	(1.21)	4.11 [a]
Originality	3.35	(1.44)	3.72	(1.50)	3.46	(1.56)	3.75	(1.39)	.92

[a]p< .01; Standard deviations are in between brackets.

Table 10: Participants' preference for a specific example per styling criterion

	No example	***Sentence***	***Mood board***	***Image***
Personality coherence	2%	8%	55%	35%
Graphical visual coherence:	11%	3%	11%	75%
3D visual coherence:	11%	6%	27%	57%
Originality	9%	17%	51%	23%

5.3 Discussion

Inspiration is vital for designers. So far, scholars have mainly investigated how to use examples to support designers in problem-solving tasks. However, styling tasks, as an important part of problem-solving tasks, have received relatively little attention. As the first step to exploring this untapped research field and stimulating designers' creativity in styling tasks, this study extends current research by providing an understanding of the influence of examples on design outcomes. More specifically, I explored the effect of modality and conceptual distance of the examples on the design outcomes according to three styling criteria: personality coherence, visual coherence, and originality.

The results indicate that for personality coherence and 3D visual coherence, all participant groups that received near-field examples scored higher than those that did not receive any examples. The examples being closely related to the problem domain helped narrow down the search space and stimulate a more in-depth search for ideas. This conclusion is in line with the findings of problem-solving tasks on the positive effect of attention allocation (Sio et al., 2015) and that near-field examples can improve more design characteristics than far-field examples (Chan et al., 2015; Goucher-Lambert & Cagan, 2019). Additionally, the participant survey outcomes provide partial support, where the mood boards and the images as near-field examples were the most preferred options for both criteria.

Furthermore, as expected, participants who received the sentence as a far-field example for visual coherence designed concepts with similar scores as participants without examples. Moreover, I anticipated a positive effect as the mood board and the image were near-field examples for this styling criterion. However, I found no difference in graphical visual coherence between the participant groups. Graphical visual coherence captures visual similarity through design elements such as logos, shapes, and styles (Phillips et al., 2014). According to both design experts, the correct inclusion of the brand logo in the concept design was a critical contribution to graphical visual coherence. Therefore, concepts with logos that had a poor stylistic resemblance (e.g. the wrong typeface) and concepts without a logo received lower graphical visual coherence scores, damping the potentially positive effect of the mood board and image.

As for originality, no differences were found between the participant groups either. This unexpected result differs from findings on problem-solving tasks in that far-field examples may improve the originality of the ideas (e.g. Goucher-Lambert & Cagan, 2019). This result can be related to the fact that originality was presented as the last design criterion in the brief. The participants might have paid less attention to this aspect. Another explanation is the path of least resistance. Searching for surface features that can benefit personality coherence and

visual coherence requires less effort than searching for relational structure similarities that enhance originality. As using far-field examples comes with high initial processing costs (Chan et al., 2015), participants may avoid them, which results in similar scores for all participant groups on originality.

There are several directions for future research to enhance originality in styling tasks. Cheng et al. (2014) demonstrated that partial photographs of existing products encourage design students to put more effort into solving incomplete information, resulting in more original visual appearances of products. One direction for future studies is to explore whether partial pictures of styling examples can encourage designers to overcome the barrier of high initial processing costs, thereby improving originality. Furthermore, I expect that using far-field examples to inspire originality may be more beneficial for experts. Experts may have lower initial processing costs (Chan et al., 2015) compared to novices. Therefore, they can connect concepts more effortlessly, turning far-field examples into original ideas (Moss et al., 2006). The second direction of future studies is to investigate whether the examples used in the present study can help experts achieve higher originality in their work. The last direction is related to the commonness of examples. The study by Chan et al. (2011) shows that the combination of far-field and less common examples can increase originality. According to these authors, commonness refers to 'how common the designs are found in designers' worlds'. The examples used in the study were quite common. Future studies can explore whether less common examples can increase a designer's effort to create more original ideas in styling tasks.

Problem-solving studies show that near-field examples can induce design fixation, impairing the originality of designs (Jansson & Smith, 1991; Perttula & Liikkanen, 2006). Regarding styling tasks, I expect design fixation to occur under similar conditions, that is, when the provided examples are too closely related to the problem domain. In Karjalainen's (2007) study, the participants rarely transferred any existing car features to a new product category (e.g. drink container) for the same brand. This finding may indicate that too product-specific features (e.g. the strong shoulder of a Volvo car) cannot support the creation of a dissimilar product in a styling task. In the present study, the features presented in the images of a dissimilar product (i.e. a website) were beneficial because they were not too specific for a product category and could be easily modified. At the other extreme, examples are likely to become detrimental when they are too distantly or not related to the problem domain (Chan et al., 2015). Lower personality coherence and visual coherence scores can be expected when examples are not related to the brand identity.

This study contributes to the literature in several ways through the empirical findings. First, I connect findings on problem-solving tasks with the design of product visual appearance and

identify beneficial examples for styling tasks. The examples used in this study were generated according to research findings based on expert interviews, case studies, and surveys of design professionals. They are also widely used by design professionals, answering the call for more connection with real-world design work and more diverse research methods (Crilly, 2019). Second, I specify a primary set of styling criteria to evaluate the design outcome, which had not been identified before. Third, I provide initial evidence that attention allocation in a related problem domain can help designers achieve better results for personality coherence and visual coherence in styling tasks. Interestingly, the results also suggest that textual inspiration seems equally effective as visual inspiration regarding personality coherence. In contrast, the participants overwhelmingly preferred the mood board (55% for personality coherence and 51% for originality) over the sentence (8% for personality coherence and 17% for originality). This result is consistent with the finding that the influence of textual examples is underestimated (Gonçalves et al., 2012). Lastly, the examples did not include existing product features as described in current styling task approaches (Karjalainen, 2007; McCormack et al., 2004). They provide a new way to express brand identities for non-existing products and products across different categories.

There are several implications for design research. Unlike existing research on problem-solving tasks, the present study distinguished differences in conceptual distances of examples through the lens of different styling criteria. The results indicate that the initial processing cost might influence the effect of attention allocation. Thus, when designers receive examples, they may first or only use them for the design criterion that they are closely related to. For a more distantly related criterion, designers may need more stimulation to overcome the barrier of high initial processing costs or use a near-field inspiration with a lower initial processing cost. This study showed that a design task can encompass various design criteria, and one example may not help designers sufficiently fulfil all design requirements.

This study also has several implications for practitioners. First, I recommend that designers and their clients should collaboratively select and craft inspiration examples. The examples can be used as boundary objects (Carlile, 2002; Endrissat et al., 2016) to create alignment in concept generation and selection and to enhance the personality coherence and visual coherence of various products under the same brand. Second, sentences, mood boards, or images are often combined in design practice to provide multiple inputs for styling tasks. However, Sio et al. (2015) predicted that the simultaneous use of multiple examples may inhibit designers from searching deeply, resulting in a diffused search. Based on the findings, I recommend designers should use just one example at a time so that they can benefit from attention allocation. Third, practitioners invest considerable time and effort in composing mood boards or formulating inspirational sentences (Bakker-Wu et al., 2017). When facing time constraints, an image of dissimilar products from the same brand can be an excellent

alternative to support the creative process. Fourth, the three styling criteria identified in this study can bring clear focus during the ideation and selection of concepts for design teams. Lastly, regarding the underestimated textual examples, the implication for practitioners and design education is to be aware of the existing preferences and to experiment with less familiar types of examples to broaden the repertoire of tools in the design process.

The explorative character of the study also brings some inevitable limitations. Design decisions on form, function, and technology are intertwined (Dormer, 1993; Lawson, 2006). Depending on the specific design task, these aspects can have varying importance to the design outcome. The aim was not to comprehensively cover all visual design aspects but to focus on styling tasks with an emphasis on communicating the brand identity. Furthermore, there are numerous ways to devise examples using the same sources and representation forms as in the study. The findings are limited to the particular examples used in this study and cannot predict outcomes of other examples on styling tasks in general.

5.4 Conclusion

This study reveals how inspiration examples can support designers' creativity in styling tasks. Drawing on findings on styling and problem-solving tasks, I generated examples based on different inspiration properties (i.e. modality and conceptual distance), sources (i.e. nature and everyday life objects and dissimilar products), and representation forms (i.e. sentences, mood boards, and images). To assess the design outcomes, I identified three primary styling criteria that had not been specified before: personality coherence, visual coherence, and originality. I conducted an explorative study with two hundred and fifty-two participants assigned randomly to two different design briefs, either without an example or with one of the examples. Two design experts assessed the concepts individually. The results indicate that near-field examples can stimulate attention allocation, improving personality coherence. Furthermore, near-field visual examples can improve visual coherence in styling tasks. These findings are in line with the positive effect of near-field inspiration (i.e. feasibility and usefulness) revealed in problem-solving tasks. While more research is still needed to understand how to improve the originality of the ideas, the study suggests that developing and using examples can be considered an essential ingredient for successful styling tasks.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and discussion

This research explored how to design meaningful BEs that help organisations achieve favourable consumer outcomes in line with their brands' strategic management. It was born to answer the call for more design knowledge on BE. As the number of TPs continues to rise for organisations, reports from practice and research suggest the importance of coordinated creation of TPs and, hence, coherent BEs. Meaningful BEs undoubtedly deliver benefits to consumers and organisations. However, little is known about how to approach BE design. Based on the literature review, the research scope is narrowed down to the design of the visual appearance of various TPs that express a brand identity – thus, styling tasks for BE design.

To achieve the research goal, I conducted two studies. Following the sequential mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2014), I first used a qualitative study to explore BE design practices, which is reported in Chapter 3. More specifically, the first study investigated the research question: How could the visual appearance of various TPs be designed to form an integrated BE that communicates the desired brand identity? To answer this question, a multiple-case study was conducted that revealed the desired outcomes and challenges of BE design for organisations and practices that brand managers and designers use. Data was collected from practitioners and design and research experts. Four cases were selected based on company size (LO vs. SME) and source of design capability (internal vs. external). Recently completed digital and physical TP design projects were chosen to address the diversity of TPs. I recruited informants who held the roles of brand strategist and brand steward. To account for the complexity of LO cases, one additional informant was interviewed for each case. Lastly, after the case analysis, five design and research experts were interviewed to consolidate the initial findings.

Building on the findings of the first study, the second study zoomed into the creation practices. Scholars generally agree that inspiration is vital for designers in broad problem-solving tasks. I used a quantitative study to answer the following research question: How can inspiration examples affect the quality of styling tasks? Several criteria for generating inspiration examples were identified for styling tasks. An experiment was conducted. It compared a group of participants that had no examples with three groups that each received a different example. The study used two design briefs for different types of TPs to enhance generalisability. The design task asked participants to develop a concept, either without any example or with an inspiration example that was created for the specific design brief. Thus, participants were randomly assigned to one of the eight design tasks.

The remaining part of this chapter is structured as follows. First, I summarise the key findings from each study and elaborate on how these findings collectively address the main research question (6.1). Section 6.2 presents the theoretical contributions of the entire research,

while 6.3 delves into the implications for practitioners. The chapter concludes with a discussion of limitations and suggestions for future research in Section 6.4.

6.1 Summary of key findings and conclusions

This section first reports the key findings of the two studies. Then, it presents the connection between the results of the studies and how they collectively answer the research question.

6.1.1 Findings of Study 1

The results of the first study show that BE design covers a wide range of TPs. I was able to cluster the challenges according to three levels of complexity: an individual TP, multiple TPs, and generations of TPs. As each complexity level poses different challenges, designers and managers deal with different tension fields and strive to achieve corresponding outcomes. The desired outcomes are *distinctiveness, coherence,* and *continuity*. Further analysis revealed two types of practices to achieve the desired outcomes. The first type of practice emphasises discovering and developing new possibilities for TP design (e.g. a new shape of a display or a new logo), which is labelled as *creation* practices. Creation practices include *inspiring, guiding,* and *learning* practices. The second type concerns optimising efficiency or effectiveness (e.g. decisions on investing in a specific TP), labelled as *coordination* practices. Coordination practices include *prioritising, governing,* and *regulating* practices. An overview of these findings is presented in Table 5 in Section 3.2.

With regard to an individual TP, the first level of complexity, designers deal with the tension field of *consistency* with a non-original brand identity versus the *originality* of a TP's visual appearance. They strive for *distinctive* TPs that are unique combinations of original and existing visual elements. *Inspiring* refers to practices of selecting and using inspiration that support the creative process to achieve distinctiveness. Designers obtain rational inspiration through cognitive analytic processes. Feelings and emotions captured through affective processes are emotional inspirations. Although often overlooked, emotional inspiration is highlighted as equally essential as rational inspiration. Coordination of TPs takes place through *prioritising* leading TPs to establish a distinctive BE. Designers carefully observe consumers' interaction on the customer journeys to uncover those crucial TPs.

BE is an accumulation of a customer's interactions with a portfolio of various TPs. On the second level of complexity, *consistency* across a TP portfolio is vital for a strong brand, but the *adaptation* of a specific TP to a particular situation is inevitable. To resolve this tension field, designers strive for *coherence*, where all TPs fit together naturally as a whole without necessarily being identical. *Guiding* refers to practices that generate and provide descriptive

or inspirational guidelines to steer the creation of TPs towards one direction. To develop the guidelines, designers take inclusive and multidisciplinary approaches, trickle down the overall brand identity to a particular user context, and capture unwritten information through the affective process. The implementation of the guidelines through *governing* is characterised by a top-down approach, where managers provide training on the guidelines and plan the execution of TPs on a centralised basis.

To meet changing market needs, brands introduce new generations of TPs to establish renewed brand identities. The designers face the tension field of maintaining *consistency* across generations of TPs while creating new ones to gain *relevance*. They strive for *continuity* as a balanced combination of old and new visual elements that enables brand recognition from a consumer perspective. Through *learning* practices, designers gain knowledge from past experience and benefit from the cross-learning effect of various types of TPs. They also experiment with new TPs and mood boards to translate new brand identities into tangible designs, generating learnings for brand renewal. The launch of a new generation of TPs and a renewed brand identity are carefully synchronised through *regulating* practices. These practices ensure an optimal refreshment cycle, balancing the need for refreshment and establishment.

6.1.2 Findings of Study 2

The second study has an explorative character. It aimed to support designers in *creation* practices. To evaluate the design outcome of a particular TP, three primary styling criteria were identified based on the literature review. The criteria are personality coherence, visual coherence, and originality. As the visual appearance of a TP can trigger cognitive and affective consumer responses, personality coherence evaluates the coherence between a brand personality and a TP's visual appearance. Based on the theory of process fluency, visual coherence assesses the coherence among the visual elements of a product's visual appearance. Lastly, according to the 'most advanced yet acceptable' principle, an optimal level of originality is essential to fulfilling changing consumer needs and allows brands to differentiate from their competitors.

The generation of the inspiration examples used in this study is grounded in the design literature and findings from Study 1. The criteria are conceptual distance and modality, inspiration sources, and presentation forms. They were derived from three relevant literature streams. They include problem-solving tasks, product visual appearance, and design for brand recognition. Table 6 (Section 4.4) and Figure 8 (Section 5.1.2) show the composition of the examples and the examples used in the second study.

The results indicate that designers who received examples that communicated a brand personality generated concepts with a higher personality coherence but with a similar level

of originality as designers who were not provided with any examples. Also, visual examples (i.e. a mood board and an image of a dissimilar TP) increased visual coherence. These results indicate that examples that are closely related to the brand identity can stimulate attention allocation, improving the quality of styling tasks. Interestingly, the results also suggest that textual inspiration (i.e. sentence) seems equally effective as visual inspiration regarding personality coherence. In contrast, the participants overwhelmingly preferred the mood board (55% for personality coherence and 51% for originality) over the sentence (8% for personality coherence and 17% for originality).

6.1.3 Connecting the two studies: answering the main research question

This section elaborates on the connection between the findings of the two studies and how the main research question is answered from the three perspectives introduced in Chapter 1.

First, from the design perspective, the tension fields represent two seemingly conflicting design requirements. In fact, they are paradoxes illustrating why it is so challenging to design BE. The formulation of these tension fields is crucial for designers to fully grasp the design problem before they start with ideation. As Dorst (2011) wrote, 'Experienced designers can be seen to engage with a novel problem situation by searching for the central paradox, asking themselves what it is that makes the problem so hard to solve. They only start working toward a solution once the nature of the core paradox has been established to their satisfaction.' Therefore, the tension fields identified in Study 1 can provide designers with a quick understanding of the problem concerning a multitude of TPs. Furthermore, the distinction between *creation* and *coordination* practices helps designers and managers to understand the different mindsets required in BE design. *Creation* and *coordination* practices are associated with exploration and exploitation activities, which require different mindsets. *Creation* practices require a mindset that is more comfortable with uncertainties and exploration of a large range of potential solutions. On the other hand, *coordination* practices require a mindset that is inclined to prioritise efficiency. Nevertheless, it is not strictly necessary or always feasible for organisations to assign individuals only to a specific activity. Designers and managers can also deal with both types of activities. They are likely to be more successful in these activities if they are at least aware of the different mindsets required.

From the experiential perspective, the findings of this research can be applied across multiple types of TPs. First, the structure of three complexity levels helps to deal with the challenge of a large number of different types of TPs that collectively form consumers' BEs (see Section 2.2.2). This structure can be applied broadly across various types of TPs as it does not depend on a specific type of TP, such as physical or digital TPs. It also provides a new way to analyse the TPs that can engage multiple disciplines within an organisation. For instance, it can stimulate collaborations between a marketing communication department

and the product department to develop a shared understanding regarding the *coherence* among various types of TPs. Next, inspiration examples can be useful when dealing with the creation of different types of TPs, such as a display or packaging, enhancing the *coherence* among different types of TPs. The effect of attention allocation is not limited to one specific type of TP. The results showed that all three examples support designers in two different design briefs that are, in fact, two different types of TPs. In particular, the third example, an image of a website, is essential for learning practices on the level of TP generation. Study 2 provided initial evidence that the design of one type of TP can benefit from another type of TP, supporting the cross-learning effect revealed in Study 1. During brand renewal, designers can use the leading TP as an example to create other types of TPs that establish a continuous BE once the leading TP has been designed. Lastly, as inspiration examples can enhance visual coherence with the brand logo, it may indicate that they have the potential to improve visual coherence with other visual elements of a brand as well.

Lastly, from the perspective of strategic brand management, the desired outcomes and the styling criteria enable designers and managers to evaluate the outcomes of their BE design effort specifically in relation to brand management. To determine the *distinctiveness* of leading TPs, designers and managers can evaluate to which extent the leading TPs convey the desired brand personality (personality coherence), how visually coherent they are with the brand logo or other key visual elements, and how original they are compared to competitors' TPs. Designers and managers can use personality coherence and visual coherence to assess the *coherence* among different types of TPs (see Section 6.3 for an elaboration on this aspect). Coherence among TPs is valuable for achieving positive consumer responses. A service design study shows that coherence between product and visual service elements (i.e. logo and employee image) can positively affect consumers' attitudes towards the product service system (Valencia et al., 2011). Furthermore, coherence in brand personalities and design styles positively affects brand-related consumer outcomes. A related study in brand management examined the personality coherence and visual coherence among the sub-brands in a brand portfolio (Nguyen et al., 2017). It builds on the brand identity approach and demonstrates that a coherent brand portfolio perception and experience for consumers leads to favourable brand-related consumer outcomes, such as higher purchase intention for the sub-brands. Taken together, there is a strong indication that it is beneficial to ensure that all TPs communicate a brand identity in a coherent way, and personality coherence and visual coherence are two important criteria. Lastly, during brand renewal, designers and managers can gain insight into the *continuity* between generations of TPs using the styling criteria. Decisions can be made on the optimal level of personality coherence and visual coherence to ensure brand recognition and the level of originality to meet the changing market needs. For example, poor visual coherence between the old and new TPs may indicate issues related to low brand

recognition. Moreover, this assessment can be conducted internally by employees or with a survey to understand consumer perception.

Based on the results of these assessments, designers and managers can formulate concrete goals and identify actions to achieve positive brand-related consumer outcomes using the BE design practices. For instance, based on the originality scores, an organisation can ask itself whether it needs to differentiate more from competitors to increase the originality of leading TPs. Or, when the visual coherence score is low, whether its design efforts should focus on enhancing key visual elements or remove elements that are not essential for brand recognition. Based on these concrete goals, an organisation can choose from the six BE design practices to identity actions. For instance, to enhance visual coherence among various types of TPs, leading TPs can be identified through prioritising. Key design features of leading TPs can be integrated into design guidelines as part of *guiding* practices. Lastly, g*overning* practices can be adopted to support the embedding of design guidelines.

6.2 Theoretical contribution and implications

This section starts with a brief summary of the specific contributions of the findings of Studies 1 and 2. Then, it discusses the theoretical contribution and implications of the overall findings from this research in a broader sense that has not been addressed in the previous chapters.

Study 1 mainly contributed to marketing communication and brand management literature. The creation and coordination practices showed how to communicate a brand identity to a design team, facilitate the design of various types of TPs to achieve integration, and support brand renewal. Next, in Chapter 5, the contribution of Study 2 to the role of inspiration examples was addressed from the perspective of styling tasks as part of problem-solving literature. More specifically, the primary styling criteria, generation of beneficial examples, and the effect of the examples provided new knowledge to support the creative process of styling tasks.

Past research has predominantly focused on the conceptualisation of BE and its influence on brand-related consumer outcomes. However, knowledge of how to design for BE was limited in supply. The primary contribution of this research lies in providing a broader understanding of how BEs can be purposefully designed and effectively managed in line with an organisation's brand management. Specifically, this research addresses the knowledge gap by uncovering the desired outcomes, tension fields, and a set of creation and coordination practices specific to BE design. In line with the definition of BE that is formed through interaction with various TPs and the focus on the visual appearances of TPs that is chosen

for this research, the literature review looked at the design and management of various types of TPs (Section 2.2), a single type of multiple TPs (Section 2.3), and the visual aspect of a specific TP (Section 2.4). This review incorporates studies from several research fields, such as marketing communication, brand management, service design, and product innovation and design. Each section represents three topics: the desired outcomes, challenges, and approaches.

Table 11 summarises the contribution of this research in relation to the literature review as presented in Chapter 2. So far, brand management and product and service design have focused on primary outcomes such as brand awareness and conveying brand identity (Betra & Keller, 2016; Clatworthy, 2012; Duncan, 2002; Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010; Person et al., 2016; Seric, 2017). The knowledge of desired outcomes – *distinctiveness, coherence,* and *continuity* – is valuable because it enhances the understanding of the outcomes associated with BE design that has not been revealed before. The current research enriches the existing knowledge by presenting more specific outcomes for an individual TP as well as multiple TPs and TP generations over time. The desired outcomes for BE design are intricately linked with brand awareness and the communication of brand identity, thereby establishing links with the pertinent literature in brand management and product and service design. This specific knowledge can contribute to an effective evaluation of existing BEs and pinpoint areas requiring attention for achieving integrated BEs.

Second, this research revealed tension fields as unique BE design challenges. It extends current knowledge on challenges related to designing and managing various TPs into the specific context of BE design. One challenge that is notably specific to BE design is managing creativity versus integration in the creative process (Endrissat et al., 2016). The tension fields identified in this research, *consistency vs. originality, consistency vs. adaptation,* and *consistency vs. relevance,* offer a better understanding of how the paradox of creativity vs. integration unfolds in BE design. Consequently, they can lead to a quick understanding of the design challenge at hand and inform more effective strategies for creating and managing TPs.

To address these tensions, the present research uncovered a set of *creation* and *coordination* practices aiming to transcend the fragmented approaches offered by the extant literature. Existing approaches tend to focus on one particular type of TP. For instance, semantic transformation (Karjalainen, 2007) and shape grammar (McCormack & Cagan, 2004) have been developed to shape the visual appearances of products, while the BE manual (Motta-Fiho, 2021) is tailored for service design. While these approaches offer valuable insights, the question arises as to how applicable they are when dealing with various types of TPs in a holistic way. The contribution of the present research consists of *creation* and *coordination* practices based on empirical evidence that can help designers and managers holistically navigate the challenges posed by multiple types of TPs.

Among these practices, the role of inspiration examples deserves special attention. As an element of the *guiding* practice, inspiration examples are developed as boundary objects through an inclusive and multidisciplinary approach by practitioners in BE design. For example, the results of Study 1 indicate that the design team experimented with images and mood boards to search for a new brand identity and use them to gain feedback from internal stakeholders. Boundary objects actually make the 'boundaries' among different disciplines more permeable. Not surprisingly, both design researchers (Zasa et al., 2022) and organisation scholars (e.g. Endrissat et al., 2016) consider boundary objects to be a promising field. Visual objects, in particular, enable common points of reference while leaving room for open interpretations (Ewenstein & Whyte, 2009). Other scholars point out that boundary objects can have different forms. For example, textual objects, used as metaphors, can serve as semantic objects that encourage interdisciplinary collaboration and aid in translating abstract concepts into concrete solutions (Zasa et al., 2022). Consistent with these studies, the current research underscores the importance of developing inspiration examples in BE design, which undoubtedly has a multidisciplinary character. It implies that inspiration examples can serve a dual purpose. Not only do they function as boundary objects, promoting improved communication and collaboration in the development of a design direction, but they also play an active role as catalysts in supporting designers' creative processes through attention allocation, leading to a TP design with higher personality coherence and visual coherence. Establishing a link between inspiration examples and boundary objects can offer a fresh perspective for design research. This unexplored terrain holds the potential to support the design process from direction finding to idea generation, enhancing the collaboration between brand and marketing and design discipline.

Table 11: Overview of literature review findings and findings from current research

	Design and management of various types of TPs	**Design and management of one specific type of TP (product)**	**Design and management of the visual aspect of a TP (styling)**	**Findings of BE design**
Desired outcomes:	Brand awareness; the communication of detailed brand information; brand equity (Duncan, 2002; Šerić, 2017); customer brand engagement (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016).	Brand recognition (i.e. brand awareness and the communication of an intended brand identity) (Karjalainen, 2007; Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010; Keller, 2013)	Attention drawing, establishing brand recognition, and creation of symbolic meaning (Person et al., 2016)	Desired outcomes: distinctiveness, coherence, and continuity
	Consumer satisfaction, purchase intention (Helkkula, 2011); congruence between brand strategy and service experience (Clatworthy, 2012).			Assess the design outcomes using styling criteria: personality coherence, visual coherence and originality.
Challenges:	Dealing with a multitude of TPs (Bolton et al., 2018; Keller, 2001)	Achieve brand recognition across product portfolios and product generations (Karjalainen, 2007; Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010; Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005)	Embodiment of a brand identity in the visual appearance (Blijlevens et al., 2009; Crilly, 2004)	Tension fields: consistency vs originality, consistency vs adaptation, and consistency vs relevance
	Consumers' individual context influences interaction with TPs (Batra & Keller, 2016; De Keyser et al., 2020).		Styling task requires a substantial amount of training (Person et al., 2007)	
	Translating the brand identity to the design team (Clatworthy, 2012; Motta-Filho, 2012, 2021; Munchbach, 2014)		Managing creativity versus integration in creative process (Endrissat et al., 2016)	Inspiration examples as new way to express brand identity to support the design of various types of TPs
	Management and organisation barriers to TPs integration (Vernuccio et al., 2020)			

Table 11: Overview of literature review findings and findings from current research *(Continued)*

	Design and management of various types of TPs	**Design and management of one specific type of TP (product)**	**Design and management of the visual aspect of a TP (styling)**	**Findings of BE design**
Considerations and approaches	Optimising interrelationships among TPs along the customer journey (Batra & Keller, 2016; De Keyser et al., 2020).	Strategically employ design philosophy which mediates between strategic intent, core (technical) capabilities and brand values (Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005) ; key drivers for a design philosophy (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010); three dimensions for design decisions (Person et al., 2007)	Three aspects of semantic transformation process (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010)	Creation practices; Inspiration examples as new elements in design guidelines; trickling down brand identity to a specific user context
			Semantic transformation, explicit cues (visual) and implicit cues (keywords) (Karjalainen, 2007); analysis of design features: design format analysis (DFA) (Warell, 2001) visual; the semantic differential method (Osgood et al., 1957; Krippendorff, 2005); shape grammar (McCormack & Cagan, 2004).	Knowledge on how to generate beneficial inspiration examples based on inspiration property, sources and representation forms.
	Expressing abstract brand identity in multiple forms to design teams (Clathworthy, 2012); the BE manual with the relationship metaphor, the service principles and the service moments (Motta-Filho, 2021)	Consistent product portfolio policy (Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005) and use of lead products (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010)		Effect of inspiration property on the design outcome of styling tasks.
	Enhancing participation and brand orientation (Vernuccio et al., 2020). A brand identity–oriented culture, two distinct roles (brand strategist and brand steward), top management support (Madhavaram et al., 2005)	Deviation from existing TPs through experimentation, naïve questioning, and collaboration with external partners (Beverland et al., 2015; Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005; Verganti, 2008); linking a brand's past and future (Beverland et al., 2015); co-evolve and embed the (new design) philosophy (Ravasi & Lojacono, 2005).		Coordination practices: Prioritising leading TP to establish a coherent BE; Governing: embed design guidelines in the organisation; Regulating: synchronising TP introduction and optimising the refreshment cycle.

6.3 Implications for practitioners

In this section, I outline a general two-stage process of BE design that can be applied by practitioners based on the results of the research (see Figure 10). It is not a rigid step-by-step process, but rather an illustration of how the results can be used in practice.

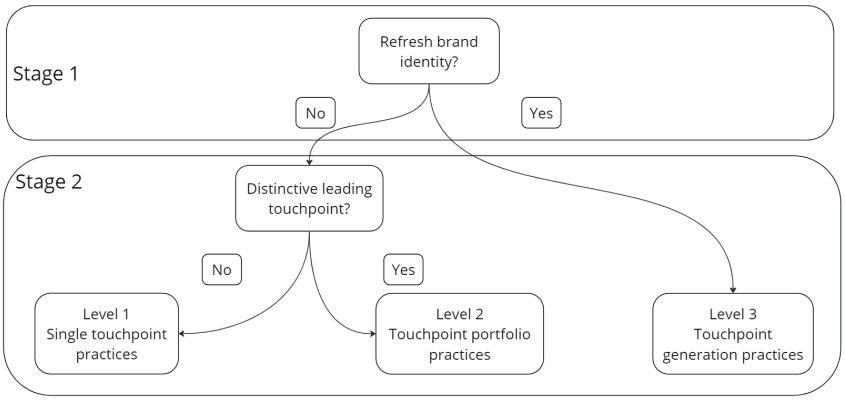

Figure 10: Illustration of two-stage approach to brand experience design

6.3.1 Stage 1: Identifying brand experience design goals

The first stage aims to identify the brand management or organisational goals for BE design. As BE design seeks to achieve positive consumer-related outcomes, enhancing its brand and improving the organisation's competitiveness, a comprehensive analysis of the brand, the organisation, and its sociocultural environment can be conducted.

How should this be done? The brand management literature offers a wide range of qualitative and quantitative tools. As this topic is not the focus of this research, I highlight one popular example from each category that can provide insights for BE design. A well-known quantitative tool for brand managers to measure brand equity and gain insight into a brand's strengths is Keller's (2000) brand report card. It consists of ten questions derived from characteristics of successful brands. These questions delve into aspects that are highly related to BE design. For example, the question of whether 'marketing and communications efforts are seamlessly integrated' can reveal issues around coherence among TPs. Another question about whether 'the brand is innovative and relevant' can spotlight concerns around the distinctiveness of a TP. Lastly, whether 'the brand is properly positioned' can lead to considerations about the relevance of brand identity and hence any needs for brand renewal. To understand how consumers perceive the brand, an interesting qualitative tool is the Zaltman metaphor elicitation technique (ZMET) (Zaltman, 2003), an easy-to-use projective method. ZMET explores

brand associations held by consumers through a metaphorical lens. They are asked to bring self-generated or collected images related to a specific brand. This technique can generate brand associations but also identify a personality profile for a brand. ZMET is particularly relevant for BE design, as these images from consumers can be potentially used as a pool from which brand managers and designers can select visuals to generate inspiration examples.

Another aspect to consider is the influence of influencers and popular culture.The next section (6.4.1) provides more details on this topic. Beyond the mainstream trends, it is essential to remain vigilant of emerging opportunities and threats. As Beverland (2021) pointed out: 'staying on top of these changes is to monitor the wider environment and, in particular, track ideas that seem fringe, niche or "out there"' (p. 119). The importance of this broader view is echoed by design scholars such as Verganti (2008) and Ravasi & Lojacono (2005). In addition, they also emphasise the development of new technologies as another essential aspect to monitor. Practitioners can choose tools that are appropriate for addressing specific brand-related issues, providing a comprehensive understanding of the brand's management perspective while remaining responsive to external influences.

However, in practice, BE design is not always initiated based on extensive analyses as described above. A noteworthy aspect to highlight is that in the cases I analysed, there was no substantial evidence that BE design projects were initiated by brand management alone. It seemed that the development of a leading TP naturally resulted in a renewed brand identity. Even in the two LO cases, where it was expected that brand management activities would be more professionally organised, the development of a new leading TP did not seem to be initiated or planned by the brand or communication managers. Instead, the creative director from agency D in case C emphasised that it was during the development of a new website that the client organisation realised that their brand identity was outdated, prompting the need to not only refresh the brand logo so that it would be visually coherent with the new website but also revive the brand identity for the entire organisation. Subsequently, two design agencies – one specialising in brand identity and the other in websites – collaborated intensively on the brand identity and website as two interconnected projects. In conclusion, brand managers need to stay responsive to design activities since the development of a leading TP can yield new insights for brand development.

To summarise, Stage 1 establishes a foundational understanding of the rationale behind BE design by analysing the internal and external environment where the brand is embedded. The analyses in Stage 1 provide clear goals for BE design. Different goals lead to distinct BE design routes, which will be further elaborated upon below.

6.3.2 Stage 2: Three different routes for brand experience design

In Stage 2, the research findings are applied through the presentation of three routes. Figures 11, 12, and 13 illustrate the three different routes for BE design. To start with Route 1, when an organisation wishes to refresh its brand identity, it can use the *learning* practices to experiment and develop new visual elements and learn from past experiences to design a new generation of TPs. One of the common mistakes that prevent organisations from creating powerful brands is the failure to be patient with the brand (Keller, 2000). *Regulating* practices can help to plan the timing for launching the renewed BE, ensuring that managers do not take shortcuts or only concentrate on the flashier aspects of building new images. Effective support during brand renewal is not limited to practices at level 3 (TP generation); practices at levels 1 and 2, including a single TP and TP portfolio, also contribute meaningfully. An organisation can utilise *prioritising* practices to identify leading TPs and, potentially, even discover new ones. Investing time and resources in *inspiring* practices can further optimise the distinctiveness of leading TPs. Subsequently, it can employ *guiding* practices to update or create design guidelines and ensure coherence during the rollout of the new BE through *governing* practices.

When reasons for redesigning BE are associated with issues around the distinctiveness of the leading TP or the coherence of the TP portfolio, I offer Routes 2 and 3 as two different options. To choose one route, I recommend starting with the identification of the leading TP based on a true understanding of the customer journey. This research indicates that a leading TP is not always the main offer from an organisation, but the TP that plays a major role in the formation of the consumer's BEs. Subsequently, the distinctiveness of a leading TP can be assessed. Compared to coherence among the TPs, distinctiveness is more foundational. When the leading TP is not on brand or stands out, a coherent BE is not likely to attract sufficient consumer attention or evoke desired associations, resulting in favourable responses. The styling criteria can be applied here. The statements used for personality coherence, visual coherence, and originality are described in Section 5.1.4. In cases where the leading TP falls short – for instance, if it lacks in originality or is misaligned with the brand personality – an organisation can take Route 2 to initiate improvements using *inspiring* practices. Following this refinement, the next step involves implementing *guiding* and *governing* practices to establish a coherent BE.

Lastly, with regard to Route 3, problems related to the coherence of BE can be analysed using an adapted version of the styling criteria. The styling criteria assessed personality (visual) coherence between the brand personality (brand logo) and the visual appearance of a TP. To assess personality coherence and visual coherence among various TPs, I suggest that the statements be adapted as follows: 'These TPs have the same personality' and 'these TPs have a similar graphical (3D) design style'. This assessment can provide tangible insights

into areas requiring improvement. After this evaluation, an organisation can pinpoint suitable *guiding* and *governing* practices. For example, enhancing the training programme ensures proper application of visual elements when visual coherence is lacking. Alternatively, updating design guidelines with more effective inspirational examples improves personality coherence.

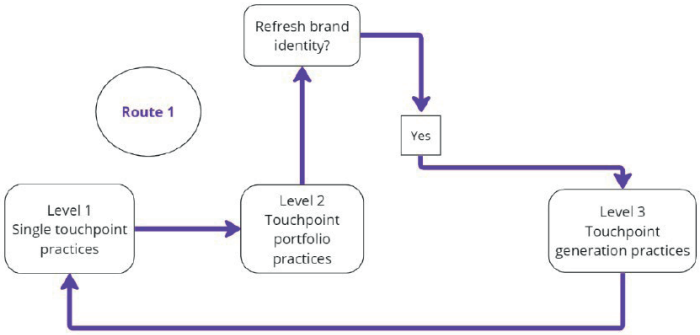

Figure 11: Route 1

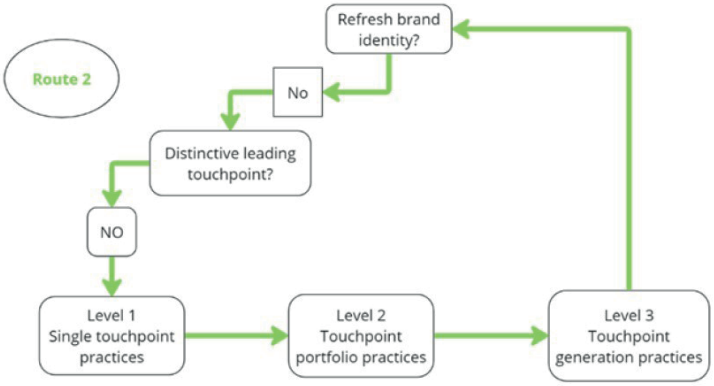

Figure 12: Route 2

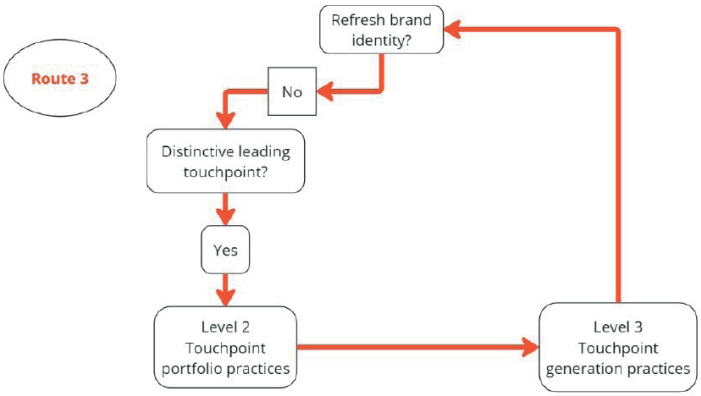

Figure 13: Route 3

Through the elaboration on the three routes, I make it clear that BE design is not a one-size-fits-all process and that there is no linear pathway. Which level to start with and which practices to use depends on the unique situation of each brand embedded in the wider organisation and its environment. While the three routes illustrated here cannot predict success, they signify a new way to approach BE design.

6.4 Limitations and future research

In this section, I will address three limitations of this research that were not covered in the empirical studies. Moving from a general to a more specific context, the first two limitations pertain to the focus on brand-owned TPs and visual aspects of TPs, without consideration of other influencing factors. These will be discussed in Sections 6.4.1 and 6.4.2. Section 6.4.3 discusses the final limitations concerning the development of inspirational examples. I will outline various future research directions associated with these limitations in their respective sections.

6.4.1 Brand-owned touchpoints and future research

As introduced in Chapter 1, TPs are diverse – some are created by organisations, while others are co-created with consumers or solely created by consumers. It is crucial to recognise that all these brand-related TPs exert influence on consumers' BEs. In this regard, the first limitation of this research lies in the focus on brand-owned TPs. Given that informants in the multiple-case study uniformly opted for brand-owned TPs, the results might be skewed.

Notably, co-created TPs are not omitted in these organisations. For instance, in case B, there is a dedicated communication department that engages with user communities through social media, and in case D, the Head of Design acknowledged the role of the service desk in shaping consumers' BEs. An explanation for informants' preference for discussing brand-owned TPs could be their perception that these TPs are more manageable from an organisational standpoint within the context of BE design. Nevertheless, practices for co-created TPs might be overlooked.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that the dominant marketing logic of a brand manager solely responsible for communicating a desired brand identity to consumers has evolved into the logic of co-creation, where different authors collectively shape brand meaning over time. As highlighted by Beverland (2021): 'Sometimes brand meaning can be controlled or strongly shaped, such as through sponsorship, product placement, the creation of official brand communities, and the recruitment of bloggers' (p. 12). The cultural brand model identifies four authors, including brand managers, users capable of creating stories and sharing information and opinions, influencers posting on social media, and participants in popular culture where a brand is represented (Holt, 2002). Remarkably, users have the ability not just to co-create the brand meaning but also to actively participate in the co-creation of new TPs. When consumers collaborate with brands to create new products, this can directly affect how people perceive the brand's personality and indirectly impact behavioural intentions towards both established and fictional brands (van Dijk et al., 2014). Moreover, influencers have emerged as a potent tool for brands to connect with consumers (Jin & Muqaddam, 2019). As a result, the collaboration between brands and influencers has introduced new challenges, such as the management of influencers' trustworthiness, which is grounded in the non-commercial characteristics of the content (Audrezet et al., 2020).

Future research can explore practices that support the co-creation of TPs with other brand authors and tackle new challenges posed by the pervasive role of influencers. For this research direction, investigating how start-ups use social media to create meaningful BEs can be particularly interesting. Navigating the challenges of establishing a strong brand is pivotal for start-ups, where neglecting to perform early brand positioning and definition is the most prominent reason for start-up failure (Chakraborti et al., 2022). Chaudhri et al. (2022) find that as start-ups are resource-strapped, they are more mindful of how they use their resources. The survival of nascent start-up brands hinges on an optimal understanding of the dynamics among the brand authors and the effective use of social media as a potent tool to communicate their brands. So far, the approaches to creating brand names, logos, and signature brand colours are characterised as pragmatic and iterative. The role of users and employees is a crucial source of inspiration. Their input and feedback are used to adjust brand concepts, creating memorable and positive brand associations. However, questions

arise about whose feedback is most valuable in the recalibration of the brand (Chaudhri et al., 2022). Future research holds promise in delving deeper into the interplay among the brand authors through the use of social media. Studying accomplished start-ups can uncover unique creation and coordination practices employed by successful start-ups, which can potentially support BE design for SMEs or LOs.

6.4.2 Visual aspects of touchpoints and future research

This research does not include consumer responses to BE design. Every consumer is inherently subjective and informed by his/her own way of thinking. Depending on their motivation, ability, and opportunity, consumers will process information differently and hence affect the outcomes (Batra & Keller, 2016). Also, social rules and norms can influence consumer responses (e.g. Bolton et al., 2018). As consumers' characteristics and individual and social contexts all exert influence on their BEs, evaluating the results of BE design with consumers demands special attention, which does not belong to the scope of this research.

A limitation related to consumer responses is the chosen focus on the visual aspect as one of the sensory aspects of TPs. Vision dominates the other senses, accounting for the majority of all sensory processing in the brain (Hultén, 2017). Consumers gain significantly more information via sight than their other senses; brands mostly study and use the visual aspect of TPs. However, next to vision, other senses such as hearing, taste, touch, and smell can all play a role in forming BEs. For instance, from cars to cafés, from apparel to electronic devices, many brands have embraced audio as a powerful branding tool. BMW introduced their sound signature; Starbucks is famous for using music to set the ambience of its cafés (Gains, 2014). In 2020, Intel relaunched its corporate image with a new logo but kept the three-second audio mnemonic that signalled that the Intel computer was switched on. This simple five-note jingle has helped Intel become one of the most recognisable brands in the world (Zha et al., 2020). Another example is that touch seems to improve the integration of other sensory inputs with thoughts and feelings, which makes a brand more tangible and increases the customer's feeling of ownership (Peck & Shu, 2009). Using unique haptic design, Bang & Olufsen's remote controls convey a feeling of quality. Remarkably, among all sensory cues, odour triggers the most emotional and evocative memories. Each of the five senses influences information processes in its own unique way. Moreover, gestalt psychology indicates that the senses are not separate and independent systems; in fact, they work together to provide a holistic view of the world.

This research has narrowed its focus to the visual aspects of various TPs to enable a more effective investigation of the main research question. However, future research can explore other sensory aspects of various TPs to design more engaging BEs. A good example of a multisensory approach for BE is the Westin hotel chain. The chain has implemented

the Sensory Welcome programme across all its hotels. The programme blends handpicked soundtracks with infused scents and carefully designed visual cues in the interior of public spaces. Its white tea fragrance has been such a success that visitors can purchase it as a standalone product. Next, the hotel chain also launched another successful tactile branding campaign with its Heavenly Bed and Heavenly Bath products. Bringing all senses together, the hotel created memorable BEs for its customers (Gainsconwe, 2014). This is just one of the many examples of how an organisation can embrace all five senses to form memorable and favourable consumer BEs. Since the introduction of the concept of sensory branding by Lindstrom (2005), many scholars have studied how to engage optimally with consumers through all senses (e.g. Hultén, 2017). There is also an interplay between different types of TPs. One interesting finding on customer experience is that the sensory dimension of consumers' BEs can be a valuable compensation for the variability of employee empathy levels and deal with the consequences of the heterogeneous nature of service TPs (Iglesias et al., 2019). In this respect, knowledge of how to design multisensory TPs is essential. However, based on a recent literature review, research has so far focused on developing an understanding of multisensory experience (Zha et al., 2020). Therefore, it is worthwhile to expand upon the visual aspects addressed in the present research and uncover challenges and practices associated with other sensory aspects in BE design.

6.4.3 Inspiration examples and future research

With regard to the role of inspiration examples in BE design, this research has several limitations. First, it has not examined in depth other criteria for developing beneficial inspiration examples. While the problem-solving and product visual appearance literature offers some insights, additional guidance would be beneficial. Second, the generalisation of the findings is limited. There are still numerous options to compose inspiration examples according the criteria. It is uncertain whether all these options can yield fruitful results. When developing the examples, the master design students were asked to search for images that could convey the desired brand identities. Consequently, the selected images were all typical or common images associated with the brand identity. In contrast, problem-solving literature indicates that uncommon examples may enhance originality. Therefore, more research is required to better understand the influence of the commonality of the examples on the originality of the design outcomes in the context of BE design.

Future research can compare design outcomes between common and uncommon examples. Generative artificial intelligence (AI) can be employed to create these examples. With its robust data mining and analysing capabilities, various AI-based tools, such as the semantic ideation network or the visual concepts combination model (Chen et al., 2019), can provide a wide range of examples, significantly enhancing the efficiency of example development. More specifically, these tools can retrieve textual or visual examples or even generate mood

boards based on specific rules (Duan & Zhang, 2022). So far, AI has been applied to inspire product design (Chen et al., 2019) and environmental design (Duan & Zhang, 2022), signalling its potential for BE design.

Another direction for future research is the collaborative development of examples in a multidisciplinary team. Professional designers have greater aesthetic sensitivity than ordinary consumers (Philips et al., 2014). The question arises as to whether individuals without a design background, such as marketing or brand managers, would be able to select beneficial images as designers do. So far, the extant literature mainly indicates the positive influence of mood boards generated by art directors or creative directors (Endrissat et al., 2016). It is reasonable to question whether the master design students who developed examples in Study 2 have a higher aesthetic sensitivity than average marketing or brand managers. Future research can explore to what extent the effectiveness of inspiration examples depends on the level of aesthetic sensitivity and design experience. As an inspiration example can serve as a boundary object to stimulate communication and collaboration between brand managers and designers, another undertaking involves examining whether examples generated by a multidisciplinary team can be useful. To summarise, future research can elaborate on the necessary guidelines for developing examples in a multidisciplinary team and the effectiveness of these examples in BE design.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview guide

Introduction
Hello, I am doing an exploratory case study to find out how brand experience is designed. Brand experiences are a consumer's sensations or feelings that are evoked by the interactions with a brand. So when a consumer uses your product or sees your website, his experience of your brand is formed. When a consumer's brand experiences are positive, they will like your brand and develop a positive attitude towards your brand. A product or a website can be seen as a touch point. A touch point is when your brand interacts with your consumers. Now I would like to know how these touchpoints are designed.

The interview will take 1-1,5 hours. All information you provide will be treated with confidentiality. The results will only be used for academic purposes. A report of the interviews and the final results will be made available to you for eventual review and comments.

Are there any questions?

Topic 1: BE design practices in the company
1. Regarding the case (project Y) that we pre-defined, how are you involved in that project? What was your role in the project and organisation?

2. Can you describe how BE is created for brand X in general (not only in this particular project)? What are the goals, the inputs, outputs and the major steps?

3. Who are the people/ departments involved in BE design, and what are their backgrounds?

Topic 2: the pre-selected TP design project and how it is related to other TPs:
4. Which TPs are used in general by the company for brand X? How are the TPs selected? Why did you use these TPs, or how did you make decisions to use or design these TPs?

5. Let's look at project Y of brand X. Can you describe the design process of TP?

6. What are the tools, methods, instruments, inspiration, past experience, learnings, etc, used in TP design? What did you or your team use in the process to come up with a proper design?

7. Let's look broader than project Y. How are the designs of different TPs interrelated?

Topic 3: the influence of the brand on the project and other TPs

8. Can you describe the brand X of this project in your own words? What kind of brand-related information have you used in this project?

9. How is the brand 'translated' into the TP design? How does the brand (= answer question 7) influence the design process of project Y? How is the brand input used? How do you use the brand in the design process? Look at the design results: analyse 1-2 aspects, for example: material choice or one brand value. How is that translated into a design?

Topic 4: the evaluation of the outcome Evaluation:

10. How would you evaluate the whole project Y? What went well?

11. What are the problems or challenges during the project Y or general BE design?

12. How did you manage those challenges?

13. What is the result of project Y and its impact on your brand or consumers?

14. What are the things you would do differently next time?

Closing:

15. I would also like to collect written information. Can you provide me with

a) Design brief

b) Brand documentation

c) Guidelines

d) Project planning

e) Contracts

f) Meeting documents

g) Description of tools, methods and models

h) Are there any other documents that you think might be relevant to my research?

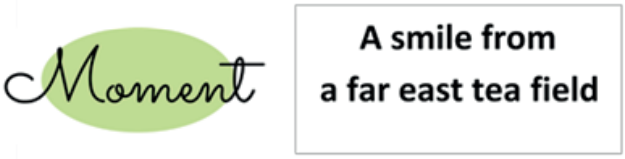
16. Can you give me advice on who I should interview next to get a good understanding of this topic?

    Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix B: Pre-test stimuli

'Moment' is a new dishwasher tablet brand. Its brand personality is: natural, cheerful and relaxed. Below you see the logo of 'Moment', an inspirational sentence and a website. Please indicate to what extent you disagree or agree with the following statements.

Inspirational text



The text and the brand seem to have a shared personality (i.e. natural, cheerful and relaxed)

Strongly disagree 1……..2……..3……..4……..5……..6……..7 Strongly agree

Website

The website and the brand logo appear to exhibit the same style in graphical and 3D design style.

Strongly disagree 1……..2……..3……..4……..5……..6……..7 Strongly agree

The website and the brand seem to have a shared personality (i.e. natural, cheerful and relaxed).

Strongly disagree 1……..2……..3……..4……..5……..6……..7 Strongly agree

'Music' is a new headphone brand. Its brand personality is: adventurous, technical and outdoorsy. Below you see the logo of 'Music', an inspirational sentence and a website. Please indicate to what extent you disagree or agree with the following statements.

Inspirational text

MUSIC

Trekking through
unexplored
wild mountains

The text and the brand seem to have a shared personality (i.e. adventurous, technical and outdoorsy).

Strongly disagree 1……..2……..3……..4……..5……..6……..7 Strongly agree

Website

MUSIC

The website and the brand logo appear to exhibit the same style in graphical and 3D design style.

Strongly disagree 1……..2……..3……..4……..5……..6……..7 Strongly agree

The website and the brand seem to have a shared personality (i.e. adventurous, technical and outdoorsy).

Strongly disagree 1……..2……..3……..4……..5……..6……..7 Strongly agree

Thank you!

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My PhD journey has been anything but typical. It began after I had spent eight years in the corporate world at a multinational company and seven years teaching and serving as the secretary of the Product Innovation and Management department (now the Design Organisation and Strategy department). I pursued this PhD alongside my teaching activities, and I'm grateful to the many people who supported me along this path.

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About the author

Sijia Wu was born in 1974 in Shanghai, China. After finishing her high school studies there, she moved to the Netherlands. She spent a year learning Dutch before enrolling to study Industrial Design Engineering (BSc and MSc) at Delft University of Technology from 1994 to 1999. After graduating, she started working at Unilever in Rotterdam and completed a supply chain traineeship from 2000 to 2002. Then, she worked at Unilever Nordic in Sweden on a temporary assignment. From 2002 to 2009, she was a packaging design manager for the Foods division, working on many innovation projects. Following her interest in design and innovation, she returned to teaching at Delft University of Technology, coordinating and developing courses in both bachelor's and master's programmes. During this time, she developed her interest in research and began a part-time PhD in 2016 in the department of Design, Organisation and Strategy. She combined her research with teaching and attended two international conferences.

Publications associated with this thesis:

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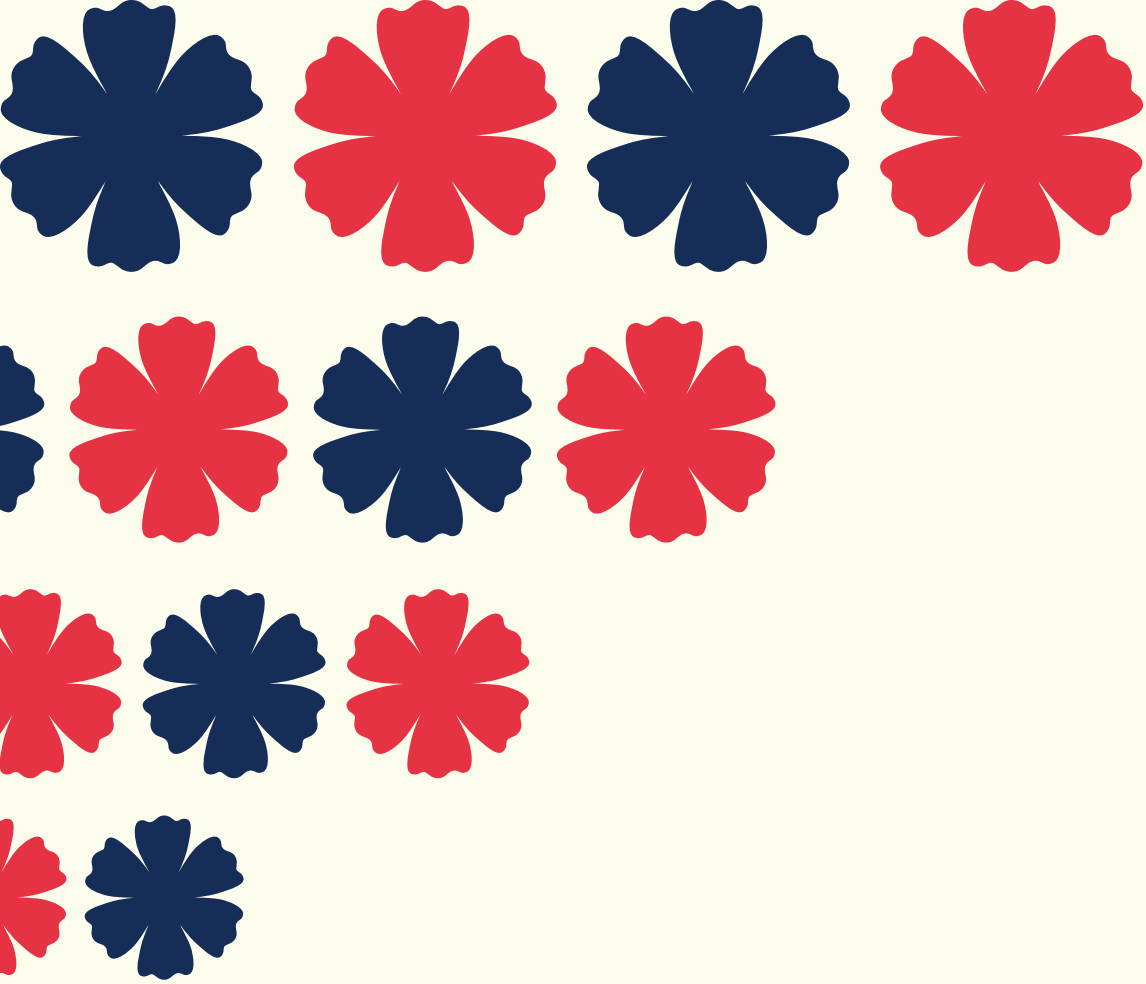

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