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Leon V. Klement

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"Exploring How B2C Customer Experience Literature Can Translate To a B2B Context Using a Case Study at a Textiles Company."

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Leon Vincent Klement

leonklement@outlook.com

s2424703

Supervisors

Chairman: Prof.dr.ir. J. Henseler

Supervisor: Dr. B.M. Österle

Company supervisors: P. van Barneveld & N. Gijssen

External member: Dr. ir. W. Eggink

University of Twente

Master Industrial Design Engineering

Track Human Technology Relations

Faculty of Engineering Technology

Drienerloaan 5

7522 NB Enschede

The Netherlands

www.utwente.nl

New Wave Textiles

Reactorweg 201

3542AD, Utrecht

The Netherlands

www.newwavetextiles.nl

Abstract

Although customer experience is a saturated topic within the academic world of B2C markets, B2B applications are still catching up. Researching manners in which B2C theories apply to B2B topics can be interesting due to the overlap in characteristics of the two. Since experiences are becoming increasingly more important expressions for companies, showrooms are a part of the customer experience with potential for improvements. To address this topic, this thesis explores how theories about improving B2C customer experience, for example, the “Loyalty Loop”, translate to a B2B case. This was accomplished by executing a case study where a showroom experience of a B2B textiles company (New Wave Textiles) was designed using the design thinking process. The study used the following research question: How can the customer experience of B2B (textile) companies be improved by the use of an interactive experience design within the showroom? And how could this be used to monitor the customer’s thoughts?”

This thesis is structured using the design thinking process (Empathize-Define-Ideate-Prototype-Test) and contains multiple iterations of ideation. The last chapter contains the implementation of the findings from the design process onto the literature which resulted in a proposed framework for future B2B showroom experience designs. The literature gathered for this thesis is on the topics of customer experience, brand experience, customer journeys, B2B customer experience, and showrooms.

The design which resulted from the case study is an experiential digital portal that the account manager and customer can use during a showroom visit to explore product variations and information. This design enhances the customer experience by cutting out the manual conversion from the offline to the online journey.

Aknowledgement

First of all, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my company supervisors Nadim Gijssen and Pieter van Barneveld for supporting me throughout my master's assignment, offering me the freedom and space to execute the project the way I want, and having engaged periodic meetings to discuss the progression of my project. Throughout this project, I was able to get a better understanding of the different facets and processes within a company like New Wave Textiles which made me even more aware of the presence and importance of the overlap between the different departments. I am also grateful for everyone with who I was able to have conversations to give me these insights like Henk Duyster and Jeroen van der Kuip who are part of the management team and shared some of their view on the company with me, Maartje van der Bie and Ilonka Knura who are part of the marketing team and gave me an idea of the brand- and customer experience creation, and Aernout Ariese, Allard Boverhuis, Bjorn Borger, Diderique de Groeij, and Vincent Vonk who among others guide the showroom visits and shared their stories and vision on delivering exceptional customer service.

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1. Introduction

In this chapter, an introduction in regard to the motivation for the research is given, along with the objective, approach and scope of the research.

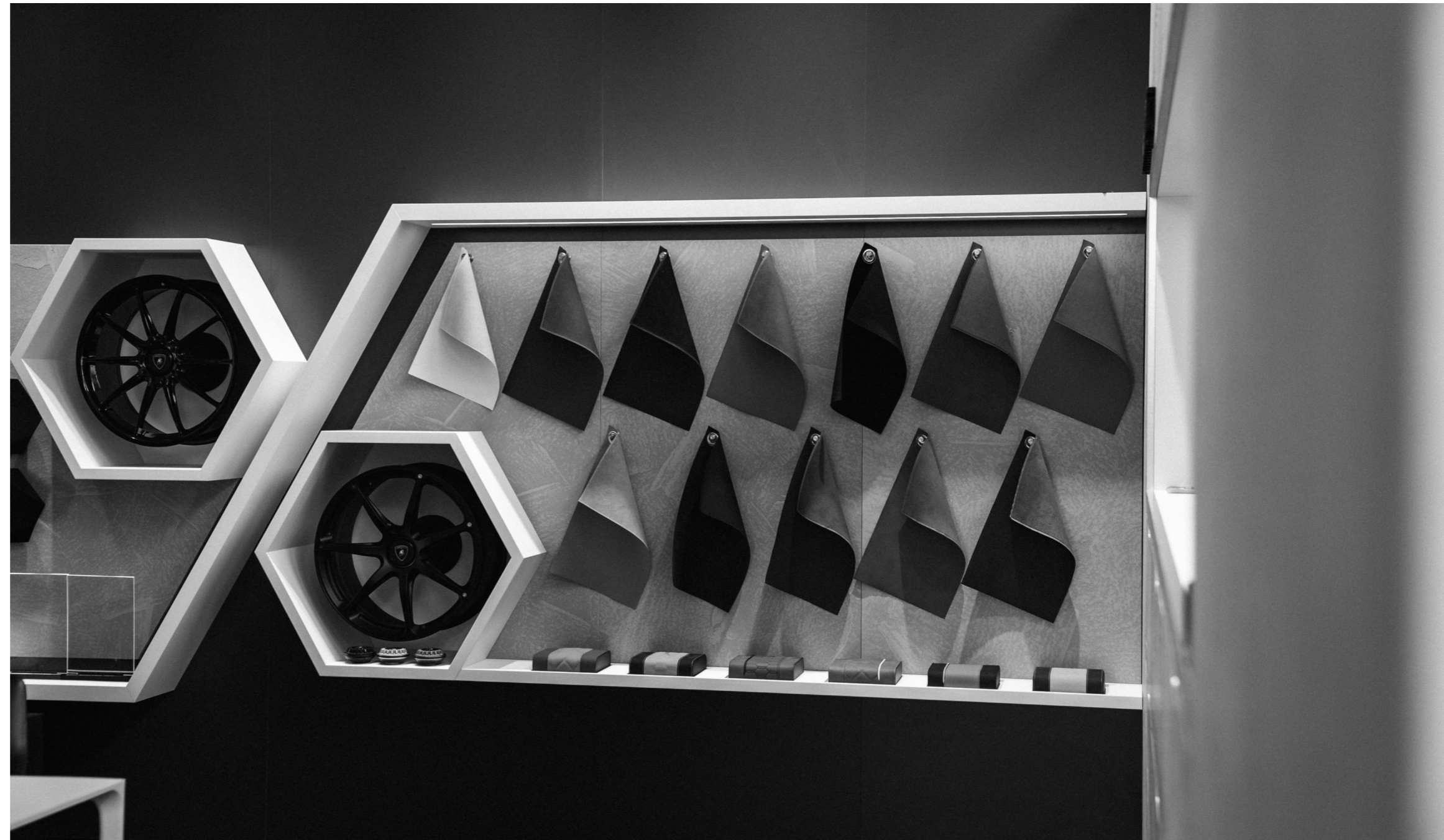
1.1 Research Motivation

Over the last decades, borders between B2B and B2C have been fading, for example by evolving information technologies and changing business models, which caused an increase in the expectations among B2B customers (March 2020). Although the two are merging, there are still significant differences between them that should be taken into account when designing a customer experience (March 2020). The lagging of B2B- behind B2C markets regarding innovations has been a popular opinion for some time. B2B markets are nevertheless catching up when it comes to this while still being under-represented within customer experience research (Hague and Hague 2018, Vivolo 2019, Becker and Jaakkola 2020, Tueanrat, Papagiannidis et al. 2021). Because of this, research into the application of knowledge from B2C to B2B markets might be interesting for enriching B2B customer experience knowledge. A topic that is both applicable for B2C and B2B and has a significant impact on the decision-making process of customers who deal with physical products is showrooms (an example can be seen in figure 1). Showrooms fit within what Österle (2019) refers to as 'brand worlds' just like other physical locations whose primary use is to promote a brand and evoke brand experiences for the visitors. Companies can stage themselves and their products within an environment they can completely control which contributes to the desired outcome of a positive brand experience (Kozinets, Sherry et al. 2002). Since showrooms are touchpoints of high control, possibilities like monitoring customer experience within these environments allow improved customer input for future customer experience alterations. Since this information is only attainable through an interaction with the customer, a design for a showroom should include an interactive element to allow monitoring to be done.

1.2 Research Objective

This research aims to look into the way how knowledge, related- or non-related to B2B contexts, can contribute to the design of an interactive experience that both improves and monitors the customer experience. This leads to the following research question:

Figure 1: Lamborghini Lounge



“How can the customer experience of B2B (textile) companies be improved using an interactive experience design within the showroom? And how could this be used to monitor the customer’s thoughts?”

1.3 Approach and Scope

In attempt to answer the research question, a case study was executed at New Wave Textiles (NWT) located in Utrecht, The Netherlands. NWT is a business-to-business (B2B) company that operates in the corporate, leisure, and sports clothing business and is using its showroom actively in its customer experience. For this case study, NWT wishes for an enhanced customer experience through the use of their showroom. Through this experience design, NWT not only would like to supply information and an experience towards their customer, but ideally also receive information. The goal of the case study therefore was to create an experience design within

the NWT showroom which delivers enhanced customer experience, monitors the customers thoughts, and is (partly) mobile enough to also deploy at a fair. The design process, and structure of this report, are following along the framework of 'Design Thinking' (Interaction Design Foundation 2022) (figure 2). This user-centered framework focuses on the importance of the perspective of the user which makes it suitable for the creation of a customer experience. The framework includes five stages of which the first one being the 'empathize' stage, which can be found in chapter 2. This stage serves to get an empathic understanding of the users

and the knowledge that is available on the topic. This includes literature on the subject, a company analysis, a brand analysis, and empathizing with both internal and external stakeholders. The findings from the first stage transfer into the second stage 'Define', which can be found in chapter 3. Here, the findings are summarized into a plan of requirements which is used as a set of criteria for the ideation of the design. Chapter 4 describes the executed iterations which are rounds of the 'Ideate', 'Prototype', and 'Test' stages where the testing was done by meeting with the client. The ideation was executed with the 'Loyalty Loop' as the main piece of theory so it can be tested on suitability for a B2B case. Testing with potential users was done in Chapter 5 among internal and external stakeholders. To

conclude the research with regard to the research question, chapter 6 covers the 'Implement' stage where analysis was done using the theory from chapter 2 to give a conclusion on how this research contributes to academic knowledge, what the limitations are, and what future recommendations

Ultimately, research as seen in this report contributes to the collection of research around B2B customer experience. This contributes to society on a meta-level where a segment of the market is not reaching its full potential by missing out on the application of innovative technologies. Applying new technologies in these markets can enhance the technology push mentality which would give developers more confidence in finding applications for innovative technologies. On a lower level, research like this offers B2B companies better handles to shape the desired customer experience and optimize the suitability to the customer which both benefits customers and companies. The first step of the research, Empathize, will now be covered in chapter 2.

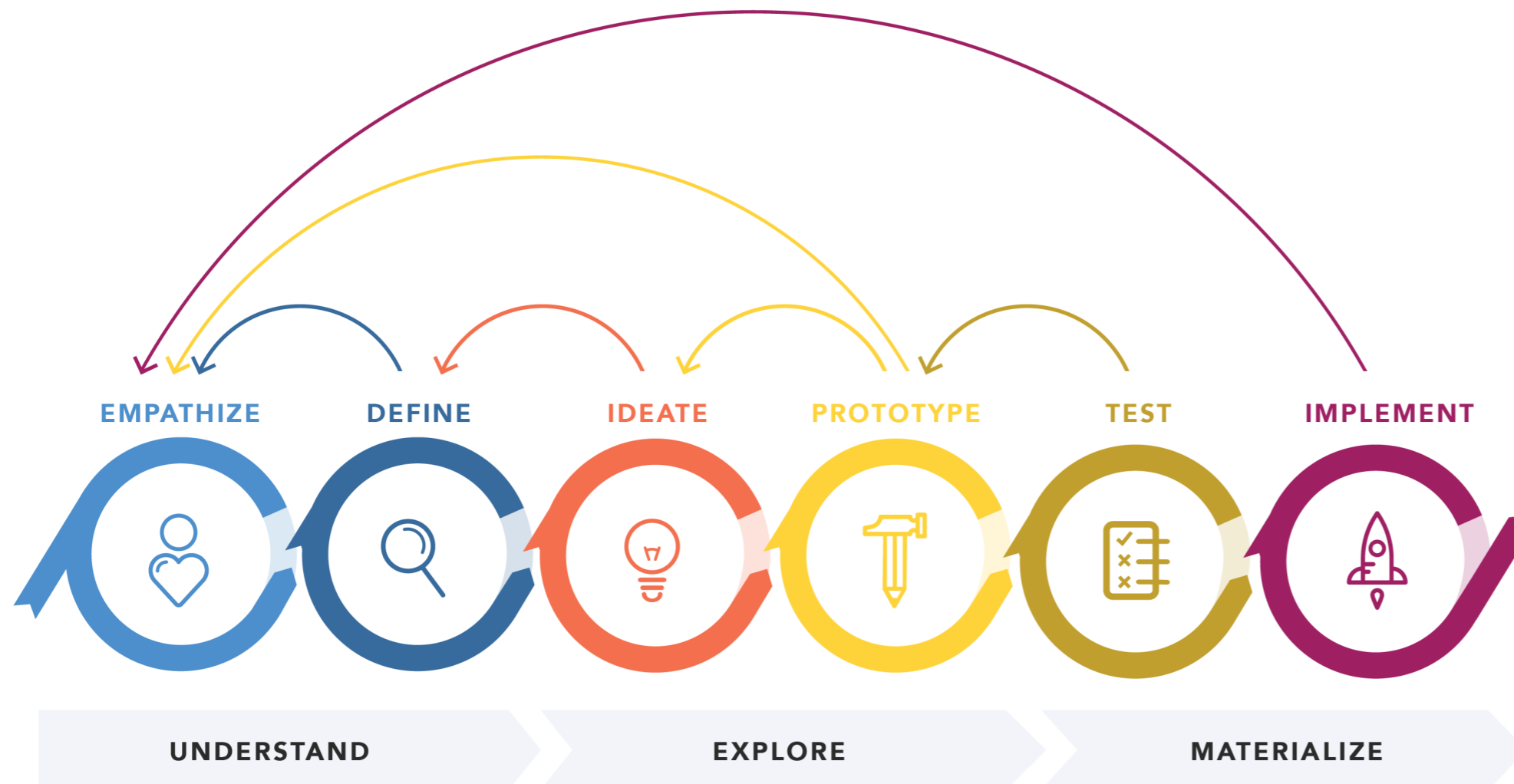


Figure 2: The Design Thinking Process

2. Empathize

To give some structure to the empathizing phase, literature on various subjects was looked into. Subsequently, the other empathizing methods were executed to saturate the knowledge found with case-specific characteristics.



2.1 Literature Research

2.1.1 Customer - and Brand Experience

To eliminate a common misconception of the concept of customer experience, stating the intended definition is essential (Xu 2022). This misconception occurs when the term is exclusively used to describe the contact customers have with the support team. However, it also includes every other touchpoint of the business such as the brand perception, the digital experience, and the entire customer journey (Xu 2022). A distinguishment of every customer experience can be made by the use of three base tenets (De Keyser, Lemon et al. 2015). The first base tenet is its interactional nature. This implies that a customer experience always stems from an interaction between a customer and a (set of) market actor(s) through various interfaces, both human (e.g., frontline employees) and non-human (e.g., self-service technologies). The second base tenet is the level of uniqueness of the customer experience which ranges on a scale from ordinary to extraordinary. This level corresponds to the nature of the activity where 'ordinary experiences' link to routine activities seen in everyday life while 'extraordinary experiences' link to uncommon activities. The third, and last base tenet is the irrational and multidimensional nature that literature suggests to express in cognitive, emotional, physical, sensorial, and social elements. De Keyser, Lemon et al. (2015) defines the term by stating: "Customer Experience is comprised of the cognitive, emotional, physical, sensorial, and social elements that mark the customer's direct or indirect interaction with a (set of) market actor(s)".

While customer experience strikes the right chord

when addressing the guidance of existing customers among the touchpoints of the business, showrooms also address the communication towards potential new customers and marketing expressions, which is part of the brand experience (Wily 2022). Brakus, Schmitt et al. (2009) once conceptualized brand experience as subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments. As seen by comparing the definitions of customer experience and brand experience, the two terms have much in common but talk about two different aspects of a company. Throughout the last century, customers have become more aware and critical of brand characteristics (Merz, He et al. 2009). One of these characteristics is the internal customers, for example an employee, which also contributes to the brand experience (Gilly and Wolfinbarger 1998).

Considering a brand as a socially-constructed phenomenon, Andreini, Pedeliento et al. (2019) suggests seeing the relational dimension as a fundamental aspect of brand experience. This is backed up by the scholars who support the Stakeholder Theory. This theory argues that a firm exists through interaction with its stakeholders and that business is about creating value for, but also with the stakeholders (Santos Jhuniar, Johnston et al. 2021).

To create a customer experience that fits the customer, it is essential to listen to the Voice of the Customer (VoC). The VoC describes the process of capturing customers' requirements which consists of four aspects: 1) Customer needs 2) A hierarchical

structure 3) Priorities 4) Customers' perception of performance (Gaskin, Griffin et al. 2010). These together contribute to the expectations a customer and brand experience need to live up to to be sufficient. Where products used to be the value holders of the market, industrialization and technological development enlarged the availability of quality products for a larger audience and with that, changed the expectations of customers (Pine and Gilmore 2013). Due to the scarcity of time in the lives of the working class nowadays, experiences overtook the value-holding position (Pine and Gilmore 2013). This change is a consequence of the unique value that is created by experiences that are based on personal perception, making it irreproducible for others. To look deeper into the value creation process, chapter 2.1.2 will talk about customer journeys and in what way these produce value for the customer.

2.1.2 Customer Journey

Diving deeper into the value creation process, Hamilton, Ferraro et al. (2020) illustrated the embeddedness of the social environment on a person within the topic of customer experience (see figure 3).

Figure 3 illustrates is the social influence that affects every step in the customer journey. This means that along with a variety of customers, the customer experience will always contain unpredictabilities, which are the result of a snapshot in the customers' social life. In general, customer journeys differ from traditional methodologies, like 'blueprinting', when used to analyze business operations by focussing on the customer's perspective as opposed to the corporate one which makes it a suitable tool to use when enhancing customer experience (N. Bolton, Gustafsson et al. 2014). Customer journeys are a series of stages or touchpoints where customers interact with the service provider to reach a particular goal (Følstad and Kvale 2018). Although researchers advise keeping customer journeys "consistent and predictable", this is not always the case; even not in successful businesses (Frow and Payne 2007, Hyken 2009, Kuehnl, Jozic et al. 2019). This becomes increasingly hard to accomplish, due to the rapid evolution of information technologies and channels which customers can search and purchase products from, resulting in a rising complexity of customer journeys (Gao, Melero et al. 2020). One of the recent frameworks structure customer journeys is described by Siebert, Gopaldas et al. (2020), and is called the "Loyalty loop".

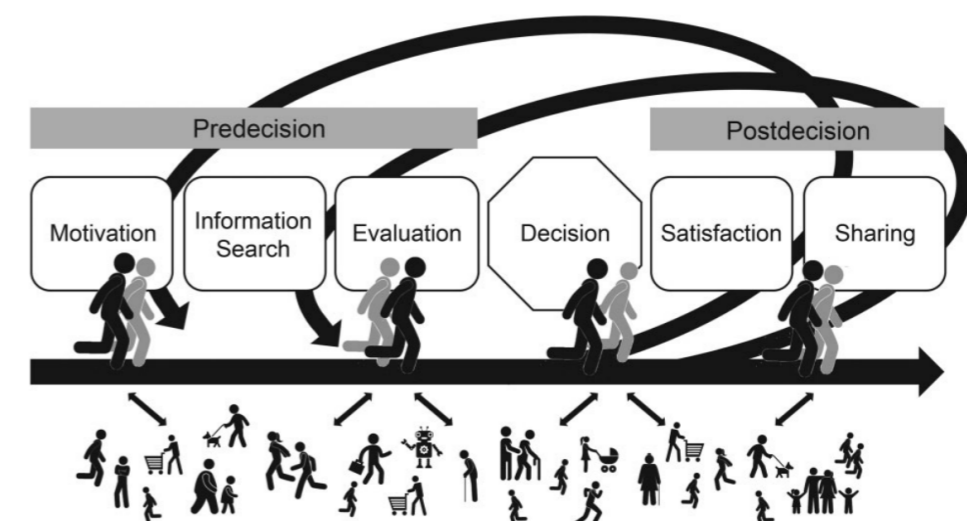


Figure 3: Illustration of the embeddedness of the social environment on a person

The "Loyalty Loop" framework visualizes a business model which relies on customers staying loyal to a company where the perception of the customer is built upon each new purchase (Siebert, Gopaldas et al. 2020). He structures the framework in four phases where each acts as a moment of comparison for the customer whether to stay loyal or go to a competitor. (Siebert, Gopaldas et al. 2020) (figure 4). The phases of the "Loyalty Loop" are:

1. The initial consideration of multiple brands
2. The active evaluation of those brands
3. The moment of purchase
4. The consumption experience

Edelman and Singer (2015) build upon the "Loyalty Loop" and described three methods that enhance the loyalty of the customer while improving the customer experience. Simplification of the customer journey is mentioned as the first technique and talks about the minimalization of effort throughout the different phases. Cutting out unnecessary steps minimizes the effort required and enlarges the ease with which a new 'loop' is made. Another technique is personalizing the customer experience. By enhancing the quality of the phases the customer goes through a contribution to customer loyalty is made which enhances the change of a follow-up purchase. The third technique described is contextualizing the customer

by ensuring JIT (Just In Time) information and preventing 'Loyalty-Weakening Incidents'. These incidents are moments where customers lose their loyalty to the company and switch to a competitor. Since this information is all researched with a B2C context in mind, 2.1.3 will talk about characteristics specific to B2B companies.

2.1.3 B2B Customer Experience

Since researchers are advised to be careful with transferring frameworks, knowledge, and theories on customer experience from the B2C context to the B2B context, we take a look at what the literature says about the differences (Österle 2019). Where B2C content typically talks about customer behavior like purchases, re-purchases, and communication,

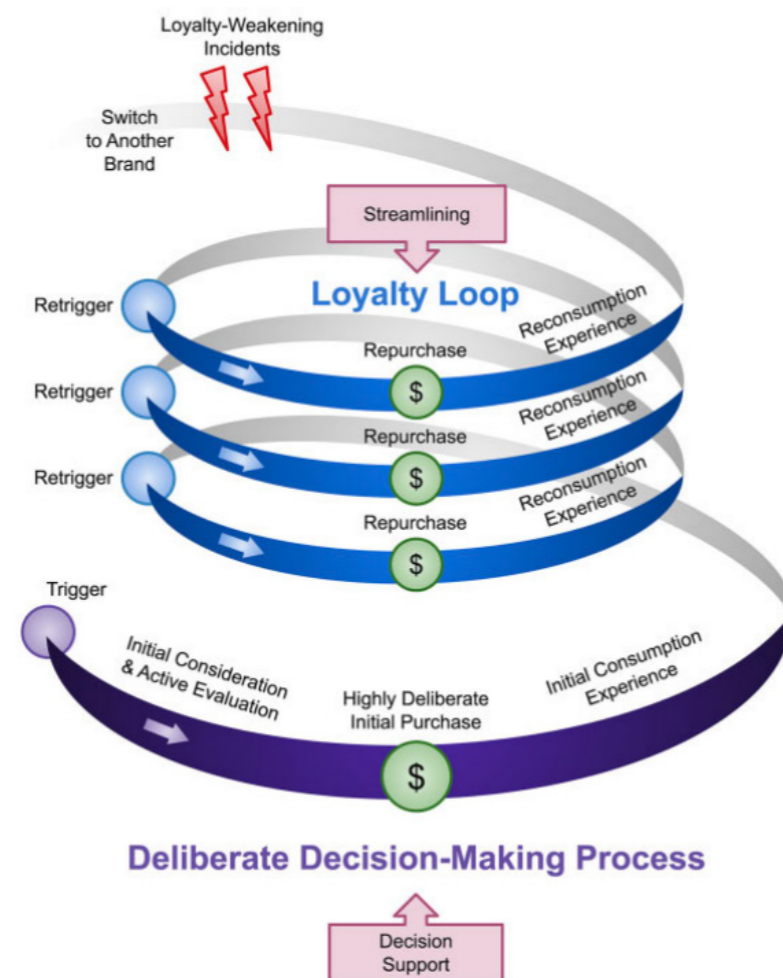


Figure 4: The Loyalty Loop by (Siebert, Gopaldas et al 2020)

the B2B context also includes collaborative resource deployment and solution development (Zolkiewski, Story et al. 2017). The value creation of B2B relationships is essentially based on an exchange of value between two parties, where a trade-off is made between gained benefits and made sacrifices (Olkkonen 2018). B2B offerings are generally more complex and involve interactions between not only multiple business actors but also multiple actors within an organizational entity (Witell, Kowalkowski et al. 2020). These multiple actors within one organization can be described as 'buying centers' and have their unique hierarchy which varies between companies based on their organizational structure (Hogreve and Fleischer 2020). An example of this can be seen in figure 5 where EX's (employee experiences) collectively shape DX's (department experiences), which together shape the organization experience. Among other things, the complexity of the customer experience within buying centers makes Hogreve and Fleischer (2020) recommend long-term relationships which focus on repeated purchases. To zoom in on the topic of showrooms, 2.1.4 will talk about showrooms and the relevant information on this topic.

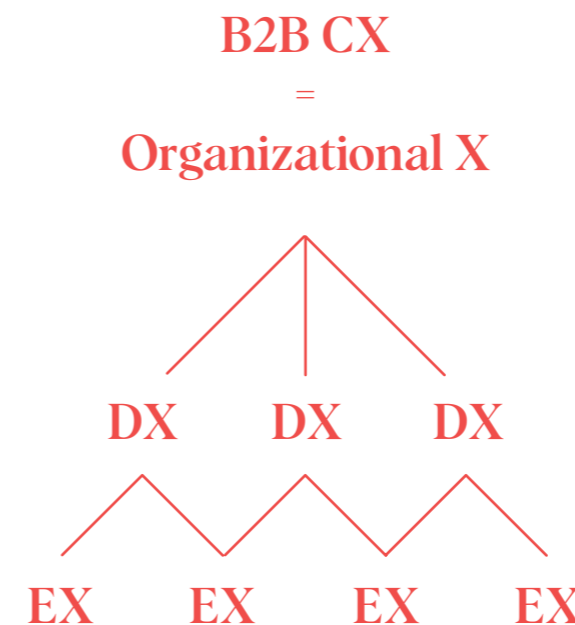


Figure 5: An example of an organizational experience

2.1.4 Showrooms

Before statements can be made on the topic of showrooms in the context of the B2B market, a look into research on the topic should be made. Messedat (2007) stated the following definition: "Showrooms are the representatives of brands that stage the products and company philosophies throughout the world". The description of Messedat implies that a showroom is a tool that fits in the marketing portfolio of companies since it not only generates profits but also contributes to building the brand image (Kozinets, Sherry et al. 2002). Regarding the application of this tool, David Bell (2015) stated the following benefits which are related to the implementation of showrooms to businesses: 1) An increase in overall demand 2) An increase in demand on websites 3) A decrease in demand through sampling channels 4) An increase in conversion within the sampling channels 5) Creates an influx of new customers insisting a channel switch for customer with the highest need for physical shopping 6) Reduces operational costs to serve customers. On top of these micro level benefits, companies gain control of the perceived brand experience which helps companies on a meta-level (Kozinets, Sherry et al. 2002). As Österle (2019) described, showrooms are an example of the umbrella term 'brand worlds' which also include brand lands, brand museums, brand stores, and flagship stores which makes knowledge on these topics relevant too. Flagship stores are identifiable by fundamental characteristics like large format stores; major city locations, architectural "iconism" manifest in a high investment in building; interiors and fitting; wider range of products; high levels of in-store service and brand experience (Webb 2012). As suggested by Moore, Doherty et al. (2010) these locations have four principle strategic functions which are 1) A market entry/market development

method 2) A conduit and support for partnership relations 3) A focus for marketing communications; and 4) A blueprint for store development.

Additional to showrooms, research also talks about the phenomenon of 'showrooming' which specifically regards the offline gathering of information while the buying happens online at another place (Mehra, Kumar et al. 2013). Gensler, Neslin et al. (2017) put up a conceptual framework to map out the factors that influence competitive showrooming among consumers. In this framework, the following consumer-related contextual variables are considered which should influence the chance that customers go showrooming: shopping enjoyment, mavenism, Internet experience, product knowledge, and anticipated regret. Nevertheless, the framework conceptualized the determinants of consumers' showrooming decisions based on the cost versus benefit compromise. Examples of cost are online search costs and delay in obtaining the product, while benefits include better quality and prices available online, on average, and higher dispersion in quality and prices available online compared to offline (Gensler, Neslin et al. 2017). Although showrooming can improve customer experience in the bigger picture, a study shows that the performance of salespersons suffers with an increase in showrooming (Battisti and Brem 2021). Therefore it is wise to take into consideration the ultimate goal of the experience strategy since stimulating or implementing showrooming might influence it negatively. Another mistake in the context of showrooming can be to offer too much in terms of service before demanding any value in return. In that case we see a phenomenon called 'free-riding' which i.e. happens when a customer goes showrooming at a high-priced store, receives all the service and information that is offered for free and decides to purchase the product at a lower-

priced store that does not have the expenses of the service (Burns, Gupta et al. 2019). When free-riding is successfully avoided, showrooming behavior can also be divided into two types called intra-product showrooming (inspecting the same product offline as bought online) and inter-product showrooming (the inspected product offline differs from the product that is bought online) (Li, Zhang et al. 2020).

With the literature research, a theoretical base of knowledge was gathered which will be enriched by case-specific information throughout the rest of the empathizing phase. To start at the basic level, the nature of the business and current customer journey was mapped out in the following chapter.

2.2 Company Analysis

To explore the ins- and outs of the company, several explorative meetings were held within different facets of the company like MYOD, marketing, sales, and management. These helped not only to attain the objective information but also to get an image of the different perspectives within the company. Therefore the company analysis is a result of the meetings and information which can be found in the company documentation.

2.2.1 Nature of the Business

NWT is an organization based in the Benelux that is specialized in the service-focused distribution of promotional wear, corporate wear, sportswear, workwear, and custom-made wear. As a subsidiary of New Wave Group, who are based in Sweden, the company operates in the business to-business market and supplies companies and stores in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg with clothing coming straight from the factory. NWT operates in different segments which are categorized into several self-owned brands like **Clique** (promo wear), **Craft** (sportswear), **Jobman** (workwear), and **Cutter&Buck** (leisurewear). Within this collection not only different quality levels are offered, but also sustainable lines which fit the demand for environmental friendly clothing.

New Wave Group is an organization focused on attaining growth by collaborating with multiple segmented 'companies' among one overlapping company (NWG 2022). With a headquarter in Sweden, the group operates in both B2B as B2C

markets which optimizes market coverage. The 70 subsidiaries are spread across several markets like clothing, promotional products, gifts, house interior, and sports. These companies produce mainly in Asian countries but some have their production located in European countries. The group is mostly decentralized which means that individual managers of the daughter companies have a lot of responsibility and freedom. The idea is that every daughter company operates with an entrepreneurial mindset while having the benefits of

The business model of NWT is completely B2B oriented while not being the most typical B2B company. The customers of NWT buy their products and subsequently sell these to their own customers. These resellers could vary in size from one-man businesses (small) to large resellers (large) (see figure 6). Since typically the B2B market comes with characteristics like multiple personalities and 'buying centers', the market of NWT sometimes tends to be a blend of the business- and consumer market (Biedenbach and Marell 2010).

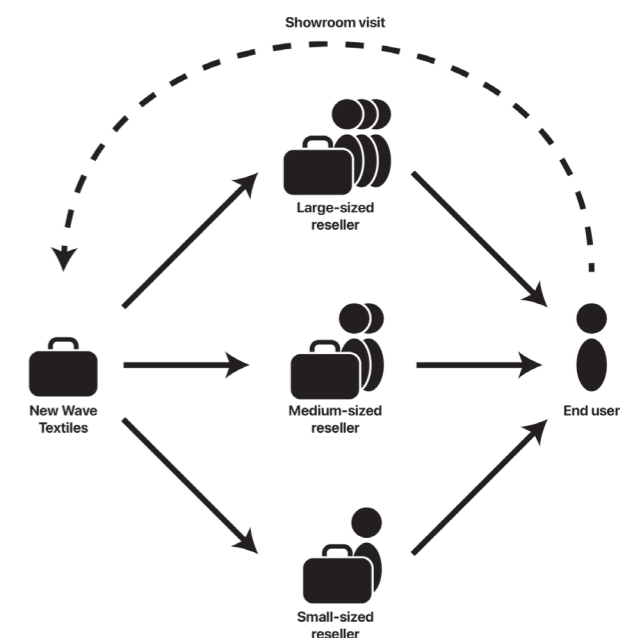


Figure 6: The business model of NWT

Although NWT majorly has contact moments with the resellers, occasional moments of contact with the end-user may occur. Usually the showroom, located at the office of NWT, is visited upon request for a physical representation of the products which is supplemented with some extended details about the products which are explained by the account managers (AM). Rare occasions may occur where a small-sized reseller does not have a dedicated physical environment to show his customer the product. In that case, NWT offers the reseller the possibility to use the NWT showroom where he can bring his customer. In this case, NWT not only comes in contact with the customer but also with the end-user which tends to look like a B2B2C market (Iankova, Davies et al. 2019). Showroom visits from end-users might also occur when, mostly larger customers, want to show their supplier extensively during their selling process. To take a closer look into the workflow of NWT, the customer journey was analyzed in the following chapter.

2.2.2 Current Customer Journey

Customer journeys are becoming increasingly important with the rise of elements like a showroom where the possible touchpoints with customers rise and control decreases (Lemon and Verhoef 2016). Therefore it is essential to analyze the customer journey of NWT to get a clear overview of how the customer experience is created. The customer journey is structured along with the 'loyalty loop' model (Siebert, Gopaldas et al. 2020).

The customer journey starts with two possible ways in which the initial trigger can take place. (See figure 7 on page 20/21) The first one (top left) is where the customer takes the initiative to approach the company. The order of events in this phase could vary, depending on whether the demand,

confrontation, or recommendation is first but always one or a combination of them happens when the customer takes the initiative. The second option (bottom left) is where NWT takes the initiative by proactively approaching the customer. This approach can be in different ways like approaching the customer with a custom offer or just initiating new interaction. Either one of them will lead, if successful, to a transition toward the next phase.

Upon a successful trigger, the selection process initiates. This process could vary in length depending on the customer and the demand in that specific case. In some cases, the selection is made in one session while other customers need several to make a choice. Guidance from NWT is given in the form of catalogs, AM's, or the showroom. Depending on the fluidity of the process and the extent to which the customers are interested and loyal, the order will be to keep the customer interested and loyal, the order will be made and delivered to the end-user.

From this point, the goal is to sustain customer loyalty and to convince them to place a new order. The re-trigger could, again, happen in two ways (see figure 8 on page 20/21). The first way entails intrinsic motivation. This is when the NWT customer gets a new request from his customer. In that case, NWT does not have to put any effort or resources into it. Financially, this is the preferred type of order. The alternative way of re-triggering is by being proactive, which is regularly done by a periodic visit from the AM but could also take the form of an advertisement. As long as the service level is maintained according to the expectations of the customers this loop will repeat itself. To zoom out a bit on NWT as a company, a market analysis has been executed to identify NWT's competition.

2.2.3 Market Analysis

The market of B2B textiles knows different business models and market segmentations. Some companies in the market are a combination of a dealer and brand, meaning they produce clothing but also sell it themselves. The companies that are depicted as 'Brands' offer a stock collection to dealers. The 'Brand-dealer mix' offers on the other hand more possibilities like a custom clothing department which makes it more suitable for every demand of the consumer. A half circle at the Make Your Own Design (MYOD) column means a limited amount of customization possibilities. As visible in table 1 on page 22/23, the characteristics of competitors vary a great deal which indicates that every company has its own strong and weak points. A company checking all the boxes is never the case. Now that the stakeholders and workflow are mapped out, 2.3 covers the profiling of NWT towards its customers and what it stands for. Therefore a brand analysis was executed by the use of a Value Proposition Canvas and Brand Identity Prism.



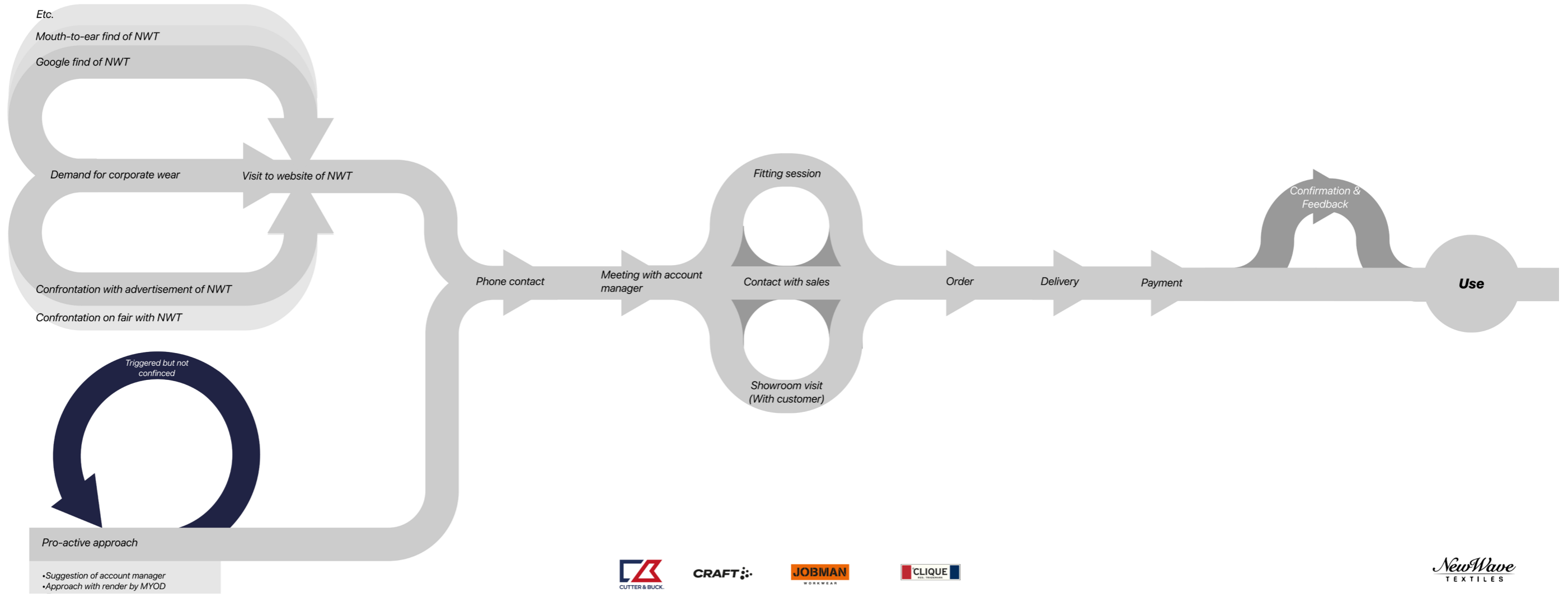
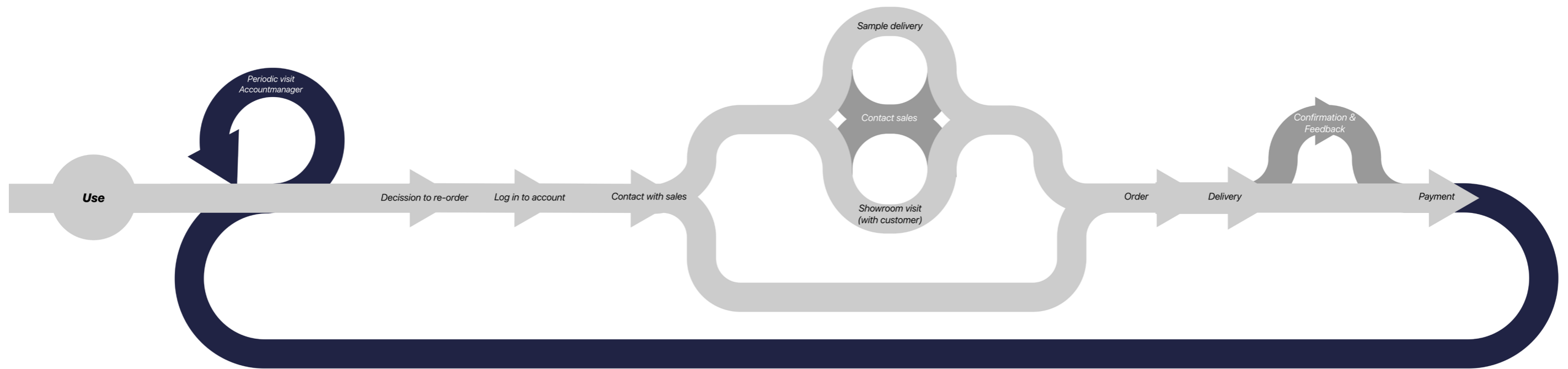


Figure 7: Customer journey of the initial interaction

Figure 8: Customer journey of a repeated interaction



	Workwear	Sportswear	Leisurewear	Corporatewear	Own Production	Physical Showroom	Direct to end-user	Online shopping environment	MYOD	Specialties
Dealers	L-Shop	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	○	Personal webshop
	Ralawise	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	○	X
Brand-Dealer Mix	Vespo (Santino)	●			●	○	●	●	●	X
	Engelbert-Strauss	●			●	○	●	●	◐	X
	Tricorp	●			●	●	○	●	●	Tricorp campus, Mobile showroom, 3D-tour in showroom
	Mascot	●			○	●	○	●	●	Mobile Showroom, Tested-to-work
	New Wave Textiles	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	Games (Lucky ones, Local Hero, Discount calender)
	HMZ	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	X
	Havep	●			●	●	○	●	●	'Texperience Centre', Repair service, Individual measuring service
	Blackläder	●			●	○	○	●	◐	Personal webshop
	Nimbus		●	●	●	●	○	○	○	X
	TBT Sportswear		●		●	○	●	●	●	X
Brands	ECC			●	●	○	○	○	○	X
	24/7 Jeans	●		●	●	○	○	●	○	X
	Carhartt Workwear	●			●	●	●	●	○	X

Table 1: Overview of Competitors NWT

2.3 Brand Analysis

Value Proposition Canvas

The value proposition canvas, which was created by Osterwalder (2014), is a tool that is used to express the way the brand adds value to the customer by resolving their problems and pains (see figure 9). The application of the frame to NWT is described as defined by Osterwalder (2014).

Starting at the right side, where the customer aspects are expressed, their job is to supply their customers with products (clothing), satisfy them with the quality and price of the product, and guide them in the right direction. Pain points for customers can be things like prices that are too high or order delays. Although these are important in the creation of the customer experience, the goal should always be to minimize these while not always inevitable. Because of that, pain points like bad service experiences, a lack of product information, or the struggle of having to go through personal contact are more interesting when looking at improvement possibilities.

As opposed to the pains, the gains are factors that affect the customer experience positively. Things like (the feeling of) personal attention or quickly going through the ordering process create a more meaningful and pleasant experience. Transferring this to the side of NWT, some actions like a periodic reach out from the AM or a minimum amount of steps in the ordering process are already implemented. Looking at gain creators which are more applicable in the context of a showroom, supplying the customer with an informative but

still pleasing experience presumably enhances the customer experience.

The pains of the customer are currently tackled by actions like giving the customer updates about the order, phone support, an informational website, a physical showroom, and competitive pricing. A potential reliever for the pain regarding personal contact could be a self-service platform that covers the physical aspect of the information gathering. To be able to discover potential pains to relieve, several touchpoints throughout the customer journey can be created that structurally monitor customer satisfaction which later on can be used for strategic planning.

To cover the final facet of the Value Proposition Canvas, the product and services contain the sport-, leisure-, and custom wear NWT sells, the customer service and the AM's who provide personal guidance when needed, and a physical showroom.

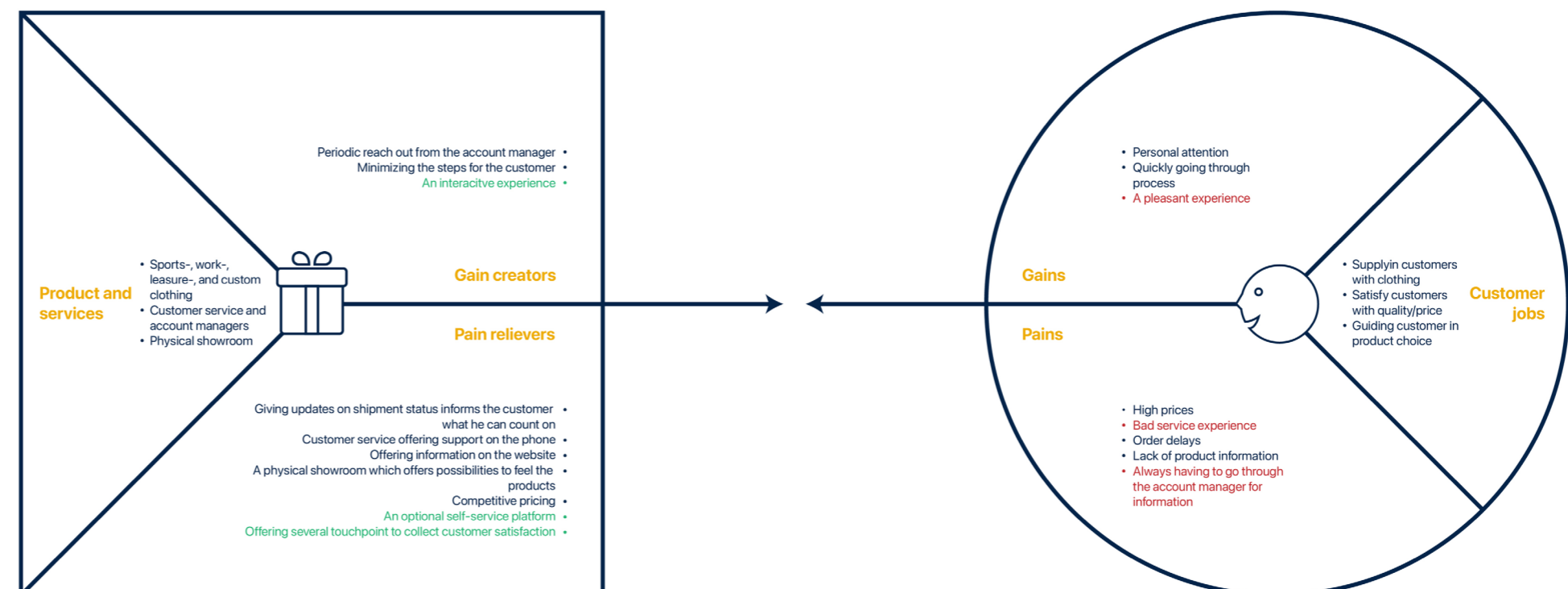


Figure 9: Value Proposition Canvas of NWT

Brand Identity Prism

The brand of NWT is displayed in the Brand Identity Prism from Kapferer (2008) (figure 10). The prism categorizes six facets of a brand which together should express its overall meaning of it. The categories are physique, personality, relationship, culture, reflection, and self-made.

The **physique** segment describes the objective offer of the brand and company. In the case of NWT, this represents the product that can be expressed as sportswear, leisurewear, workwear, and custom wear.

The **personality** shows personal traits of the brand as if it were a real customer. NWT stands for qualitative and personal attention and so values like attention, professionalism, reliability, and empathy suit the brand well.

The **relationship** displays the nature of the relationship between the brand and the company. Since a lot of customers rely on their business model on the performance of their supplier, the relationship looks almost like a department inside of the customer's company. This makes one of the slogans of NWT "growing together" which emphasizes the strong relationship between both.

The **culture** relies not only on the culture inside the company but also on the country it is stationed in. Values like sustainability, knowledge, service-oriented, efficiency and stability describe the culture within the company.

The **reflection** represents the values that the target group wants to represent and as a reaction to that, the brand should also send out these values. The customers of NWT have in common that they praise the quality of their products, offer a good service,

sell through a web shop and offer a wide range of products and brands.

The **self-image** describes the way the customer sees himself and the values he carries. This section of the model contains the intrinsic motivations and character traits of the customer which is something that is aimed to attain from the research. Therefore the input for this section of the model should be sought outside of the company.

To attain an external perspective from the customer towards NWT, depth interviews were conducted to attain insight in the thought process of being a customer of NWT.

2.4 Depth Interviews of Customers

The essence of getting insights into the customer journey lies in getting an overview of it as a whole, the role of the showroom in it, and what the motivation is to visit the showroom. The framework of Siebert, Gopaldas et al. (2020) is used to subdivide the customer journey into the sections 'orientation', 'showroom', and 'ordering' so it can be used to structure the interviews. To subdivide the main segmentations even further, individual brainstorming was executed which led to a set of specified research topics (see figure 11). The structure for the interviews and conclusions were conducted based on these research topics by looking for unique characteristics from the VoC which might

be useful within the designing process. The first set of interviews was executed among eight customers in the northern-eastern region of the Netherlands who were selected based on the practicality and representability of the customer. These customers vary in size from one to six employees which means they fit in the category of small customers. Since this part

of the research intends to be a depth interview, the small size of the company is convenient due to the available time and involvement of one person in multiple facets of the company. The duration of the interview varied between 30 and 60 minutes.

The first subject is the **orientation** section of the customer experience. This covers the experience with the company until the moment the potential client decides to become a customer which is before and around the effective trigger. In this category, it is interesting to dive deeper into the thought process of the customer and which criteria he follows to make his choice. Next to that, things like a certain preferred image, appealing factors, preferred information in advantage, and the balance between personal preference and customer preference are relevant to look into.

After clients have become customers, they enter the next category which is the **ordering** process. This covers the period from the conviction till the post-service that NWT offers once the products are delivered. Aspects that are interesting to research in this category are the desired information and timing of it throughout the ordering process, what contact method is preferred, desired post-service, and the current satisfaction of the information conversion from the supplier (NWT) to the customer (end-user).

To place the showroom in the context of the framework of Siebert, Gopaldas et al. (2020), it is one of the factors of which the trigger and re-triggers are made of. Researching the function, motivation for the visit, desired ambiance, thresholds, and the

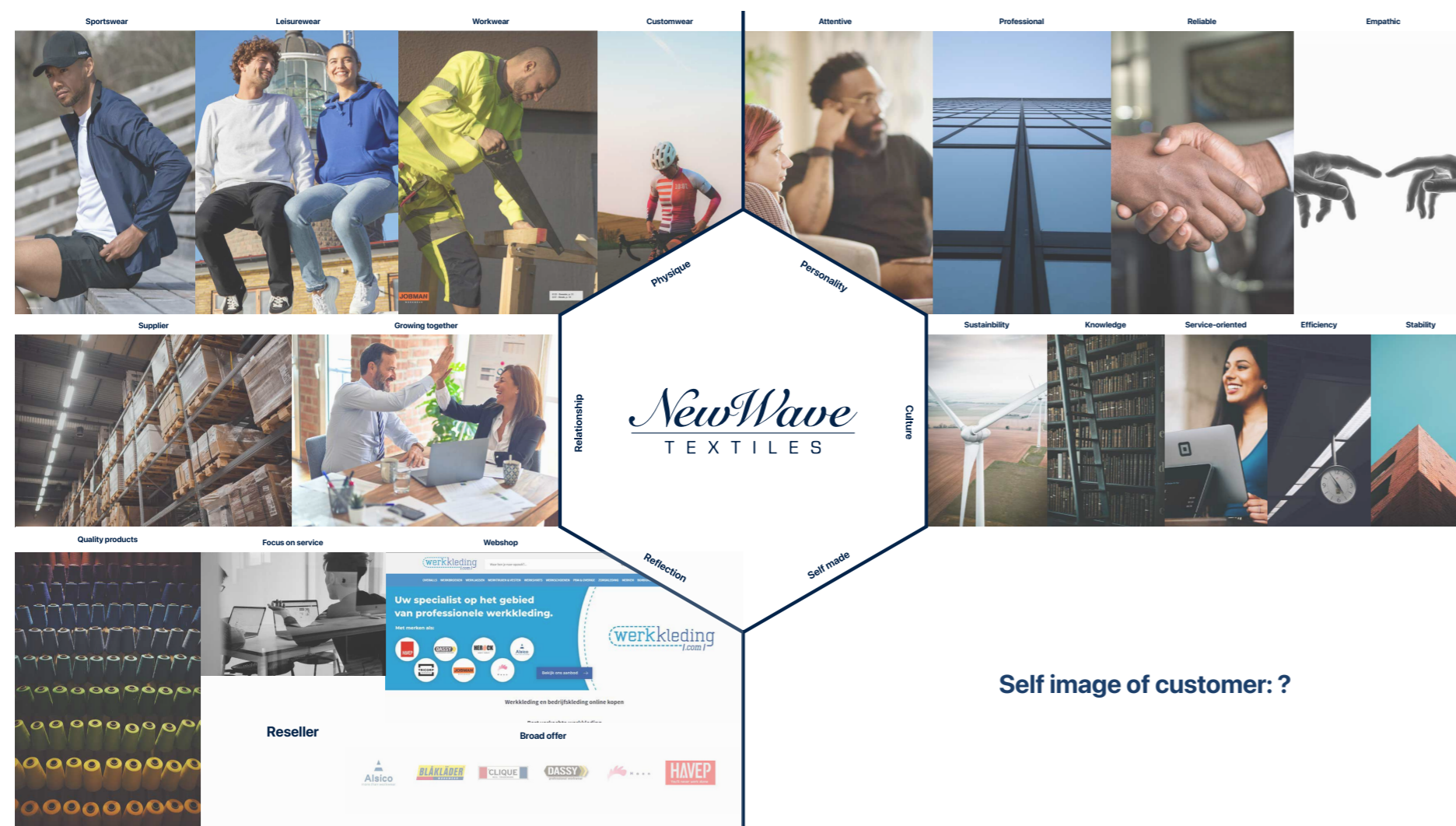
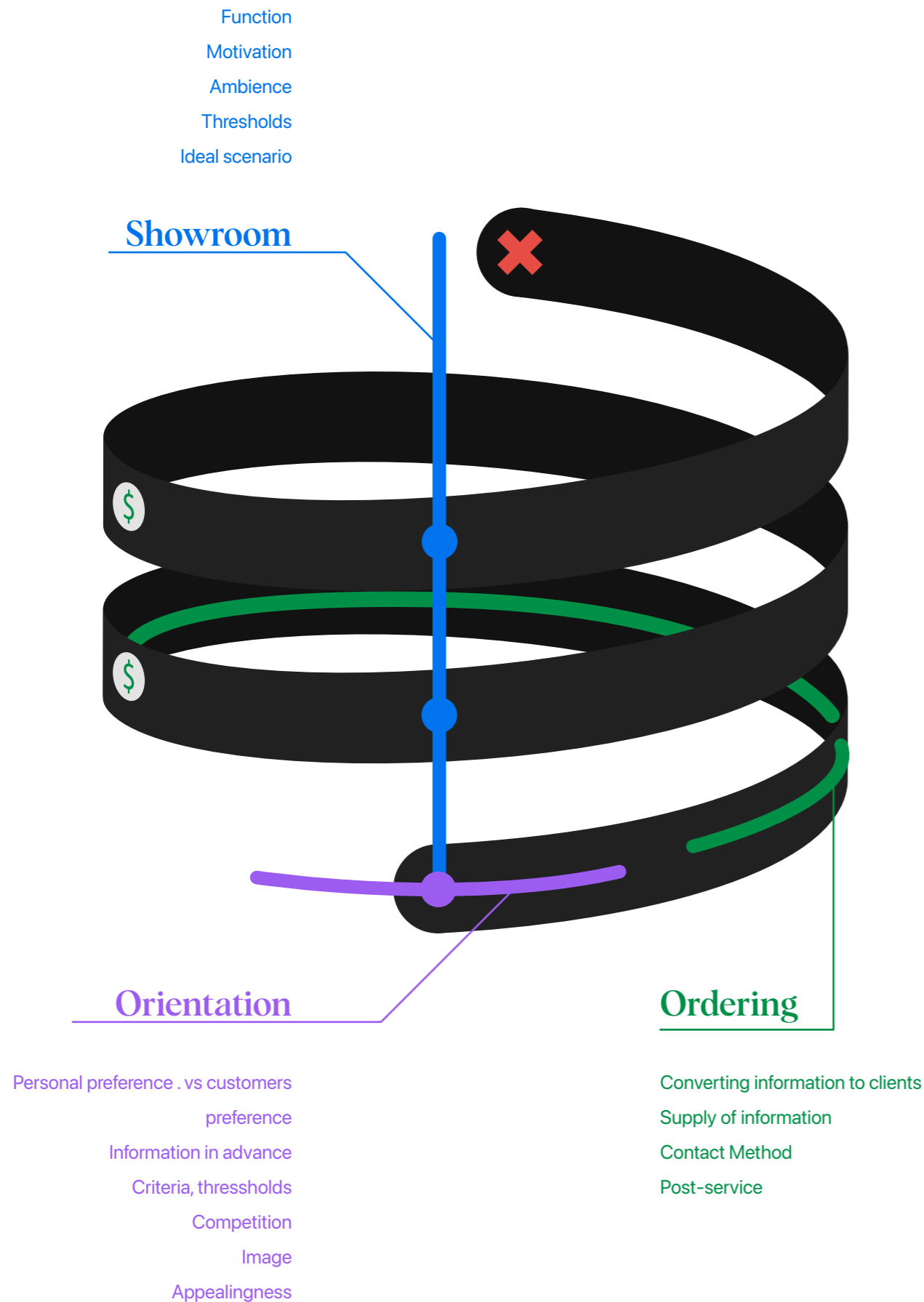


Figure II: Overview of the research topic based on the Loyalty Loop



ideal scenario for the customer might provide new insights into what to improve in this part of the trigger.

To attain insight into the VoC concerning the NWT showroom, depth interviews were used. These

interviews were guided along the research topics that resulted from the 'Loyalty loop' framework.

Getting insight into the research topics of the "Loyalty loop" was achieved by the following concrete questions:

- 1) What does the customer ask for in a showroom?
- 2) What is the mindset of the customer that plans to visit the showroom?
- 3) What annoys the customer in current showrooms?
- 4) What role does the showroom play in the orientation or triggering of the customer?

From these main questions, a subdivision was made:

What does the customer ask for in a showroom?

- What function should the showroom fulfill?
- What way of communication is preferred in the showroom?
- What ambience is desired in the showroom?
- What does the customer like to receive from a showroom visit?

What is the mindset of the customer that plans to visit the showroom?

- Is the visit to the showroom seen more like a pleasure of business?
- Should the experience of the showroom be mainly informative, explorative, or entertaining?

What annoys the customer in current showrooms?

- Should the be mainly personal or non-personal contact in the showroom?
- Should the experience of a showroom be active or passive?

What role does the showroom play in the orientation or triggering of the customer?

- How much time does the customer put into comparing suppliers?
- Is a showroom a must-have or a nice-to-have for a supplier?
- What differentiates one showroom from the other?

The research questions were translated to a set of interview questions that serve as a guide for a conversation with a natural flow. To offer the participants enough space to think about topics in a logical way, the interviews were executed in a semi-structured manner. The structure used for the interviews in combination with the individual answers can be found in [Appendix A](#). In the following section, a conclusion with interview findings (IF) can be found.

IF1: There is a clear distinction in the nature of showroom visits:

New customer: Wants to see the companies inside and outside by seeing everything from the products and people to the warehouse. The essence here lies in convincing the customer to buy from you and win their trust for the future.

Existing customer: Depending on the type of customer the showroom visit functions as a combination of getting a quick update on the new products and socializing. While there should be room for both, the emphasis should be made by the hosting AM.

IF2: A significant segment of the visited customers is not well known with the showroom in Utrecht (probably caused by the region)

However, after having discussed what the showroom could offer them, their interest in a visit was sparked.

IF3: The majority of the visited customers look up to going through the regular collection to see the new stuff. This possibly increases the threshold for visiting the showroom.

IF4: During a showroom visit, customers prefer to be able to easily distinguish quality levels, brands, and labels. This also contributes to the visibility of newly added products to an existing collection.

IF5: Customers choose a brand of New Wave with the demand for the products in mind. For that reason, promotion from the side of the supplier adds value to the overall brand since this increases the sell guarantee for the customer. Also, the presence of the supplier towards the customer is of added value since this gives an insight into the activities inside the company.

IF6: A section of the customers experience increasing demand for sustainable and eco-friendly products. If the demand becomes significant enough to generate turnover, customers consider getting into this segment of the market. If they make this step, they would prefer to receive detailed information about the subject so they become experts themselves.

IF7: Since NWT operates in the B2B market, the nature of showroom visits is different than it would be in a B2C market. The visits are in most cases of a business-related nature which emphasizes the

importance of efficiency and aspects like time and function. Although B2B customers are not always completely objective, which is supported by [Saab and Botelho \(2020\)](#), the main focus of the showroom visits is mainly focused on objective aspects.

IF8: A majority of customers indicate a preference for an active engagement during a showroom visit.

Apart from the external stakeholders, the internal stakeholders are also of relevance for the research. 2.5 will go deeper into this with interviews conducted among the AM's of NWT.



2.5 Empathizing Accountmanagers

Since a major element in the process of showroom visits at NWT is the receiving party, which in most cases is covered by the AM, taking the vision and opinion of the AM is fundamental for the core understanding of the process. For that reason, empathizing talks were held with some AMs to understand what their vision is for the showroom, what they would add to the showroom if they could and what elements of the showroom they dislike. The talks had, besides the topics as described here, no structure. For that reason, the only things noted are the empathizing findings (EF) that enriched the set of information gathered up to this point.

EF1: The showroom is used by the AM as a tool in the process of convincing the customer. For that reason, additions from the experience design should fit into this workflow.

EF2: Showroom visits from customers can be categorized in one or a combination of the following scenarios (see figure 12): 1) Visit to experience the entire company 2) Visit for an update on the new collection 3) Socializing 4) Taking the end customer to the showroom.

EF3: Depending on the specific scenario from EF2, the duration can vary drastically.

EF4: When customers visit the showroom it is often a good sign and will most of the times result in an order. Therefore, it is important to persuade the customer to visit the showroom rather than having the AM visit the customer. Exceptions, where visits will not lead to purchases, are still contributing positively in the long run.

EF5: To offer a good service that fits the customer of NWT, and B2B customers in general, the AM must keep the leading role throughout a showroom visit which creates a guiding role for the representative of the company. During these visits it is important that the AM sends out a sign of expertise.

EF6: During showroom visits, depending on the type of visit, various parts of the showroom are used which is essential for introducing and talking about additional products.

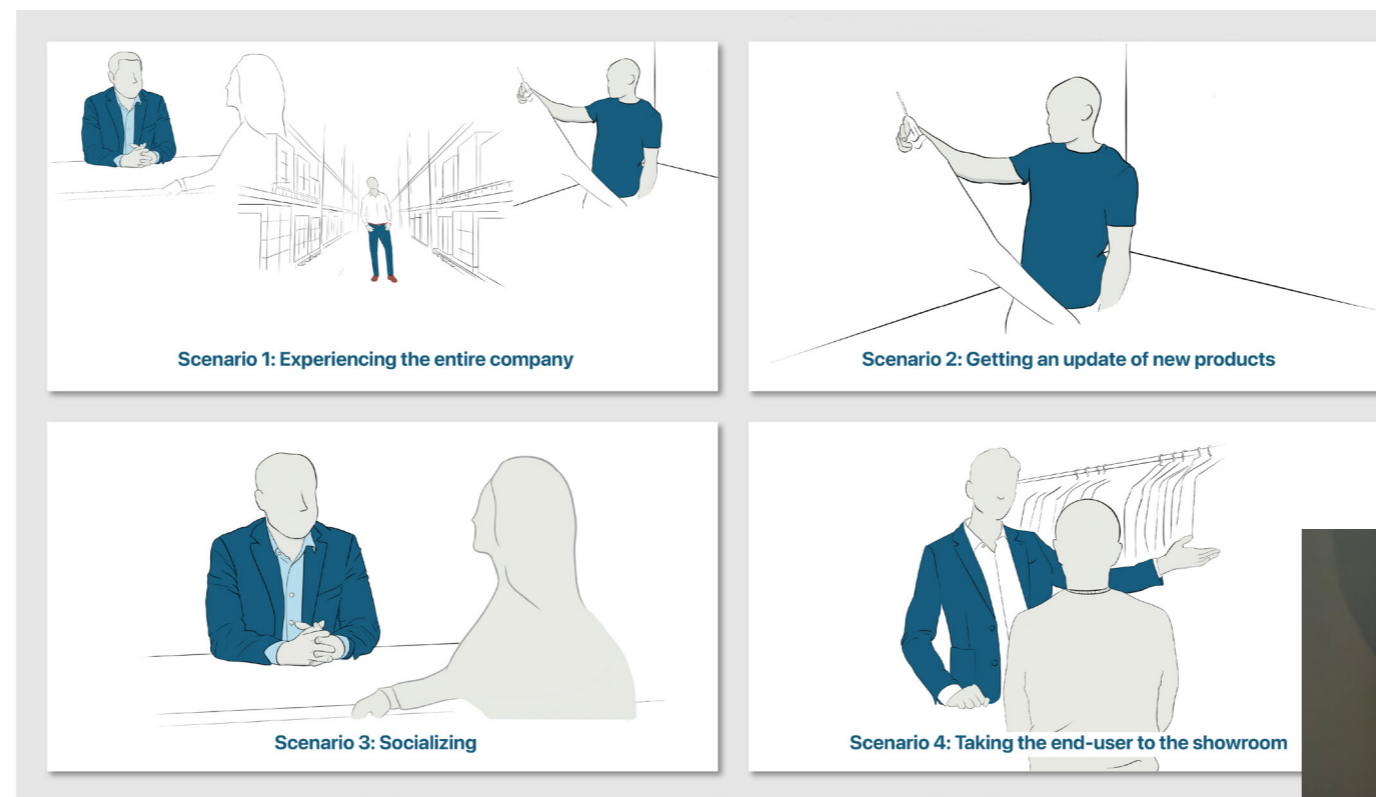


Figure 12: Overview of the possible scenarios for visits of the NWT showroom

2.6 Field Research

The world of showrooms is filled with creative uses of technology to create interactive customer experiences which enhance the customer experience. As part of the empathizing, some inspiration from existing retail concepts makes for a substantiated start of the generation of ideas. The following examples are just a small portion of the content about showrooms that exists. Nevertheless, the examples display a range of applications of techniques that give an overview of the current state of applications within showrooms.

2.6.1 Showroom Tricorp

Tricorp is among the competitors of NWT, the company that is making the most out of its marketing and showroom. Since their showroom is the most advanced within the market, this example was used to showcase the application of showroom techniques within the B2B clothing business.

The entrance of the showroom is visible from the outside and lit even during the night hours (figure 13). This means that passing cars are optimally exposed to the showroom. To make it clear what the company does, the name, products and environment are displayed in this part of the showroom. The entrance introduces the different labels Tricorp has to offer by colorful blocks. This system is repeated in the rest of the showroom. As part of the message of Tricorp, which is to be able to dress everyone, the mannequins are positioned in different sizes to illustrate a variety of postures.



Figure 13: Display at the entrance of the Tricorp showroom



Figure 14: Floor projection at Tricorp showroom

Entering the gateway towards the showroom, you are welcomed by a dark environment with a beamer aimed towards the floor which interacts with the people walking over it (figure 14). Normally, the logos of the labels are displayed but these could be replaced by customer logos by request.



Figure 15: Display with bi-color collection at Tricorp Showroom

After the gateway, the name of the experience center "Tricorp Dome" is displayed above the iconic bi-color collection of Tricorp (figure 15). The idea here was to go from a dark space to a brightly lit showcase.



40 Figure 16: Transparent display at Tricorp Showroom

Walking past the showcase, a transparent display is placed in front of a white box (figure 16). On this display, the footage is shown which is recorded to look like the person is in the physical space. Since the display also has touch capabilities, products can be selected which would then be displayed on the screen.

On the back of the first display, the first display of a product line is presented (figure 17). While currently not filled with the intended products, it should be filled with high-visibility clothing. The mannequins are surrounded by mirrors which should illustrate the idea that the clothing is visible from every angle. Customers interact with this part of the experience center by taking pictures or looking in the mirrors. The spotlights can switch between normal and a setting where the reflective stripes on the clothing are accentuated. This feature is supposed to enlarge the high visibility feature.

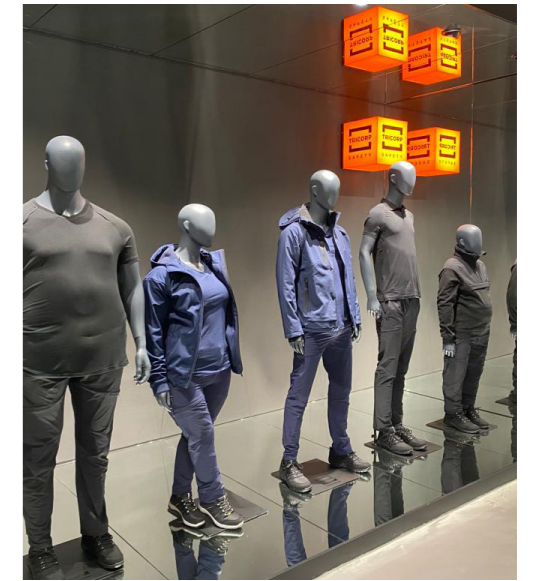


Figure 17: High-visibility display at showroom Tricorp

As opposed to the high visibility showcase, a video wall is placed which is made out of nine separate displays (figure 18). On these displays, promotional videos are played varying from full screen to nine separate videos. Notable is that this part of the experience center is often passed by customers which are presumably caused by the lack of interaction with the display.

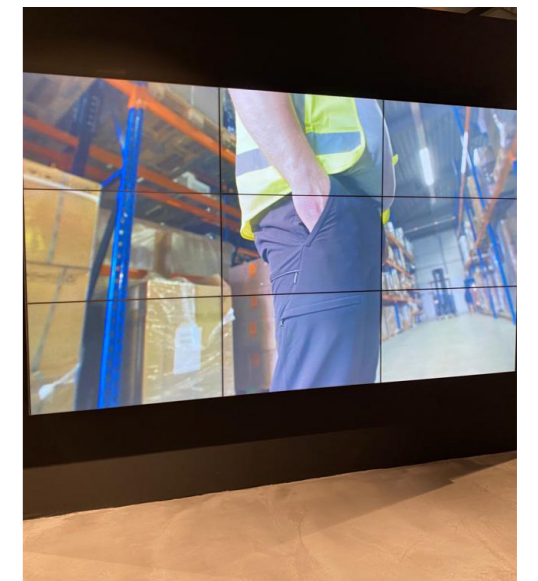


Figure 18: Display wall at showroom Tricorp

The environmentally friendly line is executed in another material (bamboo instead of black paint) and dressed up with plants (figure 19). Since the design is still the same but the material choice is adjusted, the environmentally friendly aspect still stands out clearly without falling out of tune.

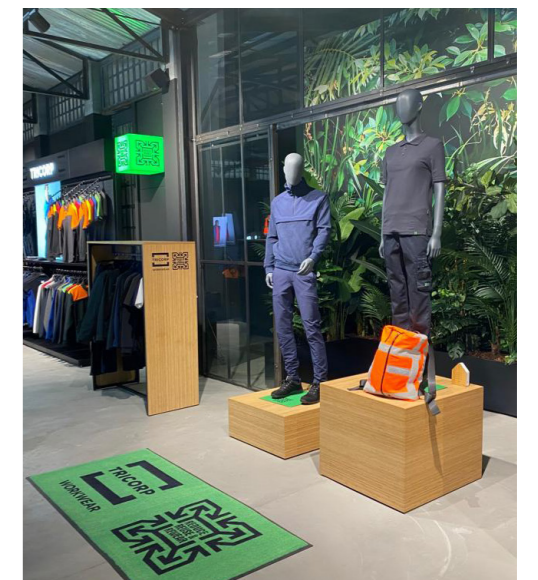


Figure 19: Sustainable display at showroom Tricorp

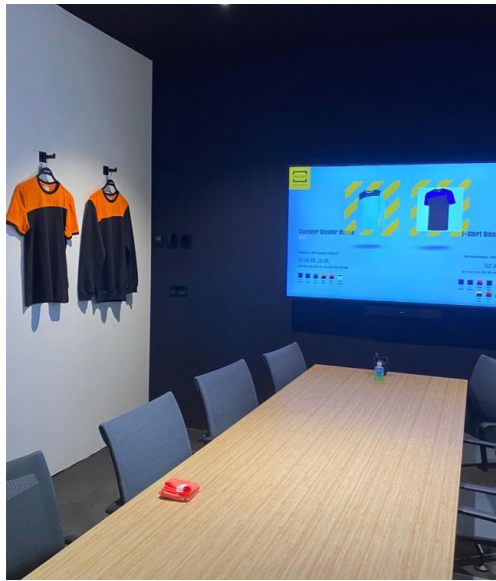


Figure 20: Boarding room at showroom Tricorp

2.6.2 Audi City

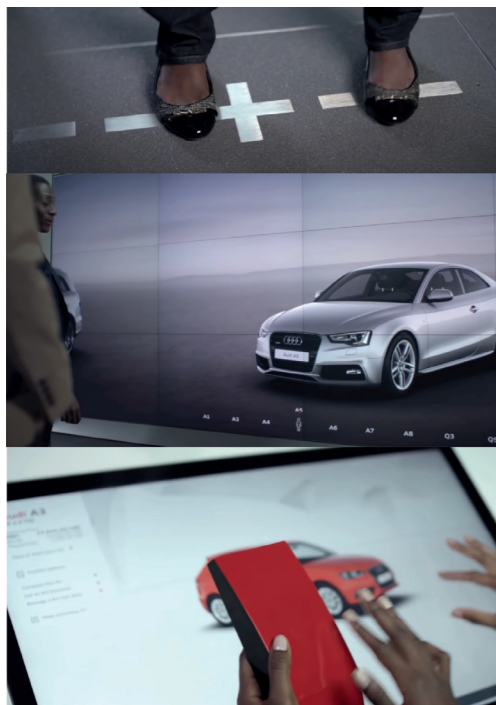


Figure 21: Snapshots from the Audi City experience

As part of the boarding room, an interactive wall and display are placed which functions as a panel to create comparisons of overviews of product characteristics (figure 20). Pieces of clothing can be hung on the wall which triggers the sensors. Hanging one product on the wall will give an overview of that single product while hanging two will create a comparison of those two products.

Audi is part of one of the largest car companies in the current fuel-based cars (Investopedia, 2020). As part of this reputation, they intergrate innovations and overwhelm their customers by using interactive experiences in their experience centers. The experience centers Audi placed in several cities around the world, called Audi City, use interactive technologies to let their customer explore all of the possibilities their cars offer (figure 21). Not only does this put the customer experience of Audi in a modern state but also removes some practical struggles of moving the cars around. This is because the digital technologies allow for a broad representation of car variation without the difficulty of putting physical cars in a building in the middle of a city center.

2.6.3 Display Interfaces in Retail



Figure 22: Display interface at IKEA



Figure 23: Display interface at souvenir shop at Sintra

A popular and simple application of technology used in retail for customer experience is the placement of a touchscreen which serves as a self-service point. These displays vary in functionality where some only display an overview of information, others allow visitors to customize products, and some are even used to receive reviews. Although these interfaces are sensorically not complex, it offers the visitors looking for additional information without needing to speak to an employee the possibility to receive an improved service. Examples of these interfaces can be seen in a variety of retail locations, e.g. figure 22 at IKEA and figure 23 at a souvenir shop of a tourist attraction.

3. Define

This phase converts the information that is collected in the empathizing phase into a plan of requirements which functions as a set measurable requirements in the design process (see [table 2](#)). A separation was made between requirements and wishes. The requirements contain all of the guidelines which the experience design should meet to be suited for the case. The wishes describe the ideal accomplishments that result from the experience design which should be met as much as possible.



Nr.	Sub	Requirement	Description	Specification	Source
1		The experience design should create added value to a showroom visit when compared to a periodic visit from the account manager	Since getting customers to the showroom most likely results in customers placing an order, persuading the customer to come to the NWT showroom is good for the business	-	Customer Journey, Empathizing Finding 4
2		The experience design should offer flexibility for different type of visits	-	-	-
	A	The experience design should be suited for visits ranging from short to long	Depending on the intentions of the visitor, the duration of the visit will vary. The experience design should allow flexibility for this.	Short (+-30 min); Long (up to 5 hours)	Empathizing Finding 3
	B	The experience design should be suited for customers with different motivations	Customers have different motives to visit the showroom. The experience should allow account managers and customer to make use of the design, no matter what the scenario is	Motivations: 1) Seeing and experiencing the entire company 2) Getting a quick update of the new collection 3) Socialize with the representative 4) Visit with an end customer	Empathizing Finding 2
	C	The experience design should be versatile regarding the personality and intentions of the customer	According to the participating customers it is important to guard the functional value of a showroom visit when implementing entertaining concepts. For that reason, the experience design should be flexible in such a way that it could be used by customers with varying intentions.	Balance between experience, entertainment and information	Interview Finding 7
3		The experience design should both be suited for new customers as for existing customers	-	-	Interview Finding 1

Table 2: Plan of Requirements

4	The experience design should fit in the workflow of the accountmanager	The account manager receives customers in the showroom and guides them through. Since the showroom is a tool for the account manager, the experience design should have the approval of the account manager	-	Empathizing Finding 1
A	The experience design should allow usage throughout the entire showroom and not only one place	-	-	Empathizing Finding 6
B	The experience design should allow to accountmanager to keep the leading role throughout the visit	-	-	Empathizing Finding 5
5	The experience design should be transferable/ transformable towards a mobile version that can be used on a fair	Since the experience which is created in the showroom seeps through at fairs and is important for NWT, the experience design should also be applicable at fairs. This can be done by moving the components of the experience to another location or transforming the concept towards a mobile version.	An average NWT stand covers around 60 m2 and the time to set up a stand should not take more than 2 hours by one person	Problem statement
6	The experience design should fit within the identity of NWT as described in the Brand Identity Prism	Looking at the competition of NWT, the company holds a unique identity in the market. Since the customers of NWT presumably partly chose NWT for this identity, it is necessary to maintain it. Experiencing the products physically is a major reason for customers to visit the showroom.	-	Brand Identity Prism
7	The experience design should incorporate the physical aspect of the products	Therefore integrating this aspect into the experience design will improve the suitability.	-	Problem statement

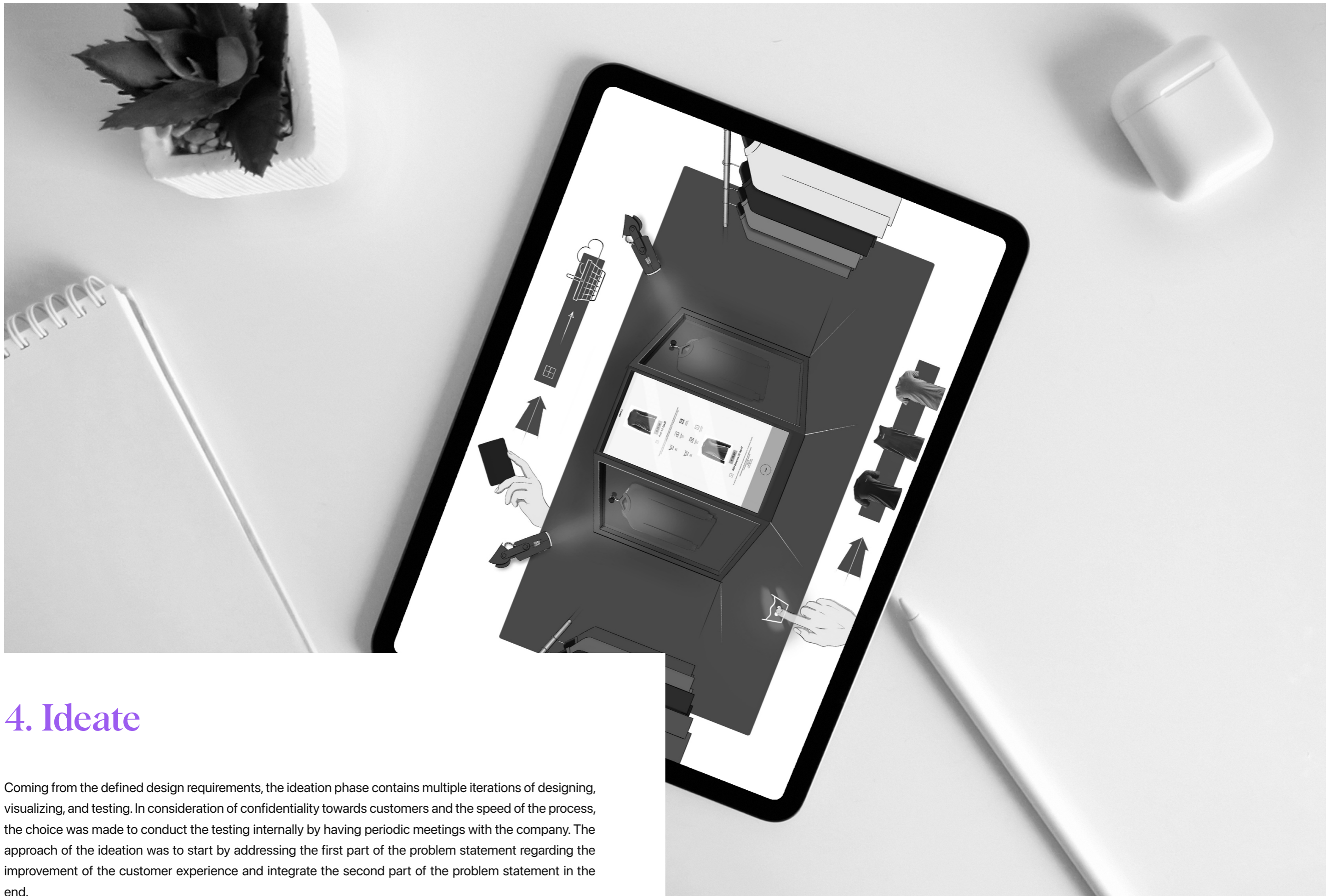
Table 2: Plan of Requirements

8	The experience design should offer an individual experience benefit to the visiting person	Although NWT exists in the B2B market, customer visits are always done by some individuals from the customer company. For this reason, adding value on an individual level, as described by Hogreve and Fleischer (2020), contributes to the organization's experience.	-	Nature of the business
9	The experience design should enhance the customer journey by the use of simplifying	Following the recommendations of Edelman and Singer (2015) to use simplification as a method of improving customer journeys, it is the most suitable one from the perspective of the business-related visits of customers of NWT (IF7)	-	Customer journey literature, Empathizing finding 7
10	The experience design should include some form of personalization	Another recommendation from Edelman and Singer (2015) is the personalization of the experience. Although the recommendation was made with B2C companies in mind, the individual role of the visiting actor makes this recommendation applicable.	-	Loyalty loop literature
11	The experience design should improve the contextualization during the showroom visit	Since loyalty breaking incidents want to be avoided as much as possible, the recommendation of Edelman and Singer (2015) to ensure YIT information supply should be implemented in the design	-	Loyalty loop literature
12	The experience design should stimulate the customer to take in an active position	-	-	-

Table 2: Plan of Requirements

13	The experience design should have a suiting price-benefit ratio for applying at NWT	As for every project, the budget is not to be neglected. Since the budget depends on the value it adds to the customer experience, the judgement for sufficiency of the price-benefit ratio should be made by NWT itself	Judgement of NWT	-
Nr.	Wishes	Description	Specification	
1	The experience design should allow the customer to get an enhanced product overview	Enhancing the overview of the customer over the products would minimize the threshold of doing showroom visits in relation to the feeling of wasting time. The design should introduce either an innovative manner of monitoring customer minds or make use of existing monitoring techniques. Since the research aims to find out if monitoring methods are integratable in experience designs in B2B companies, the aspect is placed within the wishes section. This makes that the design is still fitting the plan of requirement may the outcomes conclude that it may not be possible to integrate.	The overview could be based on quality levels, brand, and labels	Interview Finding 4
2	The experience design should introduce a way of monitoring the thought process of the customer		-	Problem Statement
3	The experience design should enhance the perceived service experience	-	-	Value Proposition Canvas
4	The experience design should enhance the information supplementation	-	-	Value Proposition Canvas

Table 2: Plan of Requirements



4. Ideate

Coming from the defined design requirements, the ideation phase contains multiple iterations of designing, visualizing, and testing. In consideration of confidentiality towards customers and the speed of the process, the choice was made to conduct the testing internally by having periodic meetings with the company. The approach of the ideation was to start by addressing the first part of the problem statement regarding the improvement of the customer experience and integrate the second part of the problem statement in the end.

4.1 Iteration 1

To start with the initial idea generation, which was the result of the outcomes of the previous chapters, a set of seven idea directions was created. These ideas were visualized by a quick sketch which served as the prototyping. By the use of a meeting with the company supervisors, an initial discussion took place in which the suitability and relevance of the application were discussed. From the seven ideas, a categorization was made which separates ideas that are interesting to look further into, ideas that are interesting but not relevant for the current showroom because they are not suited to the vision of NWT for the coming years, and ideas that are not interesting to further look into since they are not suiting to NWT at all (figure 24).

Two ideas were assigned to the category of being not interesting at all. The first one is the idea of creating some form of a navigation tool for the customer to explore the showroom. Although this solution would address the [interview finding 4](#), the execution in a scenario with multiple customers visiting at the same time would result in complications and confusion which make the idea not a relevant one for the showroom of NWT. The second one is the adaption of the environment towards the interests and nature of the customer visiting. To give an example, a customer who is oriented to the sports market would be welcomed with a showroom that is decorated completely with sport-oriented attributes. Since, again, this is not suitable for multiple visits at the same time, and the execution would require some preparation time for each showroom visit, this idea is also marked as not relevant for the showroom of NWT.

Ideas that came out to be interesting but not relevant for the current showroom are the use of life-sized displays to showcase the products, physical demonstrations of the product features, and the magnification of the brand identities by creating separate brand worlds within the showroom. The physical demonstration of the features would make for an experiential way of educating the customer but at the same time would require rebuilding part of the showroom which is not preferred. For that reason, this idea is marked as irrelevant at the moment but might become in the future. Both the use of large displays and the creation of separate

brand worlds are closely related to the interior design of the showroom and therefore not a core feature of an experience design. For that reason, these two are also marked as irrelevant.

This leaves the final three idea directions to take into the next iteration. Starting with a stand that is interactive with the products. Several technologies allow customers to have an embodied experience with the products they are interested in (Du 2013, Mandal 2013). By the use of these technologies, the customer can be stimulated to better empathize with the products, be educated more experientially, or be entertained by visuals which helps the customer memorize the information better (Osborne W. 2020). Followed up by that is the idea of

personalization aiming towards the customer that is visiting at that moment. Since the business of NWT is majorly based on the principle of service, a more personalized experience adds to the perception of customer service. The final idea direction is to create a workstation for the expert. The expert role can be fulfilled both by the staff of NWT as by the customers towards their customer. Since the visit to a showroom is often intended to be a place to be informed by someone with more expertise than him (Empathizing Finding 5), the perception of the customer towards the experts is key for satisfaction. Receiving a customer in an environment that supplies all the needed tools and perks to express expertise is a way of improving this experience.

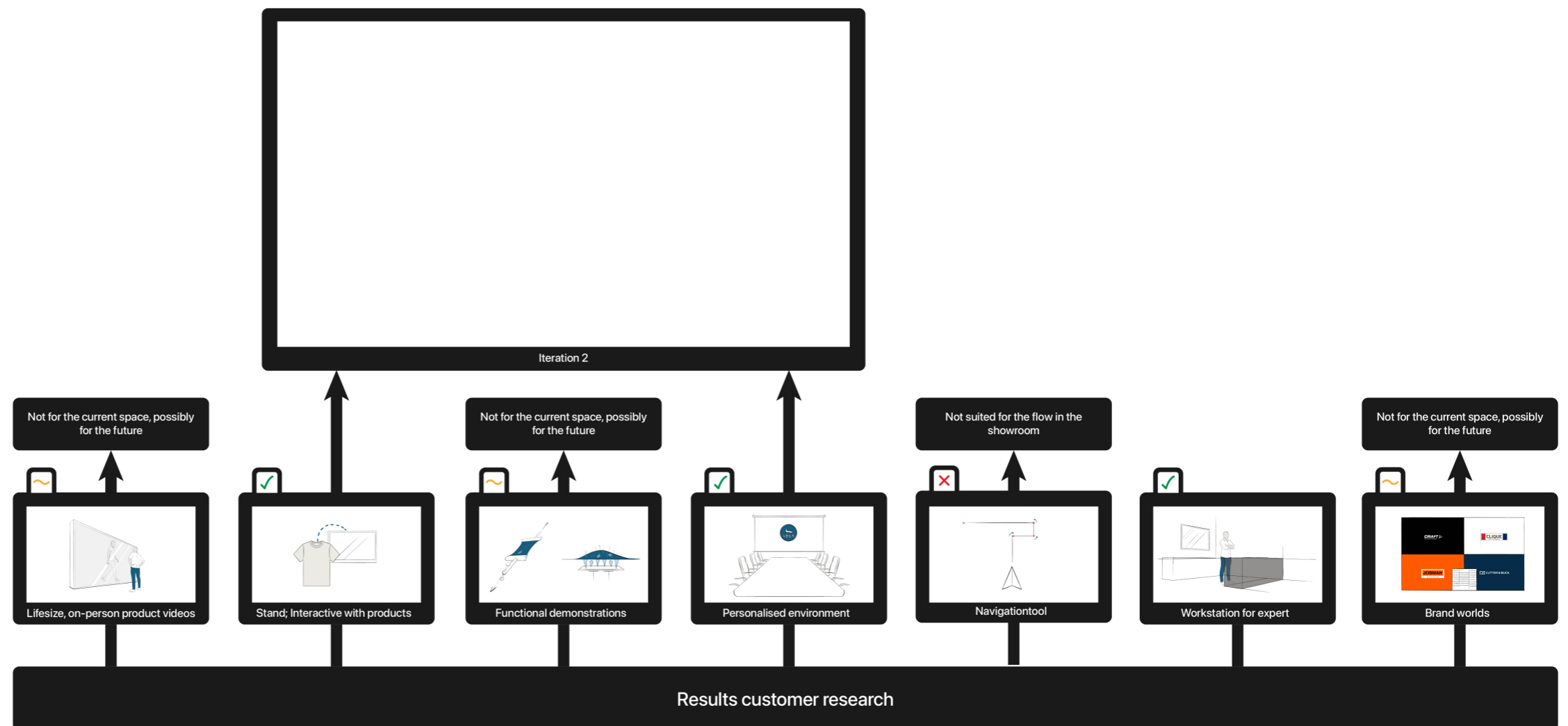


Figure 24: Overview of iteration 1

4.2 Iteration 2

Using the idea directions from iteration one, a combined concept was created. In order to be able to measure individual behavior, the resulting concept was based on a personal identifier with which the customer interacts with his surrounding in the showroom. This way all forms of collectible data are linkable to a set of unique traits. Based on this core concept a diversion was made by three ideas in which way the customer would interact with his environment in the showroom.

Idea 1

The first idea implicates an interactive stand that consists of a large touchscreen and two smart hangers which detect the presence of a piece of clothing (figure 25). One or two pieces of clothing can be hung which triggers the pop-up of product information on the screen. Since the stand would be fully activated once the personal identifier is placed, a possibility opens up to add the products, displayed on the screen, to a personal wish list. Aspects like colors, material characteristics, and stock are also explorable in this manner.

Advantages of this idea are 1) The strong and intuitive link between physical and digital as addressed by [Wish 1](#) 2) Straight to the point and functional as addressed by [Requirement 8](#)

Disadvantages are 1) Taking the clothing to the stand can be a threshold as addressed by [Requirement 4](#) 2) The information which is supplied by the system might be also suppliable by the AM as addressed by [Requirement 1](#)

Idea 2

Aiming for a more exhibition-like idea, this idea involves the use of physical objects that are related to product selections (figure 26). Placing for example a paintbrush on the interactive plateau at the bottom of the screen, the display portrays a menu that consists of all the products which can be used by painters. This way, an added manner of navigating through the product selection is created while keeping it simple and intuitive. Again, personal identification can be used to completely activate the stand which gives the customer the possibility to add the products to a personal wish list.

Advantages of this idea are 1) A memorable experience which has stimulates the customer to explore in an entertaining way as addressed by [Wishes 1 & 4](#).

Disadvantages are 1) Every action required is in a close area as addressed by [Requirement 4A](#) 2) The idea does not offer the added value of physically feeling the products as addressed by [Requirement 7](#). Although this is possible, it requires a separate action.

Idea 3

Specified on creating a workstation environment in the showroom, this idea makes use of a surrounded environment (figure 27). The main functionality of this idea is to offer the user the possibility to showcase a custom-made list of products that are suited for the customer. This is made possible by the use of three projectors which are aimed at separate walls which creates a surrounding effect. On these screens, an application runs, controllable through a tablet held by the receiving party, in which the products are displayed along with ambient images which are suited for the brand or specific product. In this case, the products that are found interesting are savable on the tablet.

Advantages of this idea are 1) The surrounding environment creates an emerging experience as addressed by [Requirements 4B & 8](#) 2) The idea is functional and focused on the product itself as addressed by [Wish 1 & 4](#).

Disadvantages are 1) Controlling displays from a tablet is less intuitive than actually touching a screen 2) There is no physical element present in this idea which the core is the essence of a showroom visit as addressed by [Requirement 7](#)

With the results of this iteration, the next iteration describes the conversion from idea to concept.



Figure 25: Visualization of idea 1

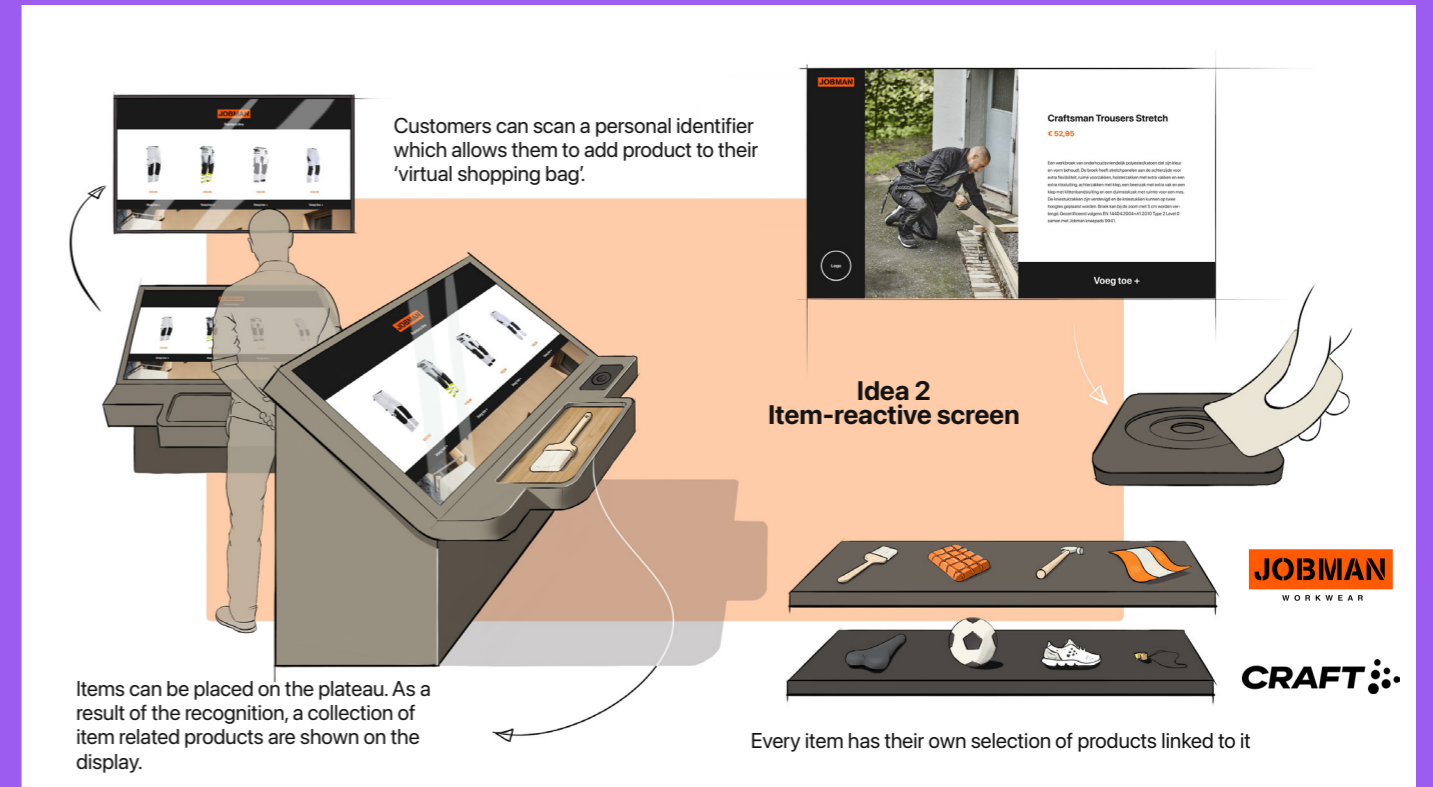


Figure 26: Visualization of idea 2

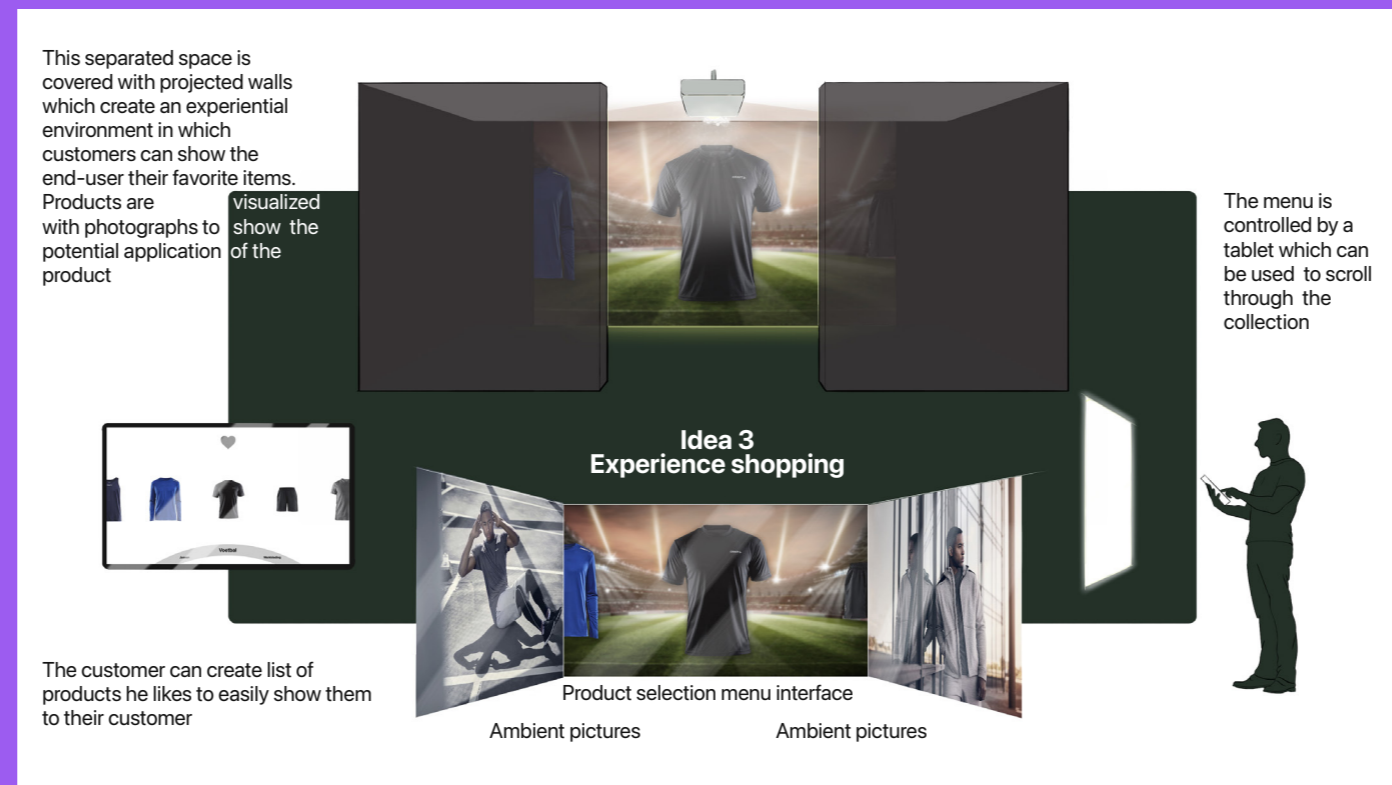


Figure 27: Visualization of idea 3

4.3 Iteration 3

Following up on the ideas which were created in the second iteration, the ideas needed to be compared and, if possible, merged. With an eye on the average showroom visit, which primarily has a functional and business-oriented nature (IF7), and the feasibility of the idea multiple criteria were created based on requirements of NWT to rank the suitability of the ideas to the case. The criteria were as follows:

Practicality: Regards the core reason and added value of the idea (R1). Since it needs to function as a tool and customers come to the showroom with a clear goal, the practicality of the idea is highly important and for that reason ranked as the most important. (weighing factor: 3) (regards suitability)

User-friendliness: Since every idea originates from the purpose of making the process easier (R9), this criterium is used to express the intuitiveness and ease of use of the idea. This aspect is also important for the relevance of the idea. (weighing factor: 2) (regards suitability)

Estimated cost: Apart from the usability aspect of the idea, the cost of building and developing the idea is relevant for the feasibility of the project. While not being the focus of the project, this aspect is relevant to take into the idea selection. (weighing factor: 1) (regards feasibility)

Complexity: Split up in two aspects, the complexity of an idea is relevant for the practicality of the setting up and day-to-day use. More complex systems create larger obstacles for people to use while at the same time increasing the chance of mistakes and misuses. A too high complexity, in this case, is therefore not desirable. (weighing factor: 1) (regarding feasibility)

Based on a rating system spreading from -2 to +2, where -2 means the idea is not suited at all, +2 means a positive effect due to the idea, and 0 means there are no real good or bad things about the idea, a judgement of suitability was made. The higher the outcome, the more suitable the idea is for the case. Table 3 Displays the scores that were given in cooperation with the company.

Table 3: Idea criteria table

Criteria	Idea 1	Idea 2	Idea 3	Weighting factor
Practicality	2	0	1	3
User-friendliness	2	1	0	2
Estimated cost	-1	0	2	1
Complexity	-2	-1	1	1
Total	7	1	6	

As seen in the total score of the matrix, idea one is the most suited for this case and should therefore form the center of the concept. Nevertheless, idea three scored almost the same as idea one which makes it interesting too. Therefore, as a result of iteration three, a combination of ideas one and three was a starting point for the creation of a concept.

The Concept

Individual identifier:

Starting with an element of the concept that regards design goal three, the choice was made to base it around the use of an individual identifier. This is essential for the usefulness of the gathered information since only when it can be linked to parameters of the specific customer conclusions can be made.

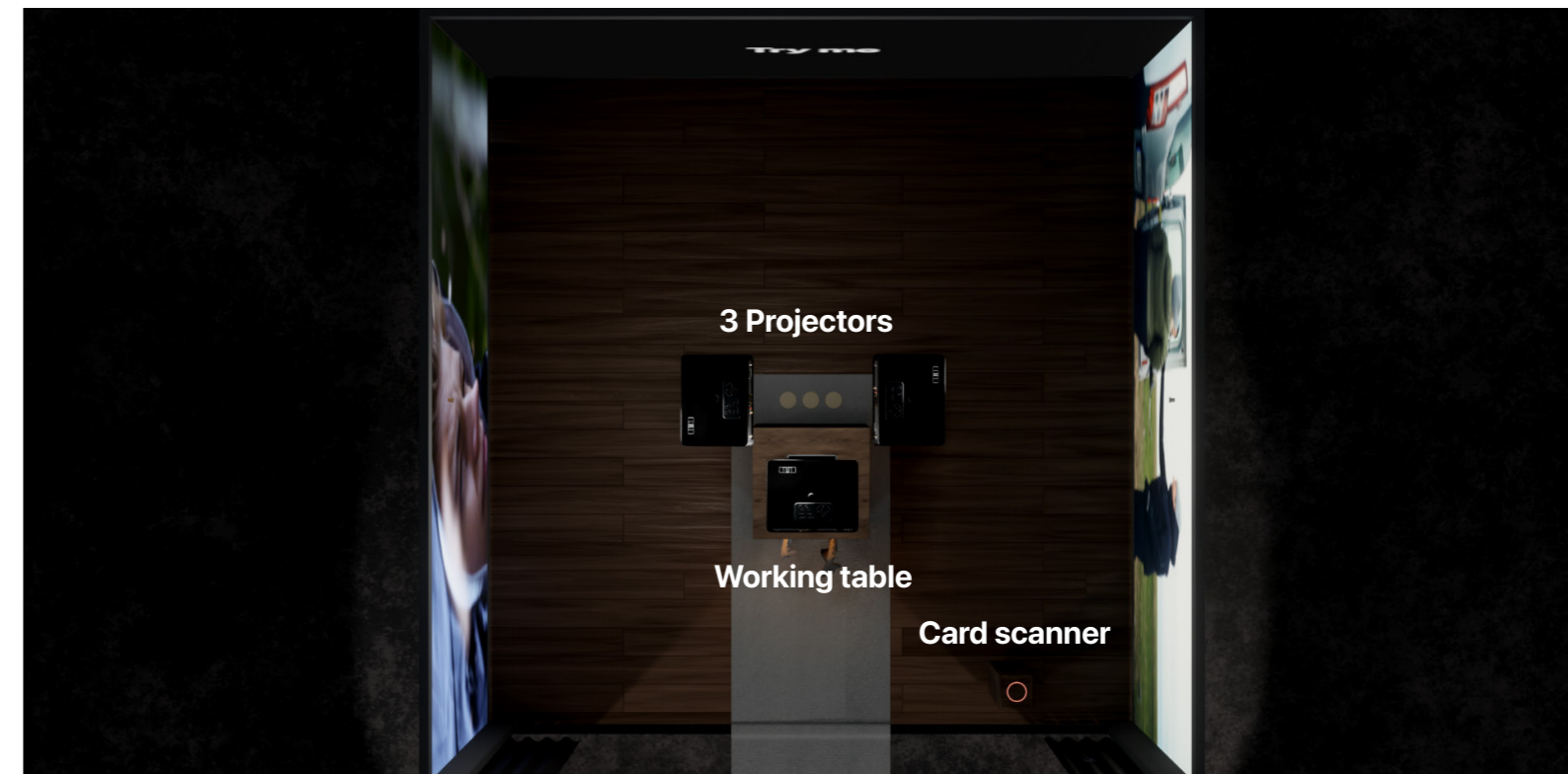
The setup:

The setup of the concept consists of three walls, positioned in a U-shape, and three projectors that cover the inside of these walls (figure 28). This part of idea three is combined with the interface and functionality of idea one. The journey of this 'experience corner' was imagined as follows:

The customer arrives in the usual way, is welcomed by the AM, and is provided with a cup of coffee. Along with the regular conversation, the AM would initiate to grab some pieces of clothing and take them towards the experience corner. Once arrived at the experience corner, the customer would activate it by placing the individual identifier on the beacon.

To collect data from the customer, he is asked to select his preferred topics projectors. With or without answering the question, pressing the 'next' button will make the system ready to use. The customer is now able to hang the pieces of clothing on the hangers, located at the top edge of the projection. Placing the product triggers an action on the projectors where the product-specific information is displayed on the center projector and ambient image on the side projector, surrounding the product itself. Hanging two pieces of clothing will trigger an easily comparable product sheet, comparable with the system at the showroom of Tricorp (see chapter 'Field research').

Figure 28: Top view of the experience design set-up



Now that the exploration started, the customer can do one or multiple steps in random order:

Explore different color options by changing the image in real-time;

- ▶ Check the current stock of the product;
- ▶ Press on one of the unique symbols to find out more about the special characteristic the product has;
- ▶ After clicking on a symbol explore the subject even further by pressing on informational dots which trigger interesting facts;
- ▶ Look at the ambient images which are projected around the product;
- ▶ Save products that are placed on the hangers by pressing the 'like' button;

Once the customer is done using the system, the personal identifier can be removed from the beacon which saves the activities executed during the use. In this manner, the design goal was addressed in a way that the visit to the showroom is more convenient than before. Products that are found to be interesting can be, in this way, found online easier. To round off the iteration, the concept was presented to and discussed with the supervisors within the company to map out a path for the detailing of the concept.

4.4 Iteration 4

The discussion of iteration three was used as an input for the detailing of the concept. To describe the adjusted concept (figure 29), the following paragraphs address each topic individually.

To address Interview finding 8, it is essential to get the customer activated with his surroundings. For that reason, instead of controlling the software on a tablet, the projectors should be touch-sensitive so that the customer can move across the walls to navigate through the software.

To enhance, again the interpretation of design goal two, stimulation of the senses empowers the experience of the information offered. Therefore, adding colored lights and speakers to the system will help exaggerate the effects displayed.

The personal identifier should, for convenience reasons, be something that customers already have access to once they are heading towards the showroom. On the other hand, in a realistic situation, customers will sometimes forget to bring something like that. Offering a hybrid option where, both digital and physical, customers receive their identifier in advance of a showroom visit.

Since the concept can be used in different ways, the generic journey is described in the following description. Followed up by that will be the different use cases with their specifics.

The customer arrives, at the planned timeslot, in front of the building of NWT. Entering the building, the customer stumbles upon the counter where he is welcomed by the service collaborator. The personal identifier, which in this case is a physical or digital customer card, is put to use by asking

the customer to check-in for the showroom visit. This way, the system is activated and registers the actions of the customer. Taking the market placement improvement method talked about by Edelman and Singer (2015), an element of personalization is added to the check-in moment by projecting the company's logo and name on the wall next to the counter. This way, the customer is welcomed in a more personal way which enhances customer experience.

After the check-in, the customer is guided upstairs to be greeted by the AM regularly. During the stay upstairs with the AM, the customer can make use of the system within the showroom. The experience corner is expanded in terms of functionality by having two walls covered with objects functioning in the way described in idea 2. Although the idea scored the lowest of the three, integrating it into the concept was undemanding since it requires similar electronics as the already present ones. Not only does this add a sensorial experience, but also an extra use case for customers with different intentions. Where physically hanging products on the walls is suited for a product-specific orientation, idea two allows for a more explorative orientation which is more interesting to customers as opposed to ending customers.

Integration of idea 2

The integration of idea two into the concept concretely looks like two diagonally oriented walls facing inwards the room. Both walls are filled with hanging objects which are related to product families. Placing these objects on the table, in the middle of the room, activates an appearance of a corresponding menu of the product family on the middle projector. By the use of touch-sensitive projectors, The customer can explore different product families. Removing the object from the table restores the system to its neutral position.

Experiential upgrade

To enlarge the sensorial triggering during the display of the information, LED lights were added which change color based on the action on the projector. With this, the embodiment of the room is enlarged because this simulates a special effect more realistically as opposed to an animation on a screen.

Multiple interaction points

Since there are multiple types of showroom visits each with its corresponding scenario, an addition is made to enlarge the usefulness for all of them. Looking at the visit where the customer takes their end-customer to the showroom, the setting mentioned before does not conflict with the conventional way of working significantly. The end customer will be looking for either a specific item or a set of them. In that case, the customer will grab multiple options and take them to the experience room. Following the advice received by the AMs this

will conflict in usual scenarios.

An alternative, and not so suiting scenario, is when the customer visits under the guidance of an AM. Since these visits are generally more focused on broad orientation, it is not that easy for the AM to grab a view items to take into the experience room. Instead of that, the workflow looks more like a walk around the showroom and stopping at interesting or new items. This creates a problem regarding the distance which interrupts the natural workflow.

To fix this issue, multiple interaction points were added which function partly in the same way as the experience room itself. Using a table with an integrated display and RFID scanner, the interaction point will be able to detect products, display product information, and offer additional information about the characteristics and company information. While these interaction points stripped down versions of the three-display setup, they form a gathering point for practical information which is useful in the workflow of the AM. These interaction points also enable R5 to be met, since the tables are easily moveable and deployable at fairs.

The Online Element

When the visitor is done using the showroom, he can check out with his customer card which initiates the follow up phase of the showroom visit. The actions executed by the visitor are summarized and send by email to give an overview and reminder of the items that were seen during the visit. Within a personal message, an overview will be shown which is backed up by links to the website of NWT. This way, the conventional step of searching a product

as noted on the website is simplified by offering this, possibly interesting, product page in an online matter.

In the case of companies that consist of multiple employees visiting the showroom, the software should allow colleagues to see wish lists from each other to optimize the workflow within buying centers.

Now that the concept is shaped sufficiently to take to some of the stakeholders, the next chapter

will describe the different testing methods which were used to validate the designed experience to potential users.



Figure 29: 3D render of the experience design

5. Test

To validate the concept with the different stakeholders, three validation methods were selected to attain as much useful information as possible. The used methods in this chapter were internal focus sessions, external questionnaires, and a Product Concept Evaluation which were used to validate and criticize the concept which resulted from chapter 4.



5.1 Internal Focus Sessions

To get an idea of the internal vision of employees of NWT, a one-to-one focus session was held with some of the employees. The selection of employees, used for this validation step, was made with a variety of positions and creative abilities in mind.

The participants were first shown a presentation, describing the aspects of the concept, after which they were asked several questions to acquire their opinion. The questions were mostly asked to unravel the positive and negative aspects of the concept.

The questions were as follows:

- 1) As a customer, would you see a benefit in using this concept over the conventional workflow?
- 2) Based on the explanation that you just saw, what aspects do you miss?
- 3) What do you think the strengths of the concept are?
- 4) Are there any aspects of the concept that you have doubts about?

Outcomes of the individual sessions can be found in [appendix B](#). The following conclusions were attained from the outcomes:

Three out of three participants mentioned positive aspects of the concept were the enjoyable experience it would offer and the clear presentation of information in a visual way.

Positive aspects mentioned once were things like the connection between online and offline, relieving customers from necessary work, the centralization of information, and added contact moments.

Possible aspects missing were things like a memory function in the software to remember previous comparisons and the possibility to operate the experience room without guidance. A mention of the advantage of smart suggestions was made too.

Doubts about the concept were the lack of spontaneity, the usefulness of the stationing of the out checkpoint, and the practicality of customers having to bring a physical customer card.

5.2 External questionnaire

Due to confidentiality, validating the concept with actual customers from NWT could not be done by showing information about the concept. To attain the best feedback possible, a questionnaire was filled in by 61 customers which regarded questions about abstract and non-descriptive aspects of the concept. The questionnaire was sent to the customer base of around 3000 email addresses. This way, the attitude towards the core elements of the concept could be mapped which indicates the suitability of the concept for the customers of NWT. The questions and multiple choice answers (in Dutch) stated in the questionnaire can be found in [Appendix C](#):

Note that participants were able to respond with multiple answers to one question. Regarding significance, an answer is seen as valuable once a third of the participants responded with that answer.

The following outcomes have been collected from the questionnaire:

Regarding the first question of the questionnaire, two answers stood out. The preferred option, filled in by 72.1% of the participants, answered 'B'. This was followed up by a 49.2% preference for 'A'. Answers less popular and not significant were 'C' (13.1%) and providing feedback to participating in a giveaway (4.9%).

Two answers given for question two could be indicated as significant. Aspects of the product that are most important for customers that filled in these answers were 'A' (36.1%), 'B' (50.8%), and 'C' (41%). Several individual answers were given which are not measured significant enough in this questionnaire though may interesting to take a look at during

further detailing.

Out of the 61 participants, 88.4% were prepared to share their interest in topics they like to know to get helped in a better way. This result shows that the assumption can be made that customers would be prepared to open up about their interests.

Question four created some confusion among the participants. For that reason, the results might not be truly suited to the intended question. Neglecting, in this case, the six confused participants, 60% of the participants had a negative attitude towards a customer card. While still, 40% had a positive attitude towards the idea, a critical argument against it was the exclusion of customers for certain facilities.

Question five was answered with several answers irrelevant to the project due to the abstract formulation of the question. Out of the 61 respondents, 10 answered something that can be covered by the use of the concept. Examples are gathering information or a tool to easily compare products to easily make a decision.

To the last question, where other comments could be made, no relevant input was collected.

5.3 Product Concept Evaluation

To explore the suitability of the concept to the target group, a modified version of the Product Concept Evaluation described by van Boeijen, Daalhuizen et al. (2014) was executed among the AM's of NWT. Traditionally this method mocks the design with paper-build models to get an impression of the first reaction from a person to a product. Since most of the functional facets of the concept are digital, roleplaying with paper models might not be the most reliable way to get an insight into the use. Since prototyping, like in the Product Concept Evaluation, would also enhance imagination capabilities, the test was still executed to find out attitudes towards the concept.

Using paper models the test was executed as follows. Starting outside, in front of the building, the AM was offered a mock-up customer card with his name and got an explanation of the context the customer would be informed with before the visit. Entering the building, the AM is asked to check in with the customer card which triggers an action on the projector on the side of the counter. Here the name and a welcoming word is placed. The AM is now taken upstairs to move to the next step which is the usual coffee and talk that happens when customers first arrive. The setup found upstairs can be seen in figure 30.

In chapter 5.4 the results of the individual tests are translated to an application in the concept. Final adjustments as described in this chapter round of the design phase of concept.



5.4 Conclusion validation

Processing of 5.1

Since a comment was made about doubts about the spontaneity of the concept, a thing to guard for during realization would be to make it as easy as possible to use. This ensures the best cost-benefit compromise is made.

The other critique point was made concerning the aspects of the customer card. This topic also recurred during the testing session with the AM's which resulted in the solution to hand the personal identifier not to the customer but to the AM.

Processing of 5.2

Based on the results of the first question, the preferred methods of asking for feedback were asking face-to-face and through an online survey. With face-to-face being the most preferred option, a focus should be put on the moment of checking in and -out. Placing a survey link in the personal mailing after the visit seemed to be worth it according to the respondents. Since C (throughout the process) was answered insignificantly, placing a feedback moment in the experience room could be questioned and for that reason should be looked into deeper throughout user tests.

The information which the respondents seemed to be interested in can be categorized as information that is useful and easy to communicate to their customers (qualities and labels). Although the preference for prices is not significant enough to take into conclusion, the need for this should be researched further in user tests. Since the complexity,

and with that the costs of the development of the software would rise, a compromise should be between added value and added costs.

Although the positive feedback on the use of customer cards was large enough to be significant, a point of criticism rose from the negative reactions regarding the exclusion of customers without a customer card. For that reason, by giving all customers the option to use the experience room and interaction points without a customer card but e.g. by filling in an e-mail address, more customers would be presumably satisfied. In that way, using the customer card still has its benefits by offering more convenience but is not a mandatory element.

Processing of 5.3

Although the AM's all individually were researched during the Product Concept Evaluation, the results and judgment were nearly identical. Regarding the possibilities created by the experience room and individual touchpoints, all AM's were positive about the possibilities it enabled and indicated to already have strategic plans in mind using the concept. The critique point mentioned by all of the AM's regards the identification of the customers and the use of a customer card. In the final concept, customers are asked to deliver value (scan their card) before they get any value in return (service). Therefore, offering the customer a customer card should be scrapped and could be i.e. replaced by a card that is held by the AM. This way, the convenience of personal identification would still be intact, while avoiding placing unnecessary efforts on the plate of the customer. Regarding the personal greeting on the wall which is initiated by scanning the customer card, recommended is to remove this completely since the customer does not scan himself anymore on top of the potential discomfort that customers may start to feel.

6. Conclusion

This chapter converts the findings from the ideation process towards a conclusion and recommendation where it reflects on the literature gathered in chapter 2. Next to the additions to B2B showroom customer experience, the limitations of the study are stated so future researches can take this into account when interpreting the knowledge.



6.1 Theoretical Analysis of the Concept

Since the 'Loyalty Loop' from [Hogreve and Fleischer \(2020\)](#) was used as the framework for the development of the experience design, we start by looking at how the design fits in the framework and how the corresponding improvement methods are applied. Not all individual findings were discussed in this chapter since most of them are used in the ideation. Therefore, only the most important findings were discussed.

The role of the experience design in the loyalty loop can be separated into two segments. Starting with the first segment, the experience design offers additional value during the orientation phase. Starting with enhancement method one which is '**simplification**'. This is the most applicable method of the three since B2B companies are primarily focused on process optimization ([Hogreve and](#)



Figure 31: the old simplified customer journey

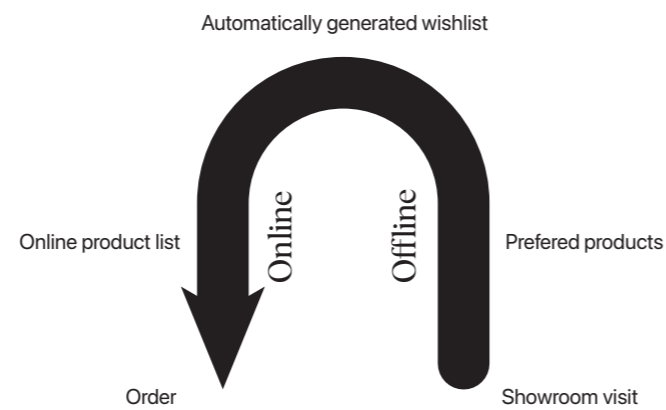


Figure 32: The new simplified customer journey

[Fleischer 2020](#)). Taking an oversimplified version of the current customer journey, there is a separation between the online and offline process (See [figure 31](#)).

What the customer journey shows is the separation between the online and offline channels which is created by the lack of digital support throughout showroom visits. The possibility to consume product information in the showroom which normally is only available on the website and like products so they can easily be ordered online enhance the connection between the two channels (see [figure 2](#)). Essentially, the concept removes a step from the customer journey, thus, simplifying the process .

Personalization is mentioned by [Edelman and Singer \(2015\)](#) as the second enhancement method and requires some attention while implementing it into a B2B context. This is due to the multi-personality customer experience of companies as opposed to consumers as mentioned by [Hogreve and Fleischer \(2020\)](#). The way personalization was implemented in the concept was to personalize on company level

by offering information supply on demand of the visitor, personal greeting based on company, and applying post-service using personalized e-mails in which the input comes from the customer itself. Since personalization on a personal level would require a complex system design, the conventional application was determined to be non-suited for the current state of B2B companies like NWT.

The third improvement technique '**contextualizing**' can be identified within the borders of the showroom by the expanded information supply that is available in multiple locations within the showroom. This covers the second segment of the impact the experience design has on the 'Loyalty Loop' where it serves as an improvement of the customer experience during the buying process. By optimizing the information supply during the timeframe where customers are actively thinking about their product selection, the step from the orientation into the purchase is ensured.

The **Stakeholder theory** describes how value creation comes from the cooperation between the company and the customer ([Santos Jhuniar, Johnston et al. 2021](#)). This cooperation can be seen in the involvement of customers to create a wishlist through the facilities in the showroom, which results in a higher level of service. This flexible way of creating personalized customer service fits with the theory of [Hamilton, Ferraro et al. \(2021\)](#) where he describes the presence of the environment of the customer in the value creation process. This way, customers themselves can customize their demanded service level or type depending on their environment that day.

Although collaborative resource deployment and solution development are typical characteristics for a B2B company, the products that NWT deals

with are in most cases generic enough so it can be bought at a competitor too ([Zolkiewski, Story et al. 2017](#)). Therefore, prevention of freeriding is still a challenge NWT has to deal with. With the offering of practical wishlists, the service itself was intended to be the irreproducible product that should prevent the freeriding phenomenon. Also, does this put the focus on a long-term relationship that focuses on repeated purchases as advised by [Hogreve and Fleischer \(2020\)](#).

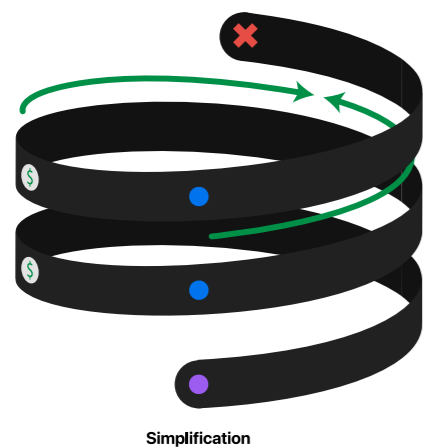
6.2 Implementation and Theoretical Contribution

Now that the concept is analyzed by the use of the theory, the implementation of the research on the research question can be initiated. For ease of reading, the research question states as follows:

“How can the customer experience of B2B (textile) companies be improved using an interactive experience design within the showroom? And how could this be used to monitor the customer’s thoughts?”

Out of all the theory, the ‘Loyalty Loop’ by Siebert, Gopaldas et al. (2020) served as the most structural piece of theory for the design of the experience. Therefore, to answer the research question this chapter will talk about the implementation of knowledge from the research into this framework so it can be used as a tool for future B2B showroom developments.

Starting at the first improvement method ‘simplification’, a high suitability can be perceived since the demands among B2B companies lend themselves perfectly for minimizing the efforts required by the customer (see figure 33). This makes that this is most important method within the framework when applied to B2B contexts.



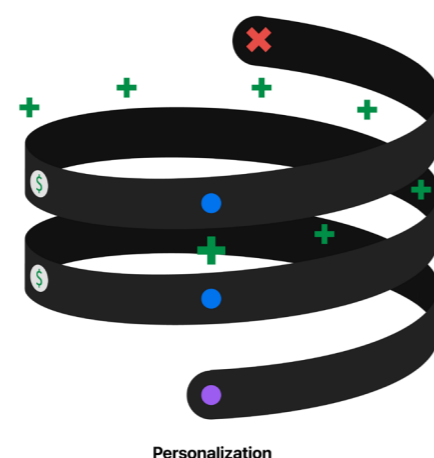
Simplification

Since showrooms are environments which are environments of high control, service options which simplify fairly easy to implement here.

The second improvement method ‘personalization’ needs some attention when applying it to B2B contexts (figure 34). Due to the multi-personality characteristic of these companies, showroom visits require overly complex systems to personalize on an individual level (Witell, Kowalkowski et al. 2020). Therefore this improvement method can be transferred but should aim towards personalization on the company experience which e.g. helps employees work together more efficiently or benefit the process within the company.

A specification of the factor ‘personalization’ can be the amount of flexibility a customer journey allows for chances in the social environment from day to day as has been empathized by Hamilton, Ferraro et al. (2021). By adding the method ‘flexibilizing’ to the framework, the chances of a customer journey being suitable every time a customer goes through it are enhanced.

The third improvement method ‘contextualization’

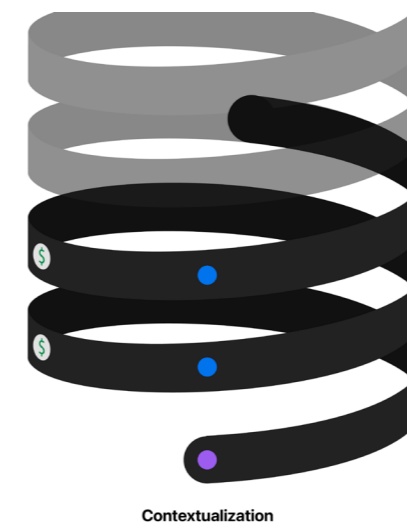


Personalization

can be applied within the showroom context of a B2B company (see figure 35). Good to note is that B2B customers tend to expect more guidance than B2C customers which influences how the customer should receive the information (see EF 5). Information delivery should be done in a more assertive manner where the customer does not have to put much effort into receiving the information.

Since B2B companies are recommended to be more focused on long-term relationships with repeated purchases it is an essential element of designing a part of the customer experience that binds customers to that specific supplier (Hogreve and Fleischer 2020). Therefore this aspect can be integrated into the framework as another improvement method called ‘bonding’ (see figure 36). This does not necessarily improve perceived customer experience but ensures the return of value in exchange for the offered service by minimizing the chance of customers going freeriding. Caution is advised, nevertheless, when implementing this method causes a decrease in customer experience quality or limits customers in any way.

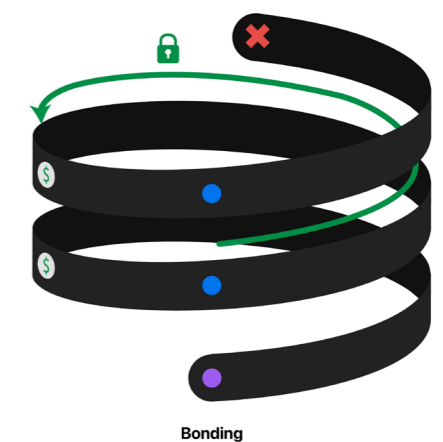
Another finding which came from the research is the importance of efficiency during a showroom visit in the B2B market (see IF 7). Therefore this can suffice as another improvement method



Contextualization

where the ratio of time-value indicates the quality of service. This indicates that B2B customers are not always short on time, but appreciate a return of value suiting the time spent. This method can be described as ‘optimization’ (figure 37). Depending on the customer a threshold value is determined which serves as a requirement for the customer to make use of the service and enjoy it. A ratio beneath this value means the customer thinks the service requires too much effort for the benefits acquired by the use of the service which will result in the customer avoiding using it. In future research, a more detailed view on the sufficiency ratio could be researched so it can be used for in future design cases.

Regarding the second half of the research question, the monitoring of customer thoughts seemed to be a challenge which is not easily implemented in a B2B customer journey. Due to the efficient nature of B2B companies and the ratio, as mentioned before, play a significant role in the customer behavior, convincing a customer to provide any form of information should be attained through willingness. Since in that case, customers will take the time to provide information about their experience it should be placed outside of the functional customer journey path. By separating this from the functional path, the unwilling customers are not obstructed



Bonding

with a question about reviews or feedback while the willing customers are still able to provide it.

Although the design which resulted from this research is not necessarily novel regarding the use of the technologies, it served as a trial for the customer experience improvement techniques originally stated for B2C contexts. Therefore the implementation of these techniques, and the proposed framework, are novel contributions to the academic knowledge on the topic of B2B customer experience.

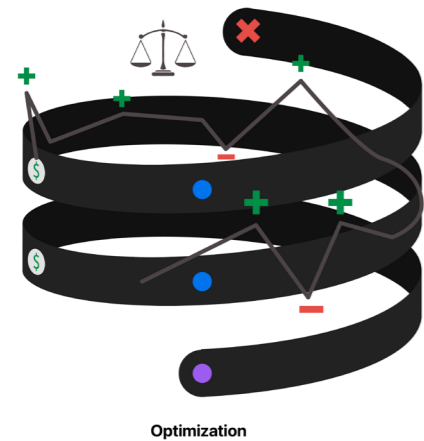


Figure 37: Visualization of optimization

6.3 Practical Recommendations

To build upon this research NWT is advised to go into the next step of validation and initiate the verification phase. Ensuring that the current concept is heading in the right direction, research should be executed in other regions of the Netherlands than addressed in this research. Next to this, the first investments should be made to start doing usability tests and integrate the concept into the actual customer journey.

Assuming the main idea of the concept will turn out to be suiting for NWT, a suggestion for future development is made to develop 'smart' software that will be able to offer unique suggestions based on personal preferences. Since this requires a base to build upon, this is a step that should be treated in a later stadium of the development of the experience design. Implementing smart suggestions will improve the personalization aspect even more, which according to the suggested framework, enhances the customer experience even further. This also fits in the current market trend, which is mostly seen in B2C markets, of 'phygital marketing' (Kotler, Kartajaya et al. 2021). The term is defined as "a symbiosis of physical space and virtual space" and opens up possibilities for more complex but more embodied experiences like making use of the location of the customers' phone or making use of AR (augmented reality). Next to the complex technology needed to fulfill these functionalities and acceptance among customers, this should be seen as an optional future step to further enhance the customer experience within the showroom of NWT. Since generation Z is growing up with advanced digital technologies available, the long-term vision should be altered to this since they will

take over the majority of the workforce by the year 2025 (Kotler, Kartajaya et al. 2021). Therefore, trends like 'Metaverse' should be paid attention to whether they can mean something to the customer of the future (Ravenscraft 2022).

A recommendation that is already feasible in an earlier stage of the detailing is the deployment of live information from the website within the application of the interactive design. In the current concept, the application will be able to browse the website within an external browser. Ideally, this will be integrated within the interface of the design which will make the user experience more fluid.

6.4 Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

Although the proposed framework is backed by practical insights from a B2B case study, limitations need to be mentioned so future research can validly use this research. One of these limitations was the singularity of companies researched within the case study. Since the main objective of the case study was to develop an experience design, studying one company was inevitable. The framework as proposed in this report is therefore suitable for the specific characteristics of NWT but, although stated in the most generalized way possible, might not be a perfect fit for other companies. Therefore, future researchers are advised to see the framework as a suggestion that might require minor changes.

Another limitation of the research is the sample size used for the interviews in 2.4. Due to the time available for the research, distances between customers, and the need for multiple types of research, the choice was made to only conduct eight interviews in one region of the Netherlands. Although the information saturation indicates that this sample size is big enough to acquire the most important topics, a more reliable conclusion, and suggestions for future research, can be conducted when interviews within more regions within the Netherlands were executed.

Due to the confidentiality of the content concerning the experience design for the customers of NWT, the way of validating was limited to using abstract terms that indicate characteristics of the design. Based on the results it was indicated that the experience design suited the participants which lead to the conclusion of this research. To confirm this suitability

with a higher confidence level, validation should be executed using the actual content of the concept.

The proposed framework is a result of the case study in combination with the collected literature. Since the literature in this report is not the only relevant literature available, future researchers could look into additional literature which possibly contributes to the framework. The proposed framework serves as an initiation of the transfer of B2C knowledge into the B2B context which hopefully inspires others to go deeper into the topic.

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Appendix A

Transcriptions of customer
interviews

**Klanten interviews 21-22-23
feb 2022**

Transcriptions

Selection of supplier:

How often do you orientate?

If there is no demand in the market for a brand that we already sell, we do not really orientate among suppliers.

What do you look for in a supplier?

There has to be a demand in the market for a supplier to be considered. Beside that, it is important that a supplier can offer a competitive price and quality in combination with adequate information which can be transferred directly to the website. Subjects like sustainability are upcoming which makes detailed information about this subject an interesting subject.

Is a showroom a must-have or a nice-to-have?

We are not really into showroom visits since we sell all our products online. New products are presented by the account manager which is sufficient for our demands.

Showroom:

Why would you visit a showroom?

Experiencing the physical element of the products.

What do you expect in a showroom?

A quick overview of the new products and the physical aspects of it. I do not want to be bothered with a collection of clothing I already know.

What ambiance do you prefer?

Personal guidance.

Would prefer an interactive experience over a passive one.

I do not mind having people around.

Ideal showroom

An experience of the company with its products. The experience can possibly be boosted by demonstrating several features of the products.

Interview: Lammerdink kleding (Harry)

Markt: Werkkleding
Fysiek
Leeftijd: +-50
Personeel: 4

Selection of supplier:

How often do you orientate?

If the supplier (in this case mainly New Wave Textiles) can meet its services standards then there is no reason for me to look around for alternative suppliers. If the service level can not be obtained, it would not automatically mean the supplier is a no go, but only if there is a good reason for this which proves it is temporary. The service level should in this case restore in a reasonable period of time. The added work required to switch to another supplier adds to the threshold of switching.

What do you look for in a supplier?

A complete product range which gives to possibility to offer as much products from the same brand to the end-user.

Is a showroom a must-have or a nice-to-have?

The visit from the account manager functions sufficiently that we never really visit the showroom. In the rare cases where I wanted to visit, a fair with the stand of New Wave did the job for me.

Fair:

Why would you visit a showroom?

I would visit a fair if I want to see new products. In that case, I would like to get a efficient and quick introduction to these products without too much hassle. This would feel like a waste of time for me.

What do you expect in a showroom?

See above.

What ambiance do you prefer?

Personal guidance
Preference for active over passive
Slightly crowded is no problem

Ideal showroom

A personal guide through the new products with a clear explanation and possibly a demonstration.

Interview: Kr8 kleding (Anneke)

Markt: Werkkleding
Fysiek
Leeftijd: +-50
Personeel : 6

Selection of supplier:

How often do you orientate?

As soon as the demand for a certain brand seems to change it becomes to look into a change of supplier/brand.

What do you look for in a supplier?

To consider a brand there needs to be a demand from the market first. Promotion from the supplier side is for that reason very important. Also the presence of the company on social media channels improves the trust in the supplier by giving an indication of what is going on inside the company.

Is a showroom a must-have or a nice-to-have?

A showroom is a must-have for two reasons. In case that the customer is new to New Wave it can give a view into the company. For existing customers this is not necessary, so the showroom would function as a showcase for the new products and a place to socialize with the representative of the company.

Showroom:

Why would you visit a showroom?

See above.

What do you expect in a showroom?

New Customer: A presentation and tour through the company covering everything from the products to the people.

Existing customer: A quick overview of the new product with enough room for casual socializing.

What ambiance do you prefer?

Personal guidance

Preference for active over passive

A clear structure is important for the clarity of the product range

Ideal showroom

See "What do you expect in a showroom?"

Interview: Brandt Bedrijfskleding (Richard)

Markt: Bedrijfskleding
Online/Fysiek
Leeftijd: +-45
Personeel : 4

Selection of supplier:

What do you look for in a supplier?

The attendance of a representative gives me the feeling of being taken seriously which makes me grant a supplier. Elements like quality and stability, of course need to be a standard. If there is a demand for a certain brand at the customer I want to be able to deliver this. Important is the link between the perceived quality and the actual quality of the products. This is co to the marketing of the brand/ supplier itself which can cause confusion at the customer.

Is a showroom a must-have or a nice-to-have?

For be a showroom visit is purely to keep in contact with the company and visiting them instead of being visited by the representative

Showroom:

Why would you visit a showroom?

For me as an existing customer, a visit to the showroom would be to get a quick overview of the new products, socialize a bit with the representative of the company and all of that in pleasant ambiance.

What do you expect in a showroom?

New Customer: A presentation and tour through the company covering everything from the products to the people.

Existing customer: A quick overview of the new product with enough room for casual socializing.

What ambiance do you prefer?

Personal guidance

A combination of listening and interactive experiences

Ideal showroom

A complete visual experience and presentation of the products and service including the social aspect with optionally other customers there. Demonstrations can be useful but should never add too much hassle for the customer. Examples of this could be testing the strength or waterproofness. The added value of this is that I will be more enthusiastic about the products which makes me want to recommend them to my own customers. Through a showroom visit a customer can be educated but this should never be at the expense of the confidence of the customer since they do not always have the complete set of knowledge.

[Comment: A paper calendar is a bit obsolete.](#)

Interview: Rowi Fashion (Wilma)

Markt: Bedrijfskleding
Fysiek
Leeftijd: 53
Personeel : 4

Showroom:

Why would you visit a showroom?

If i want to see the clothing in real life and want to see how it fits. This will only happen in the rare cases where the visit of the account manager is not sufficient.

What ambiance do you prefer?

Personal guidance

Combination of passive and active

Not really crowded but I do not mind having some people around

Ideal showroom

Room to physically experience and fit the clothes.

Selection of supplier:

How often do you orientate?

I do not

Showroom:

Why would you visit a showroom?

I would visit a showroom to experience the vibe in the company and not only see the product, although this is part of it.

What do you expect in a showroom?

Enough opportunity to ask questions about the possibilities that can be offered. Next to that the products should be presented in a visual and physical manner.

What ambiance do you prefer?

Personal guidance.

Mainly listening to the information of the host

As long as there is enough personal attention i do not really mind having some people around.

Ideal showroom

De producten moeten worden gepresenteerd met duidelijk USP's in combinatie met de opties die mogelijk zijn. Ook is het fijn om een duidelijke structuur in de showroom te hebben zodat kwaliteitsniveaus en speciale labels makkelijk te onderscheiden zijn als je er naar zoekt. Als de omgeving en behandeling duidelijk is toegespitst op de klant geeft dit ook het gevoel van serieus genomen worden.

The product have to be presented with clear USP's in combination with all the possibilities regarding e.g. embroiding or printing.

Interview: Broderie (Nieuwe klant)

Markt: (loon) borduren
Fysiek
Personeel: 2

Orientation of supplier:

Just started the company

There was oriented based on personal experience and brands that are known to the customer. This lead in this case New Wave.

Will soon visit the showroom to get a look into the products and company.

Preverance for one supplier from a loyalty standpoint.

Selection of supplier:

What do you look for in a supplier?

By talking to my customer I try to figure out what brand will fit him/her the best. Based on that I will pick the supplier. A showroom is a pro for me. In that case Op basis van gesprek met de klant probeer ik een match te maken met een merk waar vervolgens vaak enkele leveranciers overblijven.

Showroom

Why would you visit a showroom?

Ik zou een showroom samen met een klant bezoeken als deze overtuigd moet worden van een merk en het bedrijf wat erachter zit. In dat geval fungeert een showroom bezoek als een soort laatste troef om de klant te overtuigen.

What do you expect in a showroom?

Een showroom bezoek doe ik als ik informatie en indrukken wil zien. Ook kom je er om zaken te doen dus moet de sfeer wel formeel zijn waarin de informatie op een sfeervolle manier worden weergegeven.

What ambiance do you prefer?

Een levendige sfeer waar je af en toe bordjes en kopjes hoort en af en toe iemand rond ziet lopen geeft een menselijke indruk van de sfeer binnen het bedrijf. Ook is de menselijke begeleiding door een vertegenwoordiger van het bedrijf ook prettig omdat dit een gezicht toevoegd aan een bedrijf. Zelf ben ik liever interactief bezig met de producten dan passief te luisteren naar een presentatie.

Ideal showroom

Er moet op zijn minst een bar in zitten. Verder moet het een beetje huiselijk aan zijn gekleed zodat er een relaxte sfeer hangt.

Findings

There is a clear distinction in the nature of showroom visits:

New customer: Wants to see the companies inside and outside by seeing everything from the products and people to the warehouse. The essence here lies in convincing the customer to buy from you and win their trust for the future.

Existing customer: Depending on the type of customer the showroom visit functions as a combination of getting a quick update of the new products and socializing. While there should be room for both, the emphasis should be made by the hosting account manager.

A significant segment of the visited customers is not really well known with the showroom in Utrecht (probably caused by the region)

However, after having discussed the role of the showroom for them, the interest for a visit was stirred up.

The majority of the visited customers look up to having to go through the regular collection in order to see the new stuff. This possibly increases the threshold for visiting the showroom.

During a showroom visit the customers prefer to see a clear distinction between quality levels, brands and labels. This also increases the ease of distinction of changes in the product range.

Customers choose for a brand of New Wave with the demand for the products in mind. For that reason, promotion from the side of the supplier really adds value to the overall brand since this increased self-guarantee for the customer. Also the presence of the supplier towards the customer is of added value since this gives an insight in the activities inside the company.

A section of the customers experience an increasing demand for sustainable and eco-friendly products. If the demand becomes significant enough to earn money in it, customers consider getting into this segment of the market. If they make this step, they would prefer to receive detailed information about the subject so they become experts themselves.

During a showroom visit, all of the visited customers would prefer to have personal guidance since they want the attention of the expert and all of the information he can give them.

Customer prefer to offer products from the same brand as possible. For this reason it can be useful to remind the customer of the completeness of the product range since they might have overlooked or forgot something.

The customer needs to have the possibility to do a quick and efficient visit to the showroom if he wants to. However this does not always have to be the case. There should also be a possibility to stay a whole afternoon, talk, get a drink and look at products.

The demonstration of features of the fabric can be of added value but only if the demonstration does not require too much effort. Demonstrations could be done by executing tests regarding the water resistance or stretch capability.

Appendix B

Answers of the individual focus sessions

Session 1

1) As a customer, would you see a benefit in using this concept over the conventional workflow?

The experience adds extra contact moments with the customer

2) Based on the explanation that you just saw, what aspects do you miss?

A memory function could be useful when the customer makes use of different interaction points within one visit

3) What do you think the strengths of the concept are?

It makes the experience more enjoyable

Strong connection between online and offline

4) Are there any aspects of the concept that you have doubts about?

The practicality of the check-out point probably will be a bottleneck

Session 2

1) As a customer, would you see a benefit in using this concept over the conventional workflow?

Yes, the experience makes the visit more enjoyable

2) Based on the explanation that you just saw, what aspects do you miss?

If it is a possibility to use the interaction without guidance from the account manager

3) What do you think the strengths of the concept are?

It removes struggles at the side of the customer

4) Are there any aspects of the concept that you have doubts about?

The practicality of customers having to bring their physical card every time

Session 3

1) As a customer, would you see a benefit in using this concept over the conventional workflow?

Yes, the experience makes the visit more enjoyable

2) Based on the explanation that you just saw, what aspects do you miss?

A smart function that allows the system to give personalized suggestions to customers

3) What do you think the strengths of the concept are?

The experience centralizes information

4) Are there any aspects of the concept that you have doubts about?



A possible lack of room for spontaneity when using the system

Appendix C

Structure of the questionnaire

Onderzoek Klantenbeleving New Wave Textiles

Deze 5 korte vragen helpen ons enorm jullie klantenbeleving nóg beter te maken! In het kader van privacy is het invullen van deze vragen volledig anoniem.

 **leonklement1@gmail.com** (niet gedeeld) [Ander account](#) 

***Vereist**

Op welke manier geven jullie het liefste feedback aan ons? *

- Via een online feedback formulier
- Als het ons persoonlijk wordt gevraagd (face-to-face)
- Tijdens het bestel en oriëntatie proces zodat wij beter worden geholpen
- Als wij hierdoor aan een winactie mee doen
- Anders: _____

Welke informatie kunnen wij jullie aanbieden om jullie verder te helpen in het keuzeproces? *

- Productprijzen
- Kwaliteiten
- Keurmerken/Labels
- Veredelmogelijkheden
- Toepassing van producten
- Anders: _____

Zijn jullie bereid voorkeur in de onderwerpen van de voorgaande vraag met ons te delen zodat jullie hierdoor beter geholpen worden? (Indien je een toelichting hebt, vul deze dan bij "anders" in) *

- Ja
- Nee
- Anders: _____

Zouden jullie de meerwaarde zien van een klantenpas van ons? En waar zou deze in dat geval voor moeten dienen? *

- Ja, als wij hierdoor beter geholpen worden
- Ja, als wij hierdoor gebruik kunnen maken van handige faciliteiten
- Nee, ik zie hier geen meerwaarde van in
- Anders: _____

Wat zouden wij aan kunnen bieden om informatie makkelijker naar jullie eindklant te communiceren? (New Wave Academy, product sheets, etc.) *

Jouw antwoord _____

Als er nog dingen zijn die niet ter sprake zijn gekomen in de bovenstaande vragen maar toch het vermelden waard zijn, mogen deze hier achter gelaten worden.

Jouw antwoord _____