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Designing for Brand Experience

Operationalizing a Service Dominant Logic Approach to Branding through Service Design

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Acknowledgements

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To write a piece as complex as a Ph.D. thesis is to combine the ideas and insights of many different people into one document – it is to report the outcome of work that the researchers cannot call their own. Throughout my journey, I was very fortunate to have the support of an amazing group of professors, colleagues, co-workers, students, partners, and interviewees – friends and strangers that kindly shared their time, helping to make this thesis a reality. Here I would like to thank all of those who directly, or indirectly contributed to this research and this thesis.

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Abstract

This thesis reports on a research project that explored *how Service Design could be used to facilitate the translation of Brand Strategy into Customer Experience*. In this context, Designing for Brand Experience is proposed as a Service Design framework that operationalizes a Service Design approach to branding – namely, Service Branding; *the process of translating the brand's conceptual meaning proposition into customer experiences through tangible service interactions*.

Accordingly, the Service Branding process is conceptualized as comprising of two interdependent phases defining and delivering the Brand Experience Proposition. Linking these two phases is the Brand Experience Manual – a tool used to inform the design teams what the experience they are designing for is, bridging the gap between Branding and Service Design.

During the early stages of the empirical explorations, it was noticed that organizations were often unclear about their experience proposition, and as such, to create a Brand Experience Manual, it was first necessary to define the Brand Experience Proposition. Hence, the Brandslation process was developed so as to define the Brand Experience Proposition, informing the Brand Experience Manual.

Moreover, since Service Branding is also concerned with the delivery of the Brand Experience Proposition, the design of the enablers of the service interaction is also central to the Designing for Brand Experience framework. As such, by integrating different approaches to service development, the current research also proposes the Semantic Transformation for Experiences concept.

This way, to operationalize the Service Branding process, the Designing for Brand Experience framework combined the three findings from the current research: the Brandslation process, which defined the Brand Experience Proposition; the Brand Experience Manual, which communicates the Brand

Experience Proposition to the teams responsible for service development; and Semantic Transformation for Experiences, which facilitates the implementation of the Brand Experience Manual, enabling the design of brand-based customer experiences.

Developed through a Design Research methodology, the Designing for Brand Experience framework is the product of a practice-based research, grounded in an action research strategy, which evolved through cycles of design interventions and theoretical reflection.

The empirical explorations centered on the development of the Brandslation process, and of the Brand Experience Manual in cooperation with the design consultancies, organizational partners, and master degree students. In total, there were four empirical iterations, resulting in an operational process for defining, and a tool for communicating the Brand Experience Proposition. Later, during the final reflection stages, a model for translating the Brand Experience Proposition into the settings that support the brand-based service interaction was advanced.

The findings from the current research add to both theory and practice – on the theoretical level, the research contributes to a richer understanding of the relationship between Service Design, Service Dominant Logic, and Branding, as shown by the Designing for Brand Experience framework, and the Semantic Transformation for Experiences concept; in practical terms, this research contributes to the realization of the Service Branding process, and to the development of brand-based customer experiences.

Preface

THE RESEARCHER AND THE RESEARCH

Having my background in economic sciences and design, I have been drawn to the strategic aspects of design since I was introduced to Branding in design school. After graduation, this interest only became clearer, as I further realized the possibilities for the combination of design and business; especially when I lived in Moscow during the years of Russia's rapid economic development, where the role of design for consumption was blatant. This realization led me to enroll in a non-academic master's degree on strategic design when I returned to Brazil.

However, due to a lack of theoretical substance, my interest in the course diminished, leading me instead to an academic master's degree in business, where I could explore how brands communicate their proposition to customers. Then, the marketing preeminence of the degree directed the research to the role of the components of the service marketing mix (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003) as mediators of the brand. Also, because of the requirements of the financing institution – which was the state development agency –, the object of study had to be relevant to the state economy; consequently, the website for the tourism destination 'Pernambuco' was chosen.

This way, my master's research explored 'how the brand identity of a tourist destination was communicated through its official website' (Motta-Filho, 2011). Building on the concept of Semantic Transformation (Karjalainen, 2004), the research was grounded in the assumption that the components of the marketing mix – i.e. Price, Product, Promotion, Place, People, Process, and Physical Evidence (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003) – were the main manifestations of the brand. Since brands were understood as conceptual propositions, they had to be expressed in a way so that the customers could interact with it – it was thus the role of the marketing teams to translate the brand into the components of the marketing mix, making the brand alive.

In that sense, the current research and my master's share some of the same theoretical foundation. However, despite the similarities, the use of a Service Design lens, and especially the acknowledgement of Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a), resulted in a very different outcome. Through the use of design-based methodologies (i.e. Research by Design; Sevaldson, 2010), I had the opportunity to not only analyze how brands are communicated, but also to develop a process for defining an experiential expression for the brand proposition. Moreover, the theoretical implications emerging from the empirical explorations resulted in the development of a theoretical model for implementing the Brand Experience.

This combination of empirical and theoretical approaches forced me out of my comfort zone twice. First, I had to shift from a mainly academic background to a practical process, which at times resembled a research-through-consulting methodology. Then, once I was comfortable with the consultant hat, I was thrown back into the highly academic process of reflecting upon the theoretical outcomes of the research, and of writing this monograph. Hence, the research reported in this thesis can be divided into three moments: the first year, which encompasses the PhD school and first contact with Service Design literature; the Research by Design interventions, from mid-2012 to mid-2014; and finally, the theoretical reflections and thesis writing, which took place all the way to the end.

The following monograph presents the content developed throughout the research: first, it contextualizes the research and introduces the research questions; then, the methodological approach is grounded, the theoretical foundations detailed, the research process reviewed, the findings explained and discussed, and finally, the conclusive remarks are noted.

Key Definitions

This research integrates knowledge from different fields in order to answer the research question – consequently, it builds on a series of definitions that are specific to the present monograph. As such, this section briefly highlights some of the most important definitions used throughout this document.

- Brand Experience is defined as the customer's interpretation of the meanings communicated through the qualities and characteristics of any sort of brand manifestations (Section 3.2 – Customer, Service and Brand Experience).
- Brand Experience Manual is a tool (e.g. handbook, website, video, etc.) for communicating the Brand Experience Proposition to the teams responsible for the development of the new service offerings (Section 5.2 – The Brand Experience Manual).
- Brand Experience Proposition is defined as the experiences the organization wants the customer to have (Section 3.2 – Meaningful Brand Experiences).
- Brand is defined in this thesis as a conceptual meaning proposition made by the organization, which ultimately reside in customers' minds as the result of their interactions with the branded offerings
    - Brand is thus conceptualized as both a proposition and the outcome of customers' past experiences with the organization (Section 3.2 – What is a Brand?).
    - This also means that the brand is understood as a reflection of the organization's value proposition, their relationship with the customers, and of their internal capabilities (Section 3.2 – The Brand is the Experience Proposition)
- Brandslation is the Service Design process through which the brand strategy is translated into an experiential expression of the brand proposition – a Brand Experience Proposition (Section 5.1- The Brandslation process).
- Customers are conceptualized as any individual stakeholders that directly or indirectly interact with a brand or service manifestations – consumer or not (Section 3.2 – Customer, Service and Brand Experience).
- Experience is defined as the customer's interpretation of the meanings embedded (purposefully or not) in the qualities and characteristics of the offering, resulting from the perception emerging from any sort of interaction (Section 3.1 – Meaningful Customer Experiences).

- Interactive Brand Experience is defined as the brand-experience of the experiencing-self, since it happens during the customer's interaction with the brand's manifestations (Section 3.2 – Meaningful Brand Experiences).
- Meaningful Brand Experiences is defined as Interactive Brand Experience Settings that are purposefully designed to deliver the Brand Experience Proposition through its qualities and characteristics (Section 3.2 – Meaningful Brand Experiences).
- Remembered Brand Experience is defined as the experience as it is "stored" in customer's minds, and which reflects their perceptions of all previous experiences, and influences future ones (Section 3.2 – Meaningful Brand Experiences).
- Semantic Transformation for Experiences is conceptualized as the act of encoding intentional brand meanings into the qualities and characteristics of the settings that enable the service experiences (Section 5.3 – Grounding the Semantic Transformation for Experiences).
- Service Branding is defined as the process of translating the brand's conceptual meaning proposition into customer experiences through tangible service interactions (Section 3.3 – Service Branding).
- Service Encounters are defined as the moments when the customers interact with any given service touch-point (Section 3.5 – Service Design).
- Service Experience is defined as the customer's interpretation of the meanings communicated through the qualities and characteristics of the service interaction (Section 3.2 – Customer, Service and Brand Experience).
- Service Interactions are conceptualized as tangible, yet ephemeral occurrences that exist in the moment of their performance, and cease to exist right after it (Section 3.5 – Service Branding).
- Services are conceptualized as capacities embedded in, and enabled by a dynamic configuration of resources that facilitate the value co-creation process (Section 5.1 – Insight phase; Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Vargo et al., 2008; Maglio et al., 2009).
- Touch-points are here defined as the interfaces between the service infrastructure and the customers, which materialize the value proposition, enabling its realization through the service interactions (Section 3.5 – Service Design).

1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the context in which this research was developed, briefly reviewing the literature on the intersection of Branding, Customer Experience Management, and Service Design, defending the merit of the current study. In that sense, the difference between theoretical and literature review must be noted – whereas this chapter focuses on reviewing what has been written about said topics on the current literature, the *Theoretical Review* chapter grounds the research and the research findings, providing a much broader foundation for the thesis. Accordingly, although some parts of the current chapter may recur in the *Theoretical Review* chapter, the goals are different.

After the research is contextualized, the theoretical gaps to which this research responds are presented. Next, the research questions are introduced, and justified; the structure of the thesis detailed; and finally, some remarks regarding certain overall characteristics of the thesis are made. Additionally, it should be mentioned that in order to make the reading of this thesis more dynamic, the chapters are written as independently as possible, allowing the reader to jump to their preferred chapters.

1.1 CONTEXTUALIZING THE RESEARCH

In an ever more saturated market, customer experience emerged as a leading arena for the development of a sustainable competitive advantage (Shaw & Ivens, 2002; Gentile et al., 2007; Rooney, 2011; Manning & Bodine, 2012; Pickard, 2015). However, despite the relevance of the topic, organizations still struggle to integrate traditional disciplines, such as branding and marketing, with "the customer experience (CX) function that represents the brand in the customer interaction" (Munchbach, 2014, face page).

As noted in a recent report from Forrester Research, only 18% of the companies surveyed said they derive their customer experience proposition

from the brand (Munchbach, 2014). Consequently, most customers' interactions are designed with little regard to what they convey – the meaning proposition the organization wants the customers' to perceive, which naturally, should be defined by the brand. It therefore makes sense to design the service offerings in alignment with the brand – yet, at present, this rarely happens.

Although the role of the brands in informing the customer experience proposition is acknowledged (e.g. Shaw & Ivens, 2002; Smith & Wheeler, 2002), there are few structured processes that integrate brand orientation and service development. One notable exception to this is the work of Clatworthy (2011, 2012, 2013) – i.e. AT-ONE, and Brand Megaphone model – which established a research tradition on the intersection between Branding and Service Design at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design, in which this thesis is inserted; the current research builds upon a call to advance this emerging study.

Often, the brand is seen as something that takes care of itself later (Clatworthy, 2013). Such disregard for the brand strategy at the service development stage makes customer experiences susceptible to biases, which may weaken the brand (Clatworthy, 2012). Since a brand is a promise of future experience, the service delivery is the main determinant of brand value (Berry, 2000). Hence, it makes sense to focus upon transforming the brand into customer experiences.

The development of strong brands provides a sustainable competitive advantage (McDonald et al., 2001), creating a barrier for competitors – "the presence of a well-known brand will dramatically affect how people view a product or service" (Calkins, 2005, p.2), facilitating the consumers' choices, and reducing their perception of risk (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2013). However, to be relevant, a brand must be manifested; the actual customer experiences "says more about your brand than all the advertising you could possibly buy" (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, p.xiv).

The emergence of Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a) also fostered the development of customer experience centric approaches to branding. As the center of value creation shifts from exchange, to co-creative activities between multiple stakeholders (Merz et al., 2009), branding must also acknowledge the role of customer experience in determining the brand value. In that sense, this thesis advances Service Branding as a Service Dominant Logic approach to branding that is operationalized through Service Design, which is concerned with *translating the brand's conceptual meaning*

proposition into customers' experiences through tangible service interactions.

Branding ← needs → Service Design

Brands emerge from the continuous interactions between the organization's actions and the customers' perceptions. From the company's perspective, the brand is a meaning proposition; the set of associations the organization wants the customers to have in their minds, and which is manifested through the qualities and characteristics of the service interactions (Aaker, 1996; Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). From the customers' point of view, the brand is the cluster of meaning associations linked to the brand name, resulting from these interactions (Grönroos, 2007). Thus, to exist, the brand must be manifested through some sort of tangible interface (Semprini, 2006) – in the case of services, the service encounters (Clatworthy, 2011).

> "In order to deliver their benefits, their financial value, they (brands) need to work in conjunction with other material assets such as production facilities. There are no brands without products or services to carry them… Although many people will claim that brands are all and everything, brands cannot exist without a support (product or service). This product and service becomes effectively an embodiment of the brand, that by which the brand becomes real" (Kapferer, 2011, p.10)

As such, the role of Service Design for Branding is very clear – it develops the settings that enable the service provision. However, Service Design also needs Branding. As a meaning proposition, the brand leads the experience that is being designed *for*, adding a strategic intent to the service development process – for, "if service design is to be used in substantial and not in a decorative manner it has to be connected to the business strategies" (Mager, 2009, p.35).

Hence, since the brand is the outcome of customers' past experiences with the organization, it reflects the customers' preferences, the company's heritage, and the internal competencies, which are manifested through the service interactions – also, the brand is often associated with the business strategy (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Esch, 2008). This way, using the brand to inform the experience proposition can help to bridge the missing link between business strategy and service design noted by Goldstein et al. (2002; Motta-Filho, 2012).

Brand and Experience Management

The idea of designing brand based customer experiences is not new – yet, while many companies may acknowledge this, very few deliver or approach the design of brand-based customer experiences in the right way (Wise et al., 2014). In a recent paper, Wise et al. (2014) noted that although more than 80 percent of senior managers say that their organizations focus on the customer experiences, "85 percent of firms have no systematic approach to determining what a differentiated customer experience even looks like, let alone creating one" (p.8). Similarly, Gentile et al. (2007, p.395) observe that while there are many studies focusing on the customers' experiences, "tools aimed at supporting marketing managers in devising the right stimuli to support an excellent Customer Experience are still scarce".

In the managerial literature, as early as 2002, Smith and Wheeler proposed the concept of *Branded Customer Experience*[1] as "a service experience that is intentional, consistent, differentiated, and valuable" (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, p.1). For the authors,

> "… the brand promise must be the focus and anchor for the organization. It serves as the promise made to customers, what the brand represents to customers and employees, and the internal values that are required to deliver it. In short, it replaces or aligns the numerous and disconnected missions, visions, values, brand values, and customer charters that we see in so many organizations that often are contradictory, confusing, and of little practical value in running the business" (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, p.50).

Likewise, Shaw and Ivens (2002, p.11), defend that "the people delivering the customer experience should be delivering a branded customer experience". However, the authors note that often, companies "do not have a clear definition of their customer experience or have a customer experience statement" (Shaw & Ivens, 2002, p.89) – what Schmitt (2003, p.17), calls an *Experiential Platform*: a tool that "effectively communicates internally and externally what the organization, its brand, and its products stand for and what value they offer to customers" (Schmitt, 2003, p.87). This issue with determining the experience proposition has also been noted by Carbone and Haeckel (1994, p.9), as they suggest that "engineering an experience begins with the deliberate setting of a targeted customer perception".

Central to the engineering of the customer experience is the systematic design and orchestration of the "signals generated by the products, services, and the

[1] The authors registered the trademark

environment" (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994, p.9) – a.k.a. the service clues: anything in the service interaction that the customer may perceive either by its presence or absence. These clues can be classified as *functional*, when related to the service performance, or *emotional* (a.k.a. Contextual; Carbone & Haeckel, 1994), when related to the sensorial qualities of the service environment (Berry et al., 2006). Despite acknowledging the importance of the functional qualities of the offering, Carbone and Haeckel (1994) suggest that experience management should focus on the contextual clues.

For Schmitt (2003, p.17), Customer Experience Management "is the process of strategically managing the customer's experiences with a product of a company". Analogously, Kapferer (2011, p.10) argues that "brand management starts with creating products, services, and/or places that embody the brand". This view, which acknowledges the role of the offerings as the main expression of the brand proposition, is closer to a Service Dominant Logic approach to branding (Merz et al, 2009), as it implies that an experience is not designed, but only "the prerequisites that enable customers to have the desired experiences" (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2011, p.65). Experiences are thus co-created in the interaction between the stakeholders' value networks (Vargo, 2008; Vargo et al., 2008), where goods are seen as a "mechanism for service provision" (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p.7, FP3).

Enters Corporate Branding

Also writing on managerial literature, Schmidt and Ludlow (2001) advocate for an inclusive approach to branding – for the authors, changes focused only on the corporate identity are insufficient, as any sort of repositioning should be followed by actual changes in the organization, and in the offering. This holistic perspective defended by Schmidt and Ludlow (2001) can be explained through the difference between the *first* and *second* wave of corporate branding: whereas the first developed as an extension of product branding, being essentially carried out by marketing and campaign thinking, the second recognizes the role of the multiple stakeholders involved in the brand building process, and not only the customers (Schultz et al., 2005).

One key characteristic of this second wave of corporate branding is the focus on building a lasting proposition, as opposed to "short-lived advertising campaigns" typical of FMCG (Hatch & Schultz, 2008, p.10). This is because the corporate brand is connected to the organization's past, and "accompanies the firm for life" (Hatch & Schultz, 2008, p.10) – it is grounded on an integrated view of whom the organization is, whereas "products brands are detached from the company behind them" (Schultz, 2005, p.24).

Accordingly, the meaning proposition behind the experience is central to corporate branding.

In that sense, Schmidt and Ludlow (2001) warn against the risk of empty *values*, *mission*, and *vision* (VMV) statements, noting that "the VMV, which is the vital core of a brand, has hardly recovered from the reputation it gained for vagueness and irrelevance" (Schmidt & Ludlow, 2001, p.6). Similarly, Antorini and Schultz (2005) discuss the *conformity trap*: when an organization, despite its ambition, fails "to transform their claimed uniqueness into expressive statements that substantially differentiate the organization and distinguish it in ways that are meaningfully perceived by others" (Antorini & Schultz, 2005, p.60).

Another key characteristic of the second wave of corporate branding is its focus on the role of the employees in delivering the brand (e.g. Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; de Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Karmark, 2005; Schultz, 2005; Schultz et al., 2005; Ind, 2007; Ind & Bjerke, 2007; de Chernatony, 2010). Differently to the first wave, which was more concerned with promoting the brand through marketing campaigns, the second wave "can be seen as a move towards conceiving more integrated relationships between internal and external stakeholders, linking top management, employees, customers, and other stakeholders" (Schultz, 2005, p.24).

The employees thus play an essential role in enabling a brand-based customer experience, as the staff's behavior, dress, attitudes, and tone of voice are seen as a representation of the brand to the customer (De Chernatony, 2010). However, it is understood that simply imposing tight control over the employees is not the best solution. Instead, organizations should focus on letting the employees have a clear understanding of what the brand promise is, and on inspiring them to act accordingly (Mosley, 2007). The idea is to bring the brand experience inside the organization, facilitating the internalization of the brand values, thus resulting in offerings that manifest the brand proposition naturally (Karmark, 2005; Ind, 2007; Ind & Bjerke, 2007; Stompff, 2008).

Service Brand(ing)

Service branding[2] builds on the same foundation as corporate branding – essentially the main differentiation is the focus of the first on the service sector, whereas the second is not restricted to any specific industry, but to

[2] Service Branding is capitalized to refer to the approach proposed in this thesis.

corporations (as opposed to line products). Similar to the corporate brands (McDonald et al, 2001), the service brands also sit at the intersection of multiple stakeholders, mediating the different activities that enable the value co-creation processes (Brodie et al, 2006, Brodie, 2009). Moreover, both service and corporate brands often carry the name of the parent organization (de Chernatony et al, 2003).

Since service brands have multiple points of contact, the brand cannot be solely the property of the marketing department – because customer experience "disproportionately shapes brand meaning and equity" (Berry, 2000, p.130), the whole organization must help in delivering the brand (McDonald et al, 2001). In that sense, the role the frontline employees as part-time marketers, facilitating the customers' relationship with the brand, must be acknowledged (Gummesson, 1995; Ostrum et al., 1995; Grönroos, 2004) – as Berry and Saltman (2007, p.199) note, "a strong service brands is built and sustained primarily by customers' interactions with the provider".

However, it is not only the frontline employee who shapes the customers' experiences – every element of the brand delivery, is, at some point, influenced by some employee; be it through a direct interaction, back stage support, or through the development of the systems that enable the service (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). Furthermore, since every service interaction creates an experience for the customer (Johnston & Kong, 2011), "every service firm is branding, whether the fact is explicitly acknowledged or not, and whether the branding oversight is managed well or not" (Ostrum et al., 1995, p.196-197). As such, service branding should also be concerned with the management of the service interactions, so that customer experience is aligned with the brand proposition.

Service Experience Design

For Clatworthy (2013, p.100), there is "a general trend in services branding to move from a focus upon staff to a focus upon multiple touch-points, or 'clues'" – consequently, the author defends the importance of considering branding as an integral part of the New Service Development (NSD) process. Building on the concept of Semantic Transformation (Karjalainen, 2004), Clatworthy (2012) proposes a model for transforming the brand strategy into service experience during the early stage of the NSD process. Explained through the metaphor of a Brand Megaphone, Semantic Transformation for Services is conceptualized as a three-step process – summarizing the Brand DNA; developing the Service Personality; and enacting and refining the

experience – through which the NSD team develops a brand-based service concept (Clatworthy, 2012).

Traditionally, the NSD process is divided in two main stages: the front end – also called service design (Goldstein et al., 2002) –, when service concept is designed, defining the value proposition the organization is making to the customers; and the back end, when the service concept is implemented, and the prerequisites that enable the service are developed (Tatikonda & Zeithaml, 2002). More recently, Service Design has advanced into a user-centric approach (Wetter-Edman, 2011) to service innovation (as opposed to an NSD phase; Yu & Sangiorgi, 2014) aimed at co-creating service offerings (Clatworthy, 2013) in cooperation with multiples stakeholders, using iterative and collaborative processes, and with the assistance of visual tools (Stickdorn, 2010b).

Since services are understood as processes through which the stakeholders interact to co-create value (Grönroos, 2006; Vargo et al., 2010), the customers' journey with the service is key to Service Design, and journey mapping is certainly the most recognizable Service Design tool. However, when a service designer develops a customer journey, what is being designed is not a service, but a proposition – something that in many aspects is similar to a service concept. Generally, Service Design – and especially the academic literature – is not concerned with the implementation[3] of the service concept. Moreover, even when the service is implemented, what is developed is not the service *per se*, but the settings that facilitate the service provision (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996).

In that sense, Design for Service (Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012) emerged as an approach to Service Design that, by building on Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, 2008), "acknowledges the indeterminacy of services as an object of design" (Sangiorgi, 2012, p.98-99), thus recognizing that what is being designed is a platform for value co-creation processes (Vargo et al., 2008; Manzini, 2011; Kimbell, 2011a). Consequently, it understands that organizations cannot design, or control customer experiences; at best, they can "create or stage the prerequisites that enable customers to have the desired experiences" (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2011, p.65).

Yet, even though Design for Services points to the importance of the settings that enable the service provision, its link to the back end of the NSD process

[3] Recently, the most advanced service design practices are integrating the design phase with the implementation stages (Section 3.5 – Service Design).

is rather frail. Accordingly, Patrício et al. (2011) propose Multilevel Service Design (MSD) as an "interdisciplinary method for designing complex service systems" (p.180) that highlight the different levels of the service prerequisites (concept, processes, and systems; Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996), strengthening the link between Service Design and the back end of the NSD process. However, it must be noted that MSD does not address the implementation of the service concept, but only the design of the service prerequisites.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that these limitations regarding the implementation of the service concept can be associated with the complexities intrinsic to services – hardly, any single discipline may cover all the knowledge required to operationalize most services. Hence, given the necessity to ensure that the service is implemented as designed, the service designer can operate as a manager, assisting the process (Gloppen, 2012), helping to fashion the "other design disciplines into a congruent story" (Abbing, 2010, p.186).

Limitations of Current Literature

Despite the considerable production of research on Branding, Customer Experience Management, and Service Design, there are no integrated approaches for the translation of the brand strategy into customers' experiences – what is being referred to in this thesis as Service Branding. Such a limitation emerges from the gap between the two main disciplines responsible for the management of the customers' experiences: Branding and Service Design – a similar disconnect to that noticed by Munchbach (2014) between the departments responsible for designing the service interactions that convey the brand to the customers, and the traditional marketing functions that own the brand (Shawn & Ivens, 2002).

As introduced earlier in this chapter, a brand is a conceptual proposition – hence, to be effective, it needs to be manifested. Conversely, customers experience management needs branding's strategic intent to define its proposition, leading its development. In that sense, Service Branding must be concerned with both converting the brand strategy into an experiential proposition for the brand, and with transforming this experiential proposition into service settings that enable brand-based experiences for the customers. This way, an operational Service Branding process needs to incorporate the sub-process of *defining* and *delivering* the *Brand Experience Proposition* into one approach – something that has not been properly done yet, as shown in the brief literature review above.

The problem with current approaches to experience management is that, even though the importance of having a targeted customer experience proposition is acknowledged (e.g. Carbone & Haeckel, 1994), they often neglect the role of the brand in defining the experience proposition. Moreover, the focus on the service clues (Berry et al., 2002, 2006) shows little regard for the overall offering, turning experience management into the process of 'accessorizing' the service interactions. One noteworthy exception is Berry and Lampo's (2004) paper on the branding of labor-intensive services – yet the authors only defend the importance of the service performances for the development of strong brands, and do not provide any sort of framework to facilitate the process.

Similarly, managerial literature (e.g. Schmidt & Ludlow, 2001; Shaw & Ivens, 2002; Smith & Wheeler, 2002; Schmitt, 2003) also fails to deliver a practical and operational process – however, it does offer some very interesting insights, even linking customer experience management with branding (e.g. Shaw & Ivens, 2002; Smith & Wheeler, 2002). The main issue with the managerial literature is that it focuses on generic high level, top-down approaches, providing good examples of best practices, but not much is said about how to do it – e.g. how to develop the *Experiential Platform* (Schmitt, 2003). In this context, another exception worth mentioning is Abbing's (2010) work, which, despite focusing on innovation, does provide a rather detailed and hands-on approach.

On branding research, both service and corporate literatures focus on the role of the employees, and on organizational management (e.g. McDonald et al, 2001; Schultz, 2005; Schultz et al., 2005; de Chernatony, 2010), and brand based experiences are seen as a consequence of the internal culture (Karmark, 2005; Ind, 2007; Stompff, 2008) – as Clatworthy (2013, p.98) notes, "much of the focus of services branding lay in selection and training of personnel", and research on the role of "design as part of branding in NSD" (p.98), is essentially inexistent. Yet, Clatworthy (2013) also notes that service branding is increasingly concerned with the development of the settings that enable the service provision – branding and service design are mutually dependent.

In that sense, the role of Service Design is to develop the enablers of the brand experiences – yet, traditionally, Service Design research is not concerned with the brand proposition. Additionally, as discussed earlier, different approaches to service development have different characteristics and limitations. Service design, for example, is very good at co-creative and collaborative practices – however, it often focuses on the development of services as experience propositions, with little regard to its implementation.

On the other hand, conventional NSD models are very good at implementing the service concept, but do not approach the multiple stakeholders involved in the service interaction properly.

Some of these problems were addressed by newer approaches to Service Design, such as Design for Service (Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012; Segelström, 2013) and Multilevel Service Design (MSD; Patrício et al., 2011), which, by integrating the Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, 2008), acknowledge that what is being designed is not the service but the prerequisites that enable the service interactions – this way, they combine some characteristics of Service Design and of NSD. However, neither Design for Service nor MSD build on a brand-based experience proposition, and both also fail to fully address the back end of the NSD process – even though MSD considers the different levels of the service prerequisites.

What is this Thesis about?

The importance of branding and of customer experience for the organization has already been introduced. Brands create value for both the customers and for the organizations (Keller, 2013) – yet, to do so, they must first come alive through the service interactions. It is the customers' experiences with these manifestations that define their perception of the brand, and consequently, the brand value[4] (Aaker, 1991). In that sense, in order to strengthen the brand, and to create value for the customers and for themselves, the organizations must focus on delivering consistent brand-based services.

However, even though the idea of designing brand-based experiences is not new, there are no integrated approaches that facilitate the translation of the brand strategy into customers' experiences. As Clatworthy (2013, p.110) notes, "the link between customer experience, the brand and the design process is missing when it comes to tools, methods and processes" – while there is a significant production of research on the importance of customer experience, "tools aimed at supporting marketing managers in devising the right stimuli to support an excellent Customer Experience are still scarce" (Gentile et al, 2007, p.395).

Accordingly, this thesis proposes *Designing for Brand Experience* as a framework that operationalizes the Service Branding[5] process through a

[4] This is further explored in Section 3.2, in the *Theoretical Review* chapter.
[5] 'Service Branding process' is used in this section to refer to the process of translating the brand's conceptual meaning proposition into customer experience through tangible service interactions, and must not be confused with the 'Service Branding literature'.

sequence of three sub-processes: first, defining the Brand Experience Proposition (Brandslation process); then, communicating this experience proposition to the design teams responsible for the service development (Brand Experience Manual); and, finally, supporting the design and implementation of the settings that convey the Brand Experience Proposition through its qualities and characteristics (Semantic Transformation for Experiences), enabling brand-based customer experiences.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research presented in this monograph started with an open call for Ph.D. candidates from the Oslo School of Architecture and Design. In that context, the initial position was to investigate *the use of Service Design for translating brand strategy into customer experience*, advancing Clatworthy's (2012, 2013) seminal work on service branding. During the early stages of the research, it was understood that this provisional problem was just an initial position, which, to be coped with, needed to be further developed. This way, building on Clatworthy (2012, 2013), and also due to the focus of the Ph.D. program, the preliminary explorations (see *Research Process* chapter) defined Service Design as the foundation for the research, and an approach based on Semantic Transformation (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012) was proposed as a viable path to a solution.

The Ph.D. program also influenced the research methodology. Almost as a natural choice, Design Research – and more specifically Research by Design (Sevaldson, 2010) – was adopted, mainly due its capacity to develop new knowledge through action research-based design interventions. The use of an action research strategy (Lau, 1997) enabled the "research question to drive the research process" (Crouch & Pearce, 2012, p.144), facilitating a practice based approach where the design project was an integral part of the research process (Saikaly, 2005). In that sense, it is essential to acknowledge the difference between *research problem* and *research question*:

> "A problem can be considered as an unresolved dilemma or circumstance, or an obstacle to the resolution of a task. A question, on the other hand, is an intellectual tool for eliciting information, and, in relation to design and research, it's a way of eliciting information about strategies for resolving dilemmas or the resolution of a task" (Crouch & Pearce, 2012, p.19).

Approaching the initial problem as a problem, and not as a question allowed the research to explore different perspectives that could lead to a possible

solution to the situation at hand (Dorst, 2006). Although the pre-defined problem later became the basis for the actual General Research Question, it was the findings emerging from the preliminary empirical and theoretical research that framed it.

- General Research Question – How can Service Design enable the transformation of brand strategy into customer experience?

The initial problem – and thus the General Research Question – also established the assumption that brands should define the experience proposition. This view was supported by the Semantic Transformation concept (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012), and further developed through the Theoretical Review, as the role of the brand as a key strategic asset (Urde, 1999; Brodie et al., 2006) was acknowledged.

Then, building on the concept of Semantic Transformation (Karjalainen, 2004), it was understood that the design teams translate the brand strategy into services that render the customers' experiences during NSD (Clatworthy, 2012). As such, the first explorations aimed at understanding the usability (Abbing, 2010) status of contemporary Brand Manuals (Motta-Filho, 2012). Throughout this early research, it was noticed that the existing brand manuals did not address the needs of the service design teams, for the brand was not defined in experiential terms, but as "graphic identity charters, books of standards and visual identity guides" (Kapferer, 2011, p.173).

Hence, the development of a Brand Experience Manual as a tool to inform the Brand Experience Proposition to the service design teams was seen as a way to answer the General Research Question. Yet, during this process, the same lack of experiential descriptors also affected the development of the Brand Experience Manual, as organizations did not know what their Brand Experience Proposition was. Consequently, a process for translating the brand strategy into a brand-based experience proposition – a.k.a. Brand Experience Proposition – was required in order to inform the Brand Experience Manual. Accordingly, the empirical research was led by the following Specific Research Questions:

- Specific Question 1 (SQ1) – How can a brand strategy be translated into an experiential expression of the brand proposition – a Brand Experience Proposition?
- Specific Question 2 (SQ2) – How can the Brand Experience Proposition be communicated to the New Service Development teams?

However, once the empirical research was concluded, it was noticed that the current approach to the Semantic Transformation process (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012) had to be advanced to facilitate the implementation of the Brand Experience Manual, enabling the translation of the Brand Experience Proposition into service settings that support the customers' experiences – consequently, a third Specific Research Question emerged:

- Specific Question 3 (SQ3) – How does a Brand Experience Proposition become translated into Customers' Experiences?

Differently to the other two Specific Research Questions (SQ1 and SQ2), this last one (SQ3) was resolved through theoretical (literature review-based; Creswell, 2009) research, resulting in the development of the Semantic Transformation for Experiences concept. Later, in the *Findings and Contributions* chapter, all three specific questions are further developed, responding to the General Research Question.

1.3 THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis is divided into seven chapters and one appendix, following the structure shown in the image (1.1) bellow:

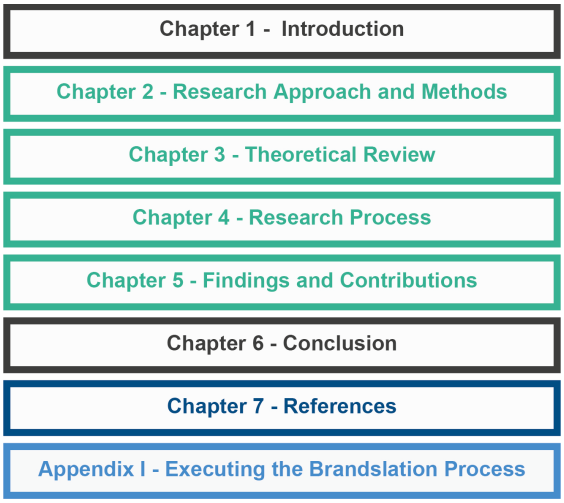

Image 1.1 – Structure of the thesis

This *first chapter* introduced the context in which this study was developed, pointing to its merit, the research questions, and the overall structure, and characteristics of this thesis.

In *Chapter 2* the methodology, strategy, and methods used in this thesis are presented. First, the chapter establishes the approach to design adopted by this thesis. Then, design research is defended as the methodological approach, and action research as the strategy of choice. Finally, the data collection, and analysis methods are described, and an overall view of the research process concludes the chapter.

Chapter 3 thoroughly reviews the theoretical foundations that support the research, and the findings that answer the research questions, providing the reader with the essential tools to understand this thesis. Structurally, the chapter is divided into two main parts – the first, grounding the process of defining the Brand Experience Proposition, and the second supporting the delivery of Brand Experience Proposition. Connecting these two parts is a section presenting Service Branding – a concept that is described through the sub-processes of defining and delivering the Brand Experience Proposition.

Next, *Chapter 4* details the research process – the action research cycles that informed the research. Starting with the early stages of exploring the research problem context, the chapter thoroughly describes the development of the Brandslation process, and of the Brand Experience Manual. In the end, the process of Writing as Reflection (Richardson, 1994) is presented as the last stage of the action research – however, a more detailed account of the findings is presented in the next chapter.

In *Chapter 5*, the research findings and contributions are presented. It starts by reviewing the research questions, and their grounding assumptions. Next, it presents the three main research findings: the Brandslation process, the Brand Experience Manual, and the Designing for Brand Experience framework – which is presented with the Semantic Transformation for Experiences. Lastly, the findings are discussed, contextualizing the research's contributions to practice and theory.

Concluding this thesis, *Chapter 6* reviews the key points of the research, its main contributions and limitations, and concludes by presenting suggestions for future studies; Chapter 7 lists the literature referred to in this thesis; and *Appendix I* provides a practical description of the Brandslation process.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that this thesis does not necessarily have to be read in the right sequence. Accordingly, a fellow academic interested in the research methodology can skip to Chapter 2; a practitioner interested in the outcomes of the research should read the theoretical foundation in Chapter 3, the findings in Chapter 5, and the Appendix I; and for design researchers interested in developing their own frameworks, Chapter 4 can offer valuable insights.

/ CHAPTER

This chapter introduced the research context, problems, and structure – yet, some final remarks regarding certain characteristics of the current thesis are still necessary:

1. First, it must be noted that this thesis was written for an audience that includes professionals and academics from different fields – as such, some explanations could be rather lengthy, as they are supposed to inform readers unacquainted with the topic.
2. The chapters were designed to be as independent as possible, making it easier for the reader to select only the parts they are interested in – however this same characteristic also makes the thesis a bit repetitive at times.
3. Although the research process was very well documented, due to non-disclosure agreements, both the pictures from the workshops, and especially the outcome of the (Brandslation) process – i.e. the Brand Experience Manuals and its content – cannot be revealed in this thesis.
4. Finally, even though this thesis builds on a Service Dominant Logic perspective, in which the concept of a service economy is seen as "an aberration of the G-D6 logic thinking" (Vargo & Lusch, 2008a, p.4), services, as an economic sector (BLS, 2015; Edvardsson et al., 2005), is acknowledged, for the empirical research was developed within the service industry.

[6] Good Dominant as opposed to Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a).

2. Research Approach and Methods

This chapter presents the research methodology, strategy, and methods used in this thesis. First, the characteristics of design discipline (Cross, 1982) are explored in light of Cross' (2010) design thinking perspective, and Gibbons et al. (1994) Mode-2 of knowledge production, grounding the approach to design used in this research. Next, different modes of design research are introduced, and reflective practice (Schön, 1982) is suggested as the epistemology of choice, which is then followed by the quality criteria.

As the methodological approach is grounded and defended, action research is introduced as a research strategy, framing the overall research process; after that, the data collection methods are detailed, and the means to make sense of the research presented. Last, the structure used to cope with the research problem is presented, the action research process is visualized, and the different iterations briefly summarized.

2.1 APPROACH TO DESIGN

For Cross (1982), design as a discipline means design as a third culture of liberal arts; an integrative discipline that complements the other two, and which has its own phenomenon of interest, appropriate methods, and cultural values. In that sense, the research presented in this thesis builds on the design discipline tradition (Archer, 1981; Cross, 1982); a practice-based approach that aims at developing new knowledge in the context of application (Nowotny, 2004), in which the design projects are not only an object of study, but also an integral part of the research process (Saikaly, 2005; Sevaldson, 2010).

Accordingly, two concepts are seen as central to the *designerly ways of knowing* (Cross, 1982). First is design thinking, which is defined by Cross (2010, p.100) as "the abilities of resolving ill-defined problems, adopting solution-focused cognitive strategies, employing abductive or appositional

thinking and using non-verbal modeling media"; this helps to describe the phenomenon of interest and appropriate methods. Second, the Mode-2 of knowledge production (Gibbons et al., 1994), which frames design discipline's cultural values in practice and transdisciplinarity (Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2011).

Phenomenon of Interest

Cross (1982) suggests that design discipline's phenomenon of interest is the artificial world, "the human-made world of artifacts" (p.54). While science focuses on the natural world, and humanities on human experiences, design is concerned with the development of solution-focused strategies to the wicked problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973) typically associated with artificial systems (Simon, 1996). Accordingly, Simon's (1996, p.111) proposition that 'to design' is to devise "courses of actions aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones" must acknowledge that design focuses on solving ill-defined problems through an explorative and generative way (Sevaldson, 2010), where designing the solution contributes to the understanding of the nature of the problem (Crouch & Pearce, 2012).

For Buchanan (1992, p.16), the reason why design problems are wicked is because "design has no special subject mater of its own apart from what a designer conceives it to be". Wicked problems are of a different kind as they cannot be properly formulated, and have no ideal solution. Since the process of defining the problem is parallel to the course of solving it, every solution is unique, and possibly leads to new unforeseen problems. Furthermore, wicked problems do not have a stopping rule, as there is no right and wrong answer, only better or worse (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Buchanan, 1992).

From the characteristics suggested by Rittel and Webber (1973), the aforementioned ones are those that best frame the wicked nature of the problem currently researched. In trying to answer the research question, different approaches could be employed; yet, in the course of understanding possible solutions, the focus of the problem became clearer and an approach to the situations was chosen. Furthermore, as there was no end-rule, it is acknowledged that further research on the topic could lead to different solutions.

Appropriate Methods

For Cross (1982), the appropriate method for a design discipline is based on modeling, pattern-formation, and synthesis. Similarly, Dorst (2006)

understands design problems as paradoxes made up of from a clash of conflicting situations, in which the solution emerges in the process of solving the paradoxes, and where the challenge is to figure out what to create, while there is no agreement on what the problem really is. In that context, the scientific tradition based on deduction and induction is inadequate for the situation, as in both cases, no new knowledge can be created outside the scope of the given information (Kolko, 2010).

Different to the traditional scientific approach, abductive reasoning connects the known parts of incomplete information, making creative leaps to hypothetical solutions from which one can understand the problematic situation. For Dew (2007, p.36), "abduction is about making inferences from information that is surprising or anomalous". Analogously, Kolko (2010) defines the abductive sense making process of adopting a hypothesis as suggested by the facts as 'synthesis'. This process of pattern creation and active solution construction is the core of design thinking (Dorst, 2010).

> "… deductive thinking proves something must be the case, and inductive thinking shows that something is in operation … it is through abductive thinking that we are able to make leaps that connect information together rapidly, and decide about how things might be put together to make sense of them" (Crouch & Pearce, 2012, p.22).

Abduction is thus about changing the problem's placements, and reframing the situation in a way that makes it easier for the designer to solve it (Buchanan, 1992). This concept is similar to Schön's (1982) 'frame experiment': "at the heart of reflection-in-action is the 'frame experiment' in which the practitioner frames, or poses a way of seeing the problematic situation at hand" (Cross, 2010, p.100). Although these approaches to abduction are described in different terms, they all propose to create new solutions from incomplete information by engaging in reflection *in* and *on* action (Schön, 1982).

As such, following Schön's (1982) 'frame experiment' concept, the present research sees abduction as the adequate mode of reasoning to be used during the reflective practice, and as the means to make creative leaps that allow the problem to be reframed.

Values of the Culture

As a practice-based approach looking to build knowledge from incomplete information, design research must acknowledge the importance of

collaborative explorations. Hence, design discipline must have a set of values that support the co-production of knowledge in the context of practice, similar to Mode-2 of knowledge production (Gibbons et al., 1994; Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2011). In that sense, Cross' (1982, p.222) definition of "practicality, ingenuity, empathy and concern with appropriateness" as the main values of design discipline is rather adequate.

The main attribute of Mode-2 is to carry out the research in the context of application with the participation of the communities of interest; a transdisciplinary approach to research that, by engaging with parts of society usually outside the academic arena, goes beyond disciplinary boundaries to focuses on real-world problems as an in-practice model of research, that has great similarities with design (Nowotny, 2004; Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2011).

To cope with such a collaborative practice-based approach, this research followed an action research strategy, which builds on Susman and Evered (1978) and Crouch and Pearce (2012) models, and on Participatory Action Research (Kindon et al., 2007), as will be further explained later in the 'Action Research' section of this chapter.

2.2 DESIGN RESEARCH AS METHODOLOGY

As practice-based research, this thesis builds on design discipline as described in the previous section. Following Cross' (1999, p.9) observation that "the whole point of design research is to extract reliable knowledge from either the natural or artificial world, and to make that knowledge available to others in re-useable form", it is understood that although design and research share important similarities (Stappers, 2007), a distinction between works of practice and research must be established (Friedman, 2000).

Reflective Practice

Cross (1999, p.9) proposes that "to qualify as research, there must be reflection by the practitioner on the work, and communication of some re-useable results for reflection". This description points towards two important characteristics: 1) the understanding that knowledge must be communicable, "generating and reporting results which are testable and accessible by others" (Cross, 1999, p.9), and 2) the fact that the practitioner must engage in some sort of reflective practice (Schön, 1982), which is suggested as an epistemological choice especially suited for design research (Cross, 2010).

For Schön (1982, p.78), designing can be described as "a conversation with the materials of a situation" through which designers can talkback to the problem; as such, in a practice context, the researcher is thinking *in* and *on* action. For Friedman (2000, p.13), "reflective practice is not a form of silent mediation on work". Similar to Schön's (1982) concept of 'frame experiment', in which abductive reasoning is embedded, reflective practice is seen as a "form of bringing unconscious patterns and tacit understandings to conscious understanding through articulation" (Friedman, 2000, p.13).

> "When he (the practitioner) finds himself stuck in a problematic situation which he cannot readily convert to a manageable problem, he may consider a new way of setting the problem – a new frame which, in what I shall call a 'frame experiment', he tries to impose on the situation" (Schön, 1982, p.63).

Since reflective practice does not pre-define the problem, it allows the designer to focus on understanding the design situation, defining the problem while working on solving it. Also, as the reflective-action is not bound by established theoretical categories, the designer may work across disciplines, developing the adequate conceptual approach to the situation at hand (Schön, 1982). Notwithstanding, although reflective practice provides a foundation for an epistemology of design research, it is not enough in itself to classify a design work as research, as is further explained in the next topic.

Modes of Design Research

Among the different categorizations of design research, Frayling's (1993) research *for*, *into*, and *through* design (Table 2.1) is among the most commonly cited (Rust et al., 2007). For Jonas (2007, p.192), "research through design provides the epistemological concepts for the development of a genuine design research paradigm". Developing on research through design, Sevaldson (2010, p.11) proposes *research by design* as "a special research mode where the explorative, generative and innovative aspects of design are engaged and aligned in a systematic research inquiry", which the author suggests should constitute the unique core of design research.

	Frayling (1993, p.5)	Jonas (2007, p.191)
Into/ About	Research Into Art and Design "… is the most straightforward, and, according … by far the most common: • Historical Research • Aesthetic or Perceptual Research • Research into a variety of theoretical perspectives on art and design …"	Research About Design "… operates from without, thereby keeping its object at a distance. The researchers are observers who work scientifically and try, wherever possible, not to change their object. Examples include design philosophy, design history, design criticism..."
For	Research For Art and Design "The thorny one… research with a small 'r' in the dictionary – what Picasso considered was the gathering of reference materials rather than research proper. Research where the end is an artifact – where the thinking is, so to speak, embodied in the artifact…"	Research For Design "… operates from without, supporting the process selectively. The researchers serve designers as "suppliers of knowledge". The knowledge supplied is valid only for a certain period of time, because it is related to a reality that design aims to change. Examples include market research, user research ... product semantics..."
Through	Research Through Art and Design "... accounts for the largest category... • … materials research – such as the titanium sputtering or colorization of metal projects ... • … development work – for example, customizing a piece of technology to do something no-one had considered before, and communicating the results ... • … action research – where a research diary tells, in a step by step way, of a practical experiment in the studios, and the resulting report aims to contextualize it…"	Research Through Design "… refers to a research and design process intrinsic to design. Designers / researchers are directly involved in establishing connections and shaping their research object. Examples potentially include every "wicked problem" in Rittel's sense of the term."

Table 2.1 – Different approaches to Design Research (based on Jonas, 2007).

For Sevaldson (2010, p.11), the difference between research 'through' and 'by' design lies in the fact that 'research by design' does not include "practices that serve to generate knowledge for external agenda". On the other hand, these approaches both emphasize the insider perspective in which the researcher is part of the project team, whereas in Fraylings' (1993) research *for* and *into* design, the researcher operates from the outside. Such a first person angle "has the potential to provide findings unattainable with

only an outside perspective" (Fallman, 2008, p.17); in that sense, designing is understood as a (vital) part of the research process (Fallman, 2007).

> "In design-oriented research in HCI, hence, the knowledge that comes from studying the designed artifact in use or from the process of bringing the product into being should be seen as the main contribution – the 'result' – whereas the artifact that has been developed becomes more of a means than an end. It is not without value, obviously, but it is not regarded as the main result of the research process" (Fallman, 2007, p.197).

Saikaly (2005) proposes a Practice-Based approach to design research that is grounded in action research, and which, similarly to Fallman's (2007) Design-Oriented Research, understands the design project not as the objective of the research in itself, but an important part of the process. In that approach, the research undergoes a path of discovery through design practice, which is then followed by the search for new understandings. Yet, according to Dunin-Woyseth (2005), to classify as research, such Practice-Based approaches need substantial textual work similar to the traditional academic format.

One last categorization of design research used to frame the current research is Fallman's (2008, p.4) "Interaction Design Research Triangle", which positions the design research activity between *practice*, *studies* – which are similar traditional academic disciplines –, and *exploration*. Yet, although Fallman suggests the 'exploratory perspective' as a way to open new arenas for design research, it was noticed that the present research practice and exploration could be separated, as the development of new solutions through practice was in itself an exploratory process.

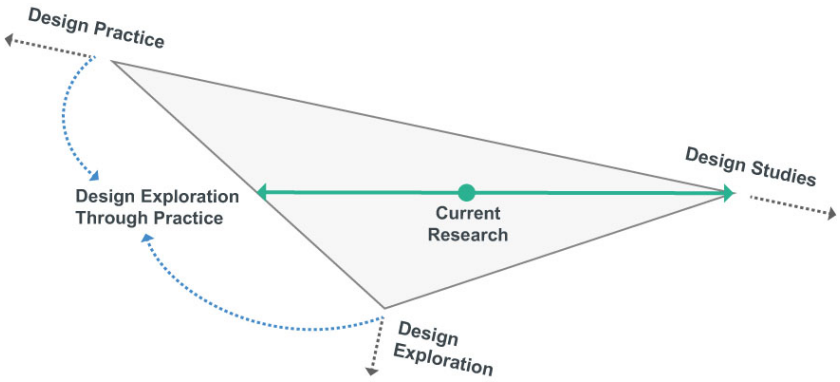

Image 2.1 - Adapted from Fallman's (2008) Interaction Design Research Triangle, the intersection where exploration and practice converge and meet design studies.

Hence, since the research presented in this thesis also seeks to contribute to academia, it sits in the continuum between the junction of exploration and practice, and design study (Image 2.1; Fallman, 2008); a practice-based research (Saikaly, 2005; Sevaldson, 2010), grounded in academic knowledge (Dunin-Woyseth, 2005), in which the design project was not seen as the outcome, but rather part of the process, giving the researcher a rich first person perspective of the design situation (Fallman 2007).

Quality Criteria

Fallman (2007) suggests that Research-Oriented Design is not the same as Design-Oriented Research; whereas the first has artifacts as the main outcome, the later focuses on research done through design, where the development of the artifact is just a part of the process. Although the design process can be focused on developing knowledge, works of practice and research must be differentiated (Friedman, 2000). For Cross (2007), best practices in design research have in common the fact that they are all purposive, inquisitive, informed, methodical and communicable.

In that sense, design research must be based on problems that are worthy of investigation, seek to develop new knowledge, and build on previous studies. The research should be carried out in a methodical and disciplined manner, and the results reported in a communicable way, enriching the knowledge of the studied subject. Although it is noticed that these are the characteristics for good research in any discipline, "they exclude works of so-called research that fail to communicate, are undisciplined or ill-informed, and therefore add nothing to the body of knowledge of the discipline" (Cross, 2007, p.48).

In order to answer to this quality criteria (Cross, 2007), this thesis is structured in the following manner: the current chapter introduces the methodology and methods used in this research; the merit of the research problem is presented in the *Introduction* chapter; the *Theoretical Review* chapter extensively explores the built knowledge that served as the base for this research; and this monograph in itself – and more specifically the *Findings and Contributions* chapter – report on the knowledge developed through the research.

Additionally, following Zimmerman et al. (2007), it is understood that the current research does not command the replication of the design outcome; hence, similar to ethnography, an essential criterion for quality is the documentation of the research process, a condition that is fulfilled by the *Research Process* chapter, which describes the iterative cycles of the action

research process. Furthermore, two supplementary criteria for rigor in actions research – "carefully planned and executed cycle of activities … (and) a continuous process of problem diagnosis" (Davison et al., 2004, p.68) – are also explored in the *Research Process* chapter.

2.3 ACTION RESEARCH AS STRATEGY

Not so much a methodology, action research is an orientation to inquiry that engages the researcher in "an empirical and logical problem-solving process involving cycles of action and reflection" (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p.4). During the *action* phases, the researcher, in collaboration with the community of interest, gathers information about the intervention. In the *reflection* stages, the researcher and stakeholders make sense of the data and plan future actions.

Action research aims at developing practical and relevant solutions that contribute to theory and practice (Susman & Evered, 1978; Crouch & Pearce, 2012), and as such, it is an appropriate approach for projects where the outcome is unknown (Swann, 2001). In this thesis, action research is used as an inquiry strategy (Lau, 1997); it structures the data collection process through design interventions, and the reflective analysis process (reflective practice; Schön, 1982) of making sense out of the data.

In that sense, the five-steps process proposed by Susman and Evered (1978), which is considered by Davison et al. (2004) as the standard for action research, is combined with Crouch and Pearce's (2012) framework, which was deemed more adequate to design practice. The combined model (Image 2.2) assimilates the best qualities of both approaches, integrating the research rigor proposed by Susman and Evered (1978), while using Crouch and Pearce's (2012) design-focused process for the interventions.

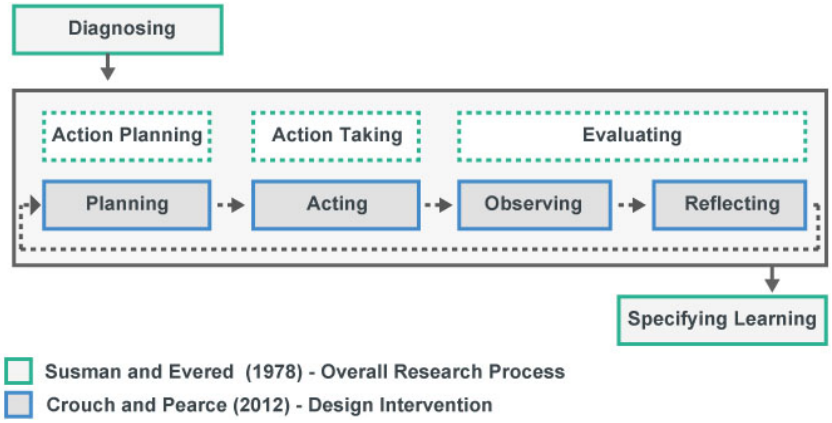

Image 2.2 - Action Research model based on Susman and Evered (1978) and Crouch and Pearce (2012).

Later on this chapter – in the *Research Process Structure* section – this model is further developed to describe the four cycles of the action and reflection used in this research (Image 2.3). Also, it must be noticed that by combining Susman and Evered's approach with Crouch and Pearce's, each action research cycle of iteration proceeded as a design intervention (Image 2.2); a characteristic that grounds this thesis on a practice-based design research.

Action Research and Design Research

Cole et al. (2005) suggests that design research and action research share important philosophical assumptions, and as such, they have much to learn from one another. From design research, action research should learn better ways to formalize and communicate the generated knowledge. From action research, design research should learn to integrate a specific stage for reflection on the learning. Additionally, as "action research enables the designer to make visible their design process" (Crouch & Pearce, 2012, p.146), design research should also learn to make the research process more transparent (Swann, 2001).

Yet, framing action research under a design research perspective poses some epistemological issues: whereas "the goal of action research is to develop practical and relevant solutions to the problem identified" (Crouch & Pearce, 2012, p.144), the main outcome of a practice-based research (Saikaly, 2005) is not the design artifact, but rather the knowledge developed through the design process (Fallman, 2007). As this thesis builds on a Design Oriented Research, and not a Research Oriented Design (Fallman, 2007), the outcome of the research must be re-useable and communicable knowledge (Cross,

1999), which was built through multiple cycles of action and reflection. In that sense design and research cannot be separated, as each research iteration is at the same time a design intervention.

Also, although "each iteration of the action research process adds to theory" (Avison et al., 1999, p.95), and the findings reported in this document are the outcome of the entire the research process, the last iterations had a stronger influence on the content of this thesis than the early stages. This is mostly a consequence of the way knowledge builds up through the action research, but also because the reflection-in-action (Schön, 1982) – which took place during the design interventions – was mainly focused on the advancement of the artifact; it was only after the last design intervention, and mainly during the last *reflection* stage (Specifying Learning; Image 2.2), that a thorough reflective analysis took place.

This way, the present research integrates action and design research (Cole et al., 2005): by describing its process (*Research Process* chapter), the research is made more transparent; by using action research's reflection *in* and *on* action, the knowledge built through the design process is strengthened. Additionally, as the proposed framework and theoretical contributions are described in the *Findings and Contributions* chapter, this monograph enables the communication and evaluation of the knowledge built through this research.

Participatory Action Research

Although action research and collaboration are often interlinked (e.g. Reason and Bradbury, 2008), this is not always the case (Ary et al., 2010). Participatory Action Research (PAR; Kindon et al., 2007) is a specific approach that is carried out in collaboration between the researcher and stakeholders (Susman & Evered, 1978), in which the stakeholders are not only subjects, but also co-designers (Lau, 1997; Ehn, 2008). By taking place in the context of application, including diverse actors in the research process, and trying to reach beyond traditional academic structures, PAR takes a transdisciplinary attitude towards the research process (Nowotny, 2004; Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2011).

In the case of the current research, the communities of interest included not only the organization, but also customers and employees. Although in PAR the stakeholders are usually involved in the research process, during the design interventions, the researcher is "constantly moving between user centered and design-driven perspectives" (Wetter-Edman & Johansson, 2011,

p.16). Consequently, some stages of the action research process proceeded in greater collaboration with the stakeholders, whist during other phases the researcher proceeded independently.

The persistence of this back-and-forth process (a.k.a. Meander; Wetter-Edman & Johansson, 2011) throughout the research shows the limitations of a fully participatory approach; as Kindon et al. (2007, p.15) notes, "while within PAR, collaboration at all stages of reflection and actions is ideal, it is important to recognize that levels of participation by co-researchers and participants may vary significantly". During the present research, the *actions* stages were held in wider collaboration with the diverse stakeholders, whereas, in the *reflection* stages collaboration was harder to achieve.

Hence, although some level of participatory data analysis (Cahill, 2007) was attained during the workshops, during the main reflection stages, the researcher had to proceed individually. Notwithstanding, although reflection is an individual process, discussions with the actors involved in the process, and with design and branding experts helped the researcher to make sense of the findings.

2.4 DATA COLLECTION

Although design research is a growing field of knowledge production, it does not have the same tradition of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and as such, it should not ignore these methodological approaches, but learn from and build on them (Cross, 1999). Similarly, it is suggested that action research should also learn from qualitative methodology by borrowing its methods, and by applying the concept of triangulation – the use of data from different sources –, in order help to better understand the context and effects of the research iterations (Ary et al., 2010). Accordingly, as this thesis builds on design and action research, it borrows the methods from qualitative methodology.

For Merriam (2002), the three main qualitative sources of information are observations, interviews, and documents. Adapting these methods to action research, Ary et al. (2010) suggest *experiencing*, *enquiring*, and *examining* as the three categories of data collection strategies. In this framework, *experiencing* refers to the researcher's own experience in the field, which follows a typical ethnographic data collection fashion; *enquiring*, refers to the multiple ways of interviewing the participants; and *examining*, refers to data collected from artifacts that already exist.

During the current research, all these categories of data collection strategies were used; as Merriam (2002, p.12) suggests, “often there is a primary method of collecting data with support from another”. Using multiple methods for data collection also enables the triangulation of the data, reducing the reliance on single sources, increasing the quality of the findings: “if multiple sources lead to the same conclusion, a stronger case is made” (Ary, et al., 2010, p.525). Furthermore, workshops - which are explained in the following section - were used as an integrative approach to data collation, which foster stakeholder participation through co-creative practices.

Workshops

Given the participatory nature of the research, the use of workshops has helped to involve multiple actors in a collaborative setting, engaging the communities of interest not only as subjects, but also as co-designers; as such, the workshops extended the field of knowledge creation beyond the traditional academic boundaries in a typically transdisciplinary approach (Nowotny, 2004). The use of workshops allowed not only for richer information, but also the co-creation of solutions with the stakeholders, which was especially noticed in the last cycle of design interventions.

As an academic method, workshops do not have a proper definition; for example, Buchanan (2001) refers to it as “quasi focus-groups” (Gaskell, 2008):

> “The technique was not the classic form of focus group discussion— though some use of focus groups was made in some cases. Instead, there were conversations with potential users and, sometimes, the conversations were shaped around modest product prototypes that elicited comments and observations” (Buchanan 2001, p.20).

During the workshops, a mix of qualitative methods such as unstructured group interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Gaskell, 2008), participatory observation (Adler & Adler, 1994; Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994), and document analysis (Merriam, 2002; Ary et al., 2010) were used in a setting that made it impossible to distinguish the different methods; discussions and idea generation took place together, and any claim of ownership would be unrealistic. The participatory aspects of the research were not only limited to the involvement of stakeholders in the process, but also extended to the role of the researcher, which became an active partner of the project team (Sevaldson, 2010).

Furthermore, in the last two action research iterations, the design interventions were planned as workshop sequences; as such, a workshop would not generate an outcome *per se*, but an input for the next one. In that sense, each workshop sequence became a participatory action research sub-process in itself, where differently to the main action research thread, the data analysis was much more participatory (Cahill, 2007). Consequently, during the last design interventions, the stakeholders had a much bigger say than in the early stages; given the importance of these last two cycles to the research as a whole, the use of workshops made the entirety of the research process much more collaborative.

Experiencing

In a remark that is especially appropriate for a workshop setting, Ary et al. (2010) suggest that the experiences of the researcher can be an important source of data; observation is probably the most common sort of input for human knowledge, and it "consists of gathering impressions of the surrounding world through all relevant human faculties" (Adler & Adler, 1994, p.378).

Although observation is commonly associated with sight, it actually involves all the senses (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994), as non-objective perceptions also influence the perception. Such an interpretative approach (Pinto & Santos, 2008) implies that the researchers must strive "to understand the meanings people have constructed about their world and their experiences" (Merriam, 2002, p.4-5), which is often communicated in a non-verbal way.

Approaches to observation range from engaged ethno-methodological attitudes, to detached laboratory-like settings. These perspectives have in common the fact that observation renders firsthand input on the phenomenon of interest, which can be used when a fresh perspective is desired (Merriam, 2002). During the current research, observation mostly took place during the workshops, resulting in an active participatory observation approach; yet, it must be noticed that during the different research iterations, the observer's level of participation varied (Adler & Adler, 1994), increasing throughout the process.

Enquiring

By talking to or interviewing relevant actors, the researcher may collect personal information and insights (Ary et al., 2010) that would be otherwise

inaccessible. Similar to observation, interviews have different levels, depending on how structured they are (Merriam, 2002), and if they take place individually or collectively (Fontana & Frey, 1994). During the present research, interviewing methods were used during the workshops as a kind of group interview (Gaskell, 2008), and individually, for assessing personal experiences and expertise.

During the workshops, an unstructured approach was taken, in which the interviews were very participant-oriented; similar to a conversation in the field, it focused on understanding the participants' point of view without trying to impose any *a priori* categorizations (Fontana & Frey, 1994). This perspective was essential, as it provided not only relevant input, but it also helped to foster the participants' engagement during the workshops.

Differently, when talking individually, the interviews followed a semi-structured style, where guidelines helped to lead the discussions without limiting the researcher; for example, when needed, the guidelines were adjusted to the conversation context (Gaskell, 2008). The individual interviews were mostly used in the evaluation cycles of the action research process, where participating stakeholders and experts in the researched field were consulted for their insights and opinions.

Examining

A third type of data collection strategy used was to examine existing documentation; as Ary et al. (2010, p.527) notices, data may also "be collected through examining artifacts and other materials that already exist or that are routinely collected in the setting". During the research, two different types of documented information were consulted: academic literature was used throughout the entire research, helping to frame the research problem, and consequently grounding the action research process; additionally, organizational documentation provided by the research partners was used, serving as important sources of input to the workshops and design interventions.

Through an extensive academic literature review (Creswell, 2009), the research field was framed, and the research process informed. During the early stages, literature helped to build the knowledge foundations necessary to tackle the research problem, suggesting the semantic transformation process (Motta-Filho, 2012) as one possible path for a solution. During the first design intervention, literature also informed the co-operative research

process (Heron & Reason, 2001), enabling the initial explorations, since very little practical knowledge or strategies existed at that point.

The organizational documentation consisted mostly of marketing insights provided by the partner company in order to assist and inform the workshops and design interventions (Merriam, 2002). In the current research, this kind of documentation played a secondary, yet important, role; for example, occasionally it was necessary to go through organizational reports to better understand the marketing strategy. Also, the use of brand manuals as a source of information for the workshops was essential; as it was noticed throughout the research, it was often the case that the brand strategy was not clearly defined, existing in a mix of shared tacit knowledge and incomplete documentations.

2.5 REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS

Dalsgaard (2014) suggests that, many times, due to the lack of adequate theoretical approaches, design researchers must adapt and become theoretical bricoleurs; similarly, also recognizing the limitations of design research, Cross (1999) suggests the use of methods borrowed from more mature methodologies. Building on interpretive phenomenology (Pinto & Santos, 2008) and on Schön's (1982) reflective practice, this section introduces the methods used to make sense of the data during and after the action research process.

As previously discussed, this research adopts an epistemological approach to design research that is grounded on abduction (Dew, 2007) and reflective practice (Schön, 1982). Analogously to qualitative research, it is understood that throughout the design interventions, and especially during the workshops, data analysis and data collection took part simultaneously (Merriam, 2002) in a reflection-in-action process, and during the 'reflection' stages – of the action research process (Image 2.2) –, through reflection-on-action.

As such, borrowing from interpretive phenomenology, the researcher is considered as the main instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2002; Pinto & Santos, 2008). Such an interpretative approach enables a first person perspective, which allows a greater understanding of the design situation. Yet, it must be noticed that, due the participatory aspects of the research, and the triangulation of data sources, a second and third person perspective were also present (Sevaldson, 2010).

Epistemological Approach

Lau (1997, p.34) notices that "while the use of action research as a strategy of inquiry is undisputed, its epistemological basis as a research paradigm is open to question". Recognizing the limitations of the positivist criteria for action research, Susman and Evered (1978) suggest phenomenology, hermeneutics, praxis, and pragmatism as the grounds for an alternative, and more adequate criteria; for the authors, "action research constitutes a kind of science with a different epistemology that produces different kind of knowledge" (Susman & Evered, 1978, p.601).

As such, the authors suggested that by adopting the aforementioned criteria, action research turns its focus to the human experience; by accepting the reality as truth, it engages with the situation, co-producing knowledge and solutions in the context of action through the use of abductive reasoning (Susman & Evered, 1978). In the conventional view on sciences, discovery must precede application, yet when the knowledge is produced in the context of practice, discovery and application cannot be separated (Gibbons et al., 1994).

> "In action research, the researcher wants to try out a theory with practitioners in real situations, gain feedback from this experience, modify the theory as a result of this feedback, and try it again. Each iteration of the action research adds to the theory" (Avison et al., 1999, p.95).

Similar to design research, action research engages in a "dynamic process of problem framing and solution finding"; during the *action* stages, the researcher gathers information about the intervention, and in the *reflective* phases, he tries to make sense of the data (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). As the cycles revolve, the design situation talks back to the researcher (Schön, 1982). Data interpretation is thus about making inferences from incomplete information that emerges during the design process (Ary et al., 2010), moving from a problematic situation, to an idea that can be tested and re-worked as part of the reflexive process (Schön, 1982).

For Ary et al. (2010, p.533), during the interpretation process, the researcher "continuously reviews the data as the action research process unfolds"; accordingly, it was noticed that the sense making process for the current research took place during the participatory activities – such as workshops – and during the reflection stages. Also, although the outcome of the design process was evaluated, it must be noticed that this is Practice-Based Research (Saikaly, 2005; Fallman, 2007), and as such, the focus is not on the design artifact, but on the knowledge produced through the design interventions.

Writing as Reflection

Throughout the entire research process, but especially during the last cycle of 'reflection' (*Writing as Reflection*; Image 2.3), writing became an important tool for reflexive inquiry (Richardson, 1994). Also, during the development of the research, multiple blog posts (Motta-Filho, 2015a) reported the evolution of the work; on this occasion, the essays helped not only to communicate and publicize the research, but the writing itself also served as a reflection tool central to the advancement of the research. As most of these texts were written after an important milestone for the research, they helped not only to consolidate the knowledge just acquired, but they also served as material memory of the researcher's current understanding. Furthermore, these progression reports facilitated conversations with experts and research participants, helping to raise relevant insights, and discuss different perspectives.

Yet, the main use of Writing as Reflection (Richardson, 1994) was during the writing of this monograph. This time, the main difference from the previous blog posts was the scale. As the empirical research and the theoretical review were concluded, knowledge was spread through a wide multitude of written and mental notes; it was through the writing of this thesis, that the often dispersive concepts came together, and the "forest for the trees" could be seen.

> "Although we usually think about writing as a mode of 'telling' about the social world, writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of 'knowing' – a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable" (Richardson, 1994, p.516).

In that sense, the writing of this monograph was the last cycle of reflection (Image 2.3). Even during the late stages of the writing, fitting the content together, and other adjustments were made as each new chapter was written; as is often the case, it is expected that even once the thesis gets published, better understanding of the content presented here will still emerge.

2.5 RESEARCH PROCESS STRUCTURE

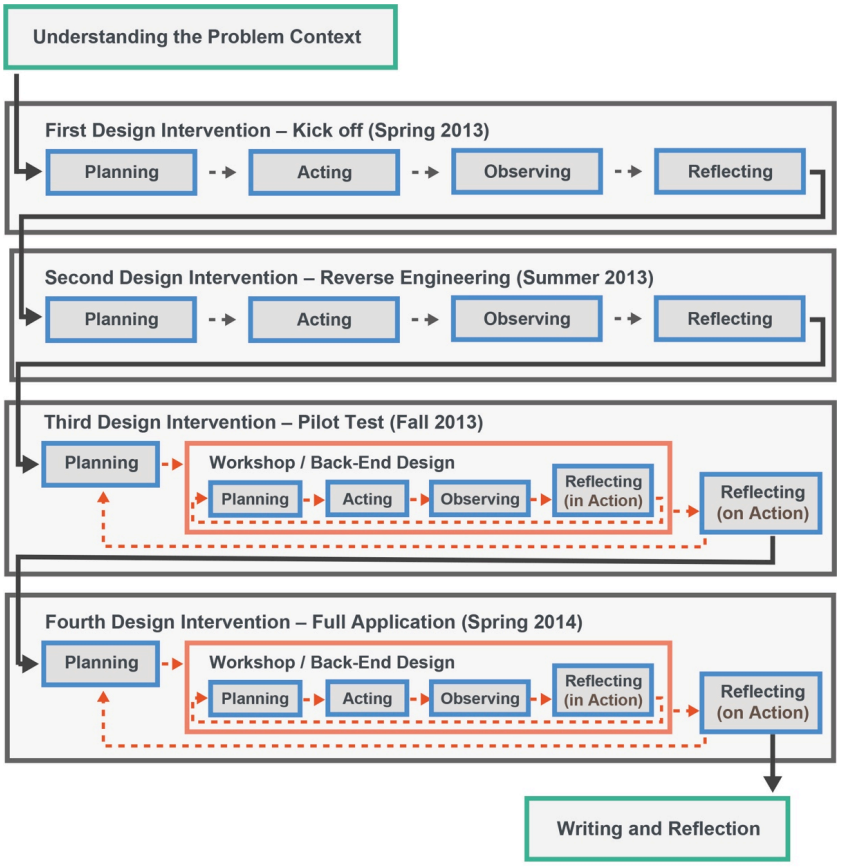

Image 2.3 – Visualization of the research process (as explained in the workshop section, the orange lines refer to the action research sub-process resulting from the workshops).

Understanding the problem context

The first step of the research was to explore how the preliminary question could be answered (Crouch & Pearce, 2012). Through a literature review (Creswell, 2009) and by interviewing (Fontana & Frey, 1994) experts in the fields of Branding and Service Design, the idea of developing a Brand Experience Manual to inform Brand Experience Proposition to the New Service Development teams (NSD; Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996) was proposed (Motta-Filho, 2012).

Central to the concept of Brand Experience Manual is the assumption that informing the service design teams of the experience the brand wants to deliver to the customer, should facilitate the design of brand-based offerings. In that sense, the research's early explorations were grounded on the role of the Semantic Transformation process (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012) in the New Service Development (NSD; Edvarsson & Olsson, 1996); consequently, the General Research Question established in early 2012 was: *how to enable a brand strategy aligned semantic transformation in the NSD process?*

At this stage, the research's specific questions already recognized the need for the Brand Experience Manual, and were concerned with:

1. Understanding the brand strategy of an already established corporation
2. The best way to convey the brand strategy to the NSD teams
3. Creating a shared language among the participants of the NSD teams

Although all these questions have been reframed throughout the process, they did set the tone for the theoretical research on the development of brand-based customer experiences, which resulted in the *Designing for Brand Experience* framework; and on the empirical studies to 'how to develop a Brand Experience Manual*'*, which resulted in the *Brandslation* process, and the *manual* itself.

First Design Intervention – Kick Off

The first design intervention took the form of collaborative research (Heron & Reason, 2001) with students from the Service Design 2 class of 2013 - Master Degree in Design at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design. At this stage, the need for a Brand Experience Manual was already recognized, and a very broad idea for the content known; yet, there was no established process to support the development of such a manual.

A generative and explorative designerly approach (Sevaldson, 2010) was thus needed to kick-start the research process; as such, in collaboration with two partner companies, the students were divided into two groups and instructed to develop a Brand Experience Manual for each organization, in a process that was enabled by the knowledge developed in the previous research (Susman & Evered, 1978).

Second Design Intervention – Reverse Engineering

During this intervention, the material developed by the students in the previous iteration was studied, analyzed, and reverse engineered (Schön, 1982). To accelerate this iteration, two student assistants who participated in the class were engaged; at the end, a structured framework describing the process for translating brand strategy into Brand Experience Proposition (Brandslation) was developed, together with a more consistent draft of the Brand Experience Manual.

Additionally, external assistance was brought in to help with the visualization of a couple of interaction examples, advancing the Brand Experience Manual further from a traditional branding format, and closer to a Service Design perspective.

Third Design Intervention – Pilot Test

In cooperation with a partner company, the Brandslation model previously developed was streamlined, and a pilot version of the process tested through a series of three workshops. These workshops were planned with the help of two student assistants, and facilitated by an external consultant. Additionally, participants from the organization's marketing and management team, and two external guests were also involved in the process.

At this stage, due the pilot nature of the design intervention, the process of gathering user insights was suppressed, and the data collected for a parallel project was used. Moreover - as mentioned in the 'workshop' section of this chapter - in this iteration, the workshops were designed as a sequence, and as such, the prior workshops would feed into the next, in a process that replicates an action research process within the action research (Crouch & Pearce, 2012; Image 2.3, orange lines); by the end, a pilot version of a Brand Experience Manual was developed and presented.

Fourth Design Intervention – Full Application

The positive reviews from the previous stage made it possible to engage another partner company in a full Brandslation process. For this iteration, two sets of four workshops were planned: the first set was meant to gather users' insights, whereas the second set focused on synthesizing the information, and building the Brand Experience Manual. By the end of this intervention, a working framework for the Brandslation process was successfully applied and tested, and a functional Brand Experience Manual developed.

Through this stage, internal and external stakeholders cooperated with insights about the organization, the brand, and the service. An external agency was also part of the process, helping with the planning and production of the workshops, and with the graphic design of the Brand Experience Manual. Furthermore, once again, assistant students were engaged, helping to contact customers for the workshops, and developing a video that was an integral part of the manual.

Writing and Reflection

During this last phase of the action research (Susman & Evered, 1978), the process of reflection-on-action (Schön, 1982) took place, and the findings and knowledge produced by the research were structured. In that sense, it must be noticed that this last iteration actually comprises the thesis writing, through which Writing as Reflection (Richardson, 1994) was an essential method in order to make sense of the data. It was through writing this monograph that the theoretical and empirical research were put into perspective, allowing new insights and knowledge to emerge.

Through this reflective process, the research problem was better contextualized, and the research questions re-defined (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Sevaldson, 2010); moreover, it was also noticed that the Semantic Transformation concept (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012) needed to be further developed in order to accommodate the theoretical advancements of the research, which resulted in the conception of the Designing for Brand Experience framework.

/ CHAPTER

This chapter began by introducing design discipline as the approach to design used in this thesis; in that sense, design is understood as a third liberal art, grounded on the designerly ways of knowing (Cross, 1982). After that, the methodology, research strategy, and methods were described and defended. Finally, the research structure was presented, giving the reader a general view of how the action research (Susman & Evered, 1978; Crouch & Pearce, 2012) process evolved during the empirical iterations, which is further developed in the *Research Process* chapter.

3. Theoretical Review

This chapter presents the theoretical grounding on which this thesis builds upon, supporting the findings that respond to the Research Questions (*Findings and Contributions* chapter). Essentially, this chapter is divided into two halves; the first presents the foundations for (defining) the Brand Experience Proposition, and the second reviews the service research literature, grounding the delivering of the Brand Experience Proposition. Connecting these two halves is the section that introduces the Service Branding process, a concept that is itself composed of two sub-processes – *defining* and *delivering* the brand –, which are respectively associated to the halves of this chapter.

Accordingly, the main purpose of this chapter is to introduce the readers to the key concepts used in this thesis. Since the intended audience for this monograph includes academics and practitioners from different fields of knowledge, the topics are explained in a rather didactic and extensive manner, so as to facilitate comprehension of the content presented throughout the this volume.

3.1 EXPERIENCE

Different Views on Experience

As a concept, experience can be understood from different perspectives. From a phenomenological point of view, experience refers to the "internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company" (Meyer & Schwager, 2007, p.2) – the individual's interpretation of an interaction, which results in associations similar to what Kahneman (2011) calls experience of the remembering-self. Experience can also be understood as the interactive process through which the phenomenological experience emerges (Helkkula, 2011) – the experience of the experiencing-self (Kahneman, 2011). Finally, in a third sense, experience has also been

described as a distinct sort of economic offering, one that is "as real an offering as any service, good or commodity" (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, p.98).

This last perspective refers to the Experience Economy, an approach developed by Pine and Gilmore (1998, 1999), which suggests that experiences emerged as the next step in the economic value progression, being as different from services, as services are from products. Although the Experience Economy recognizes the phenomenological nature of the concept, its focus on staging experiences implies a bias towards a supplier's perspective, where the company is seen as an experience provider, and experiences are understood as staged offerings. In that sense, experiences are, to a significant degree, associated with hedonic consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), and extraordinary occurrences (Arnould & Price, 1993; Sundbo & Sørensen, 2013a).

By conceptualizing experiences from the organizations' point of view, and as a distinct sort of offering (Sundbo & Sørensen, 2013a), Experience Economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999) ignores the role of the customer's experiences in different economic sectors – a limitation that is particularly noted by this thesis. However, this criticism must be put into perspective; Pine and Gilmore wrote more than a decade ago, when marketing was still shifting its focus from the *offering* to the *customer's experience* (Klein, 1999; Semprini, 2006; Merz et al., 2009). Despite the limitations, the concept contributed to the experiential marketing theory, advancing approaches dedicated to the management of the customer experience (Berry et al., 2002; Berry et al., 2006; Morrison & Crane, 2007).

Although the Experience Economy has been broadly explored in the literature (e.g. Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999; Sundbo & Sørensen, 2013b; Sundbo & Darmer, 2008), especially due the expansion of the entertainment and leisure sectors (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), a significant array of marketing literature evolved to consider experiences as a phenomenological response to an interaction (e.g. Carbone & Haeckel, 1994; Smith & Wheeler, 2002; Schmitt, 2003; Berry et al., 2006, Helkkula, 2011; Motta-Filho, 2012) – an assertion that was further supported with the development of Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a).

Under a Service Dominant Logic (SDL) perspective, value is understood as "the evaluation of the service experience, i.e. the individual judgment of the sum total of all the functional and emotional experience outcomes" (Sandström et al., 2008, p.120). In that sense, value is conceptualized as a function of the customer experience, where both *experience* and *value* are

"uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary" (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p.7, FP10).

By focusing on personal interpretations, SDL sees customers' experiences as the outcome of the customer's interaction with any kind of "product"; be it an 'experience economy style' sort of offering, such as going to the theater or a theme park (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999), a common service interaction, such as telecommunications and banking (Berry et al., 2006; Motta-Filho, 2012), or even a product (Grönroos, 2008). Moreover, even when the experience is the "product" (i.e. the actual offering) – as in a theater play – the environmental and service elements also influence the customer's experience (Darmer & Sundbo, 2008).

Accordingly, every organization is in the experience business – even if the company is not actively engaged in creating an *experiential offering*, any service[7] interaction creates an experience for the customer (Johnston & Kong, 2011; Berry et al., 2002; Morrison & Crane, 2007; Sandström et al., 2008). This way, it is understood that experiences emerge not only from a visit to Disney World, or a dinner at Hard Rock Café, but also from interactions with services that are "common, frequent, and within the realm of everyday life" (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014, p.2).

Meaningful Customer Experiences

Although customers' experiences can be classified as 'positive or negative' (Sundbo & Sørensen, 2013a), they are much more than that. Since this thesis conceptualizes experiences as phenomenological events (Helkkula, 2011), which occur "when a customer has any sensation or acquires knowledge from some level of interaction with the elements of a context created by a service provider" (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010, p.67), experiences are understood as the customer's interpretation of an incident or interaction.

However, it also must be noted that regardless of the company's intentions, experiences are always embedded with meanings (Batey, 2008; Diller et al., 2008), which are communicated through the qualities and characteristics of the interactive artifacts (Kazmierczak, 2003; Karjalainen, 2004; Johnston & Kong, 2011) – as Krippendorff (1989, p.12) notes, "people do not perceive pure forms, unrelated objects, or things as such but as meanings". Hence, if the goal is to manage the customer's experience, organizations must control

[7] Service here is conceptualized as a Service Dominant Logic concept, and as such, it transcends the distinction between products and services (Vargo & Akaka, 2009).

the meanings conveyed through the service offerings (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994).

In that sense, this thesis defines experiences as *the customer's interpretation of the meanings embedded (purposefully or not) in the qualities and characteristics of the offering, resulting from the perception emerging from any sort of interaction* – a cluster of perceived meanings associated with a particular incident (Image 3.1; Aaker, 1991; Batey, 2008). For the organization, it is this meaning proposition, which is delivered through the service interactions, that differentiates their offering from the competitors', creating a unique source of competitive advantage.

Image 3.1 – As a phenomenological response, experiences are understood as clusters of meanings resulting from the customer's interpretation of the service interactions.

This way, an 'experience economy style' offering can be also be understood from a phenomenological perspective, as the customer's perception of the qualities and characteristics of such an offering (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010) – an experience can, but need not be, the actual offering. A phenomenological perspective is not necessarily contrary to the idea of 'experience economy style' offerings, but it comprehends that an experience can emerge from any sort of interaction as the customer's interpretation of the meaning proposition embedded into the interaction's qualities and characteristics (Image 3.1; Semprini, 2006; Batey, 2008).

This is not to diminish the importance of the experience economy sector (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999), nor to deny the existence of extraordinary experiences (Arnould & Price, 1993), but rather to distinguish 'experience as a sort of offering', from 'experience as the customer's perception of an interaction'. Seeing experiences as a phenomenological response to an interaction enables a holistic perspective on value co-creation which is more aligned with Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a) – it does not matter what kind of offering the customers interact with, the experience is determined by their perception of the *characteristics* and *qualities* of the service interaction (Sandström et al., 2008).

Thus, since any sort of interaction produces an experience for the customer, in order to fathom how experiential an offering is, this thesis frames

Zomerdijk and Voss' (2010, p.67) *experience-centric service* concept – where experience-centric companies "craft the customer experience proactively to create distinctive product and service offerings" – in an *Experientiality Scale* context (Image 3.2; Gibbons & Hopkins, 1980). As such, it is understood that the different levels of experientiality delivered by the distinct offerings (the *proactively crafted experiences* mentioned by Zomerdijk and Voss [2010]) are the consequence of the meaning proposition made by the organization, which are materialized and communicated through the service interactions.

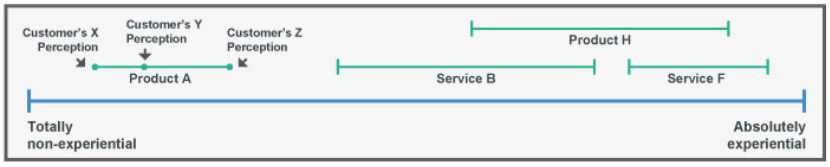

Image 3.2 – Experientiality scale applied to service; the green lines show that the degree of experientiality is dependent not only on the meaning proposition, but also on the customer's perception.

However, in the end, it is the customer's perception of these propositions that matters (Keller, 2013). As the image above suggests, the degree of experientiality is not only dependent on the materialization of the meaning proposition, but also on the customer's interpretation; due to the phenomenological nature of experiences, different users will respond differently to the same interaction. Furthermore, it is important to notice that the Experientiality Scale is not an absolute measure – unlike a natural number sequence that can be counted, it is more like a line, in which there are infinite points between the extremes, being consequently a relative scale.

Although it would make sense to define the boundaries of this scale as *totally functional* and *totally experiential*, such classification would only be accurate at the extremes, as most offerings have different combinations of experientiality and functionality. Accordingly, the proposed Experientiality Scale goes from totally non-experiential to absolutely experiential. Moreover, since the service interactions convey the level of experientiality – as the result of the meaning proposition made by the organization –, it is understood that it is the *qualities and characteristics of the offerings* that influence the customer's perception, differentiating the company's offerings from those of their competitors.

As Nysveen et al. (2013, p.406) argues, the customer's experience is "a function of a set of interactions between customers and some part of the

organization" – the perception of the combinations of all clues that the customers perceive through the service interactions (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994; Berry et al., 2002). It is not only the functional qualities that influence the customer's perception, but also the environmental and interactional characteristics of the service (Berry et al., 2006). As such, the way the customers interact with the offering is crucial for their assessment of the experience; the customer experiences results "from a combination of what is offered (function and outcome of the product or service) and how it is offered (process of usage, context of use, and emotional components of interaction)" (Patrício et al., 2008, p.320).

By building on Service Dominant Logic, this thesis understands that value stems from the customer's evaluation of a service interaction (Sandström et al., 2008). Such a customer experience centric view ignores the distinction between offerings from different economic sectors, and suggests that value is co-created in "the application of competences (knowledge and skills) by one entity for the benefit of another" (Vargo et al., 2008, p.145). In that sense, experience is always the outcome, and every company is in the experience business – products, services, and staged events are nothing but the means with which to deliver the customer experience, and in fact, most offerings are actually composed of a combination of those.

This way, since experiences emerge from the customer's interactions with any sort of offering, differentiation on the levels of experientiality (Image 3.2) are a consequence of the service interactions' qualities and characteristics – different organizations set their services prerequisites (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996) as a reflex of the meaning proposition they want to deliver. Accordingly, it must be noted that even the most quotidian experiences can also be meaningful – as Fournier (1998) suggests, customers derive important life meanings even from the most mundane relationships – no matter how ordinary an experience is, it carries symbolic meanings (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

Customer Experience Management

Since the customer's experience is essentially defined by the service interactions, the process of designing these experiences must acknowledge the importance of the interactions' qualities and characteristics as a means to communicate the desired experience. For Berry et al. (2006), these qualities and characteristics that influence customer perception are called '*experience clues*'; "anything in the service experience the customer perceives by its presence – or absence" (p.44) –, which can be either *functional* or *emotional*.

- Functional clues are those related to the technical performance of the service; although they are not enough to differentiate the offering, a failure in providing the core service is a strong reason for the customer to churn, and change providers (Berry et al., 2006).
- Emotional clues (a.k.a. Context clues; Carbone & Haeckel, 1994) are those that refer to the sensorial qualities of the service environment; they can be classified as mechanic, when associated to the objects presented in the service venue, or humanic, when related to the behaviors of the service interaction (Berry et al., 2002; Berry et al., 2006).

For Carbone and Haeckel (1994, p.10), Customer Experience Management "is primarily concerned with the systematic design and implementation of the context clues that are emitted by the product and/or service and the environment". As such, it is important that the organizations focus not only on technical performance, but also on orchestrating emotional clues across the customer journey (Pullman & Gross, 2004; Berry et al., 2006), creating the right expectations (e.g. clues emitted by the design of the environmental), and delivering on the promise; a successful service experience delivers the meaning proposition through all offerings' touch-points.

Furthermore, since the qualities and characteristics of the service interaction are defined by the meaning proposition made by the organization, the customer's experiences are understood as not merely 'good' or 'bad' (Kahneman & Riis, 2005), but the reflex of the customer's interpretation of this proposition, which was communicated through the service interactions (Batey, 2008). In that sense, even if two service providers deliver an excellent service, the customer's perception of each interaction may differ widely, not only because of the phenomenological nature of the customer's experience, but also because the service interactions might be designed so as to convey a completely different proposition.

This last observation can be illustrated through the different experiences Virgin Atlantic and British Airways propose to deliver. Whilst Virgin's offering is built on Richard Branson's 'iconoclasticism', and Tony Blair's 'Cool Britannia' (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000), British Airways is built on a more traditional concept of 'Britishness'. Thus, even though both airlines manage to deliver a superior quality, the customer's experiences are quintessentially distinct. Consequently, experience must not be confused with perceived quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988) or satisfaction (Pullman & Gross, 2004). As shown in the example, both airlines could deliver that, yet what differentiates them is the customer's perception of the meaning proposition delivered through the experiential clues present at the service interaction.

Concluding Remarks

This section started by defining the conceptualization of experience used in this thesis, opposing *experience as a sort of offering* (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999) to *experience as a phenomenological perception* (Helkkula, 2011). Next, it was argued that since *experiences* are described as the personal interpretation of the meaning proposition made by the organization – which are communicated through *qualities* and *characteristics* of the service interaction (Batey, 2008) – they must not always be understood as a sort of offering (i.e. Experience Economy), but also as the customer's interpretation of the interaction settings.

Accordingly, experience was defined as *the customer's interpretation of the meanings embedded (purposefully or not) in the qualities and characteristics of the offering, resulting from the perception emerging from any sort of interaction.* It is the customer's evaluation of this meaning proposition that differentiates the offering from the competitors', and that determines its value (Sandström et al., 2008); even if the organization does not actively manage its experiences, the customers still associate meanings with it.

Thus, in order to purposefully design (*for*) the customer's experience, a predefined proposition must be described; as noted by Carbone and Haeckel (1994, p.9), "engineering an experience begins with the deliberate setting of a targeted customer perception". In the next section, this thesis proposes the Brand Experience Proposition as this targeted experience – the meaning proposition the organization should aim at delivering through the service interactions.

3.2 THE BRAND EXPERIENCE PROPOSITION

What is a Brand?

Due to different orientations and the continuous evolution of the concept, there is no agreed definition for what a *brand* is. However, despite the failure to define the concept, there is a common understanding that brands can be conceptualized from the viewpoint of its two main stakeholders – a contrasting perspective that is the condition for the existence of brands, and the boundary for the concept (de Chernatony & Riley, 1998), grounding the definition used in this thesis, which is presented later in this section.

From the company's perspective, the *brand identity* (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000) is a conceptual meaning proposition (Batey, 2008) the

organization makes to the customer (Klein, 1999; Semprini, 2006) – a set of associations the company wants the customer to have (Aaker, 1996, Grönroos, 2007). From the customer's perspective, the *brand image* is the resulting perception of the interactions with the brand's manifestations (Semprini, 2006; Grönroos, 2007; Kapferer, 2011) – a *mental network of meaning associated to the brand name* (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2013) resulting from their experiences.

Although the organizations cannot control customer's perception (Meenaghan, 1995), they may influence their experiences by designing an attractive brand proposition, and principally, by delivering this proposition through all the brand's interactions (Berry, 2000; de Chernatony et al., 2003; Ducan & Moriarty, 2006; Clatworthy, 2012; Motta-Filho, 2012). Even though the (brand) image formation process is not controllable, the brand delivery process is (Grönroos, 2007).

In the marketing literature, brand is often described using the American Marketing Association's (AMA, 2015) definition – a "name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers". Differently, de Chernatony (2010, p. 17) offers a more experiential definition of brand as "a cluster of functional and emotional values that enable a promise to be made about a unique and welcomed experience". What these definitions have in common is that they both focus on the brand as a proposition, and are not very explicit about the role of the meanings associated with the brand by the customer.

Yet, as Kapferer (2011, p 19) notices, the brand is also "the focal point for all the positive and negative impressions created by the buyer over time as he or she comes into contact with the brand's products, distribution channel, personnel and communication". Hence, it is important to acknowledge the brand as both a *source* and a *repository* of meanings (Sherry, 2005).

As a *source* of meaning, the brand is the proposition made by the organization that is communicated through the offering (Semprini, 2006); however, until it is made alive through marketing actions, the brand is nothing but a concept (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård, 2004; Calkins, 2005). As a *repository*, the brand is the entity with which the meanings perceived by the customers through their interactions with the offering are associated – the main difference between a name and a brand is that brands have meanings associated with them (Aaker, 1991; Calkins, 2005).

Viewing the brand from both the customer's and the organization's perspectives grounds the concept in the interplay between brand image and brand identity. Since brands are understood as conceptual propositions, they need to be enacted by the organization to exist (Fournier, 1998). It is through these manifestations that the customers interact with the brand, and access its meaning proposition. In that sense, it can be argued that brands exist in the continuous interactions between the organization's actions and the customers' perceptions (Grönroos, 2007).

This way, brand is defined in this thesis as *a conceptual meaning proposition made by the organization, which ultimately reside in customers' minds as the result of their interactions with the branded offerings* – both a proposition and the outcome of customers' past experiences with the organization.

Customer, Service and Brand Experience

This thesis conceptualizes experiences as phenomenological events – *the customer's interpretation of the meanings embedded (purposefully or not) in the qualities and characteristics of the offering, resulting from the perception emerging from any sort of interaction*. As such, in a rather cyclical definition, *customer experience* is understood as the product of the customer's perceptions – the constructed meanings resulting from their interactions with the company (Meyer & Schwager, 2007); or, in the words of Clatworthy (2013, p. 101), "the impression left with the customer from their interactions with the service offering as presented through the touch-points of a service over a period of time" (Clatworthy, 2013, p. 101).

Analogously, service experience is also defined from the customer's perspective, as *the customer's interpretation of the meanings communicated through the qualities and characteristics of the service interaction.* Yet, since Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a) defines service as "the application of competences (knowledge and skills) by one entity for the benefit of another" (Vargo et al., 2008, p.145), it is understood that any direct value co-creating interaction is a service – hence, any customer experience is also a service experience.

However, indirect encounters with the brand also influence the customer's perception – even if the customers never used the service provider, they may have experienced the brand indirectly (Helkkula et al., 2012). As such, brand manifestations must not necessarily be a direct interaction, for brand experience does not demand consumption (Berry et al., 2002; Nysveen et al., 2013). Accordingly, building on the conceptualization of experience adopted

by this thesis, brand experience is defined as *the customer's interpretation of the meanings communicated through the qualities and characteristics of any sort of brand manifestations.*

This way, similar to Nysveen et al. (2013), this thesis understands *brand experience* as a comprehensive concept that encompasses both customer and service experience. Finally, it is also important to note that although brand perception does not demand consumption, and even if 'stakeholder' is a more inclusive term (Schultz, 2005; Kapferer, 2011), this thesis uses the term 'customer' to refer to *any individual stakeholders that directly or indirectly interact with a brand or service manifestations – consumer or not*.

Meaningful Brand Experiences

Similar to the concept of experiences, *brand experience* can also be understood from a phenomenological perspective, as the personal response to some sort of brand stimuli (Brakus et al., 2011); or, as a process, the actual event in which the interaction takes place (Berry, et al., 2006). As Sundbo and Sørensen (2013a, p.2) suggest, "experience is something that happens in people's minds, it is determined by external stimuli and elaborated via mental awareness"; it is both a personal response (to), and an external occurrence. Therefore, the concept of *brand experience* can be understood from the experiencing-self and from the remembering-self perspectives (Kahneman, 2011).

From the *remembering-self* perspective (Kahneman, 2011), brand experience is the evoked personal interpretation of the brand stimuli, which is reshaped by each new interaction with a brand manifestation (Image 3.4) – a concept similar to brand image as a set of dynamic interlinked meanings (Ind, 2007; Batey, 2008; Brakus et al., 2009; Helkkula et al., 2012; Keller, 2013). From the *experiencing-self* perspective, brand experience is the actual interaction moment (Kahneman & Riis, 2005) between the customers and the brand's touch-points (Ducan & Moriarty, 2006), which takes place at the service encounters (Cook et al., 2002; Clatworthy, 2011).

Although the experiences of the experiencing-self inform the remembering-self, these memories are frequently psychologically biased (Kahneman, 2011), as they may reflect some situational and individual circumstances (Sandström et al., 2008; Verhoef et al., 2009). However, this does not mean that the customer's perceptions are totally arbitrary (Kazmierczak, 2003), as they are informed by the interactions of the experiencing-self with the

brand's manifestations – "service is a communication experience" (Ducan, Moriarty, 2006, p.237).

As the customer's experiencing-self continuously interacts with the brand's manifestations, it develops an interpretation of the brand's proposition (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård, 2004; Batey, 2008; Rockwell, 2010), and associates the decoded meanings with the brand name. In that sense, the brand performs as a storehouse for the customer's associations, and also as a powerhouse for the meanings communicated (purposefully or not) through the service interactions (Sherry, 2005). Such understanding of interactions as conveyors of an intended brand meaning (McCracken, 1986; Batey, 2008; Diller et al., 2008) adds the company's perspective to the *remembering-experiencing* dichotomy, where experiences are also seen as propositions made by the organization to the customers.

Although the idea of brand experience as a proposition made by an organization might get confused with 'experiences as a kind of offering' (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999), since this thesis conceptualizes experience as a phenomenological occurrence (Helkkula, 2011), it is understood that any sort of offering – and not only an 'experience economy style' offering – can create an experience for the customer. This way, similar to semantic transformation (Karjalainen, 2004), brand experience is defined under a triadic semiotics perceptive (Lencastre & Côrte-Real, 2007; Santaella, 2008; Image 3.3), where it is seen from the perspective of the customer's *experiencing* and *remembering* selves (Kahneman, 2011), and from the company's viewpoint, as a *meaning proposition* made to the customers.

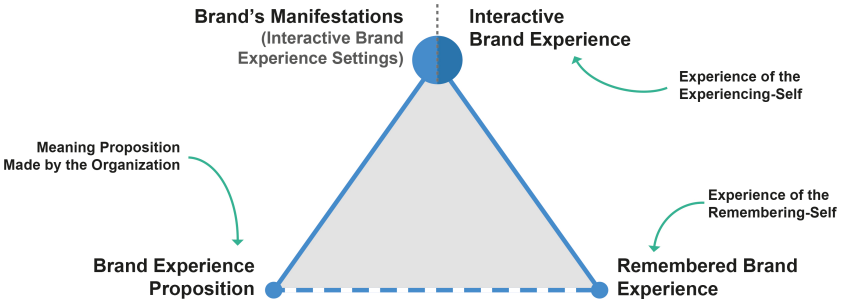

Image 3.3 – Experience in a triadic semiotics perspective.

Accordingly, the brand experience of the remembering-self is conceptualized in this thesis as 'Remembered Brand Experience', *the experience as it is "stored" in customer's minds*, which reflects their perceptions of all previous experiences, and influences future ones. *The brand-experience of the*

experiencing-self is described as the 'Interactive Brand Experience', since it happens during the customer's interaction with the brand's manifestations. Finally, 'Brand Experience Proposition' is *the experience the organization wants the customers to have* – an understanding that is similar to Grönroos' (2009) definition of brand identity.

Furthermore, since brand meaning is co-created during the customer's interactions with the brand's touch-points (Diller et al., 2008), a *meaningful experience* does not necessarily imply an extraordinary experience (Arnould & Price, 1993), but an experience proposition that communicates the intended meaning (McCracken, 1986; Batey, 2008; Diller et al., 2008) through the qualities and characteristics of its manifestations (Karjalainen, 2004; Berry et al., 2006; Clatworthy, 2013). Therefore, a Meaningful Brand Experiences is here defined as *Interactive Brand Experience Settings that are purposefully designed to deliver the Brand Experience Proposition through its qualities and characteristics* (Image 3.3).

The Brand is the Experience Proposition

From the company's perspective, the brand is a conceptual meaning proposition – a promise made by the organization that only exists in the interaction with the customers (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård, 2004). As such, in order to live, the brand must be manifested through some sort of material that communicates its proposition to the customers (Kapferer, 2011; Secomandi & Snelders, 2011); it is by interacting with the brand's manifestations that the customers may develop a perception of the brand's proposition, associating the meanings decoded back to the brand name (Aaker, 1991, Keller, 2013).

As Calkins (2005) notices, a brand only becomes something more than just a name when customers' associations are strong enough to influence their perceptions. In that sense, the brand is the outcome of the continuous negotiations between the customer's perception, and the meaning proposition delivered through the service interactions (Image 3.4) – a storehouse for the customer's meanings associations resulting from their relationship with the brand (Sherry, 2005).

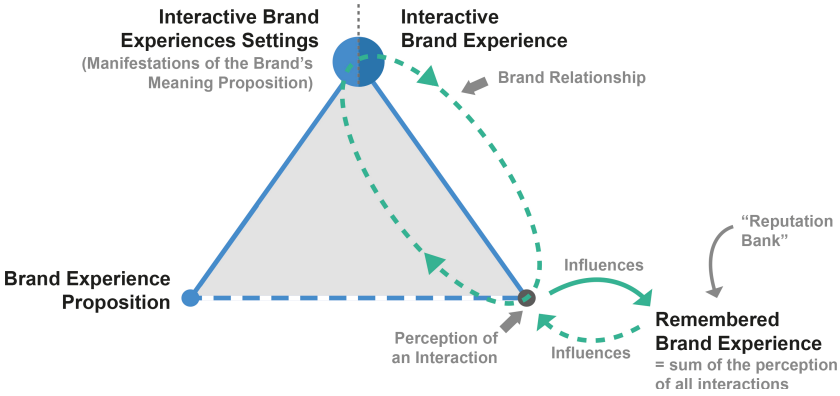

Image 3.4 – *Remembered Brand Experience* as the repository of the Brand Experiences.

The experiences the customers have with the brand are the outcome of direct interactions with the service, and indirect contacts with advertisements, word-of-mouth, and publicity (Nysveen et al., 2013); thus, since the customer's perceptions of the brand are formed from mental meanings networks (Aaker, 1991) resulting from these interactions, each new experience influences the existing meaning associations, changing the customer's perception of the brand (Image 3.4; Batey, 2008).

Additionally, since the brand is at the same time a repository and a source of meanings, the customer's current perception of a brand will influence their interpretations of future experiences (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010). This way, the brand can be seen as a 'reputation bank' for the organization's marketing actions (Image 3.4) – a place where all positive and negative experiences of the customer are stored (Kapferer, 2011), and from which the organization may extract or lose equity (Farquhar, 1989; Aaker, 1991, Biel, 1993; Keller, 2013).

For Kapferer (2011) this process unfolds in the following way: as the customer interacts with the brand's manifestations, *brand assets* such as reputation and awareness are created. These assets influence the customer's behaviors, yielding *brand strengths* such as higher market share and loyalty. The financial effect resulting from these positive attitudes is called *brand value* – the discounted cash flow attributed to the brand, which refers to the brand's ability to generate profit in the future. It is this potential for producing future profits, and the consequent higher valuation in the stock market (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000) that are sought by organizations.

Under a service dominant logic perspective (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a), this potential for generating higher profits is explained by the central role of the customer experience. As the organization cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, FP7), the financial return for the company – the value-in-exchange – is determined by the customer's evaluation of the value-in-use the company helps to co-create; in other words, the price premium the customers are willing to pay is proportional to their perception of how valuable the offering is (Grönroos, 2008; Sandström et al., 2008).

The brand equity is thus determined by the customers' perception (Keller, 2013), which ultimately is the result of their experiences with the brand (Payne et al., 2009); even though brands exist in the interplay between the customer's perception and the organization's proposition, it is the customer's perception that creates value. In that sense, the brand is the reflection of the customer's perception of their relationship – the outcome of all previous experiences with the brand manifestations (Image 3.4). Therefore, if the organization is trying to create value for the customers – and consequently for themselves –, they should focus on consistently delivering the Brand Experience Proposition through the service interactions.

Yet, this does not mean that the organizations are obligated to keep doing the same thing they have always done, but that in developing new interactions or offerings, they should use their brand as a strategic asset (Urde, 1999; Brodie et al., 2006); after all, *the brand is a reflection of the organization's value proposition, their relationship with the customers, and of their internal capabilities*. Whether the organization wants to keep or completely change the brand strategy, the *experience proposition* should still be grounded on the brand positioning, as it is the *brand's meaning proposition* that differentiates the offerings, creating a competitive advantage in a market where most sources of differentiation have been commoditized.

Even if the company is not looking for long-term engagement, the brand proposition – either intentional, or inferred from the past experience – implies a promise to the customers, from which *brand equity* is the outcome of a successful relationship (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a). *Brand equity* is thus grounded on the relationship constructed with the customer over time, and as such, it is defined by the customer's Remembered Brand Experience; as shown in Image 3.4, the Interactive Brand Experiences inform the brand's 'reputation bank', which can be understood as a metaphor for the *mental meaning network* that underlies brand equity.

Positive customer experience creates value for the company by improving sales and profitability (price-premium), and also by generating intangible assets such as brand equity (Gentile et al., 2007). This way, by strengthening the customer's brand meaning associations, successful Interactive Brand Experiences create brand assets, which lead to sounder relationships, fostering brand strengths such as higher market-share and profit margins, enabling the organization to extract profits from the customer's positive brand associations, resulting in financial brand value (Kapferer, 2011).

Hence, following what has just been exposed, it is understood that *the experience the organization is trying to deliver should be based on the brand*. Furthermore, as it will be developed throughout this thesis, it is important to mention that the Brand Experience Proposition should not be solely based on the organization's perspective, but also on a holistic process that includes multiple stakeholders; in the *Findings and Contributions* chapter, a comprehensive process for defining the Brand Experience Proposition will be presented.

A Relationship Metaphor for the Brand Experience Proposition

From the customer perspective, the brand can be understood as the result of the brand relationship – the outcome of the continuous negotiations between the organization's propositions and the customers' perceptions, which is actualized through each new interaction between the customers and the brand's manifestations. In that sense, brand image and brand relationship become the same, as both are the product of the Remembered Brand Experience – the sum of the customer's perception of all Interactive Brand Experiences (Image 3.5). Moreover, it is also important to notice that brand relationship does not mean recurrent patronage, but a continuous interaction with the brand through its manifestation.

Although the idea of customers as active participants in a brand relationship is easily accepted, the idea of brands as an active partner might require a little more attention (Fournier, 1998). Yet, since it is suggested that customers have no difficulty in associating human characteristics with the brand (Aaker, 1997), as long as the brand behaves as an active partner, expressing its personality through the marketing actions (Fournier, 1998), the customers can build a relationship with the brand (de Chernatony, 2010), assigning behavioral traits to it.

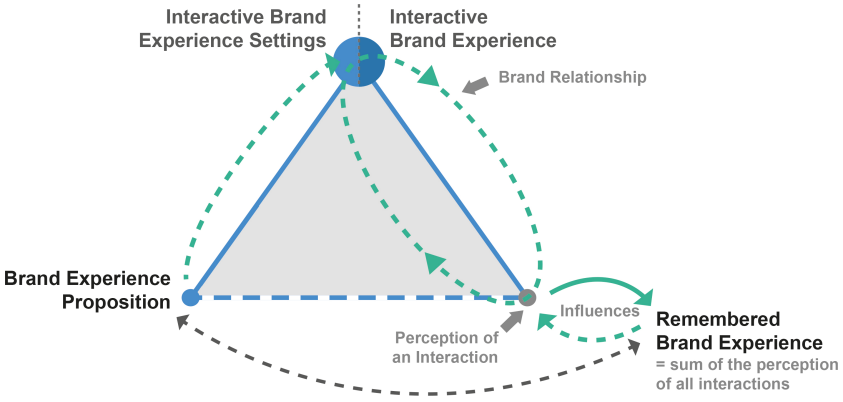

Image 3.5: As the organization embeds the *Brand Experience Proposition* in the *Interactive Brand Experience Settings,* the customers perceive the brand proposition though these interactions, and the relationship develops. Ideally, the customer's perception of this relationship is the same as the *Brand Experience Proposition.*

For Aaker (1997, p.347) *brand personality* is defined "as the set of human characteristics associated with the brand"; from the company perspective, it is a set of symbolic and self-expressive qualities the organization wants to link to the brand, and which contrast with the utilitarian attributes related to the product (Aaker, 1997; Plummer, 2000). From the customer's perspective, the 'brand personality profile' (Plummer, 2000) refers to brand personality descriptions as perceived by the customers through the brand's behavioral actions (Belk, 1975; Fournier, 1998).

Since brands are understood as conceptual propositions, they need marketing actions to enact their personality on their behalf, legitimizing the brand as an active partner in the relationship (Fournier, 1998); the brand personality is thus embedded (purposefully or not) in the service interactions, and enacted through the brand's manifestations. For Fournier (1998, p.345), "a logical extension of this thinking is to view all marketing actions as a set of behavioral incidents from which trait inferences about the brand are made and through which the brand's personality is actualized".

In that sense, it is suggested that the brand relationship the company wants to foster is the same as the Remembered Brand Experiences they want the customer to have (Image 3.5). Accordingly, this thesis proposes that, in order to deliver the Brand Experience Proposition, the organization should focus on the relationship it wants to develop, and design the offerings, journeys and touch-points in a way that will enable it to emerge.

As the relationship between the brand and the customers develops, the brand communicates its personality through the everyday marketing actions, becoming an active partner (Fournier, 1998). Hence, since brand relationships are built through the customer's continuous interactions with the brand manifestations (Payne et al., 2009), in trying to deliver the Brand Experience Proposition to the customer, the organization is actually trying to reinforce the relationship between the customers and the proposed brand personality through consistent Interactive Brand Experiences.

This way, the link between brand experience, personality, and relationship exposed in this section, grounds the proposition of *relationships as a metaphor for communicating the Brand Experience Proposition*; moreover, the empirical research that grounds this thesis also supports this finding, which is central to the framework proposed later in this thesis.

Concluding Remarks

This section started by defining brand at the intersection between the customer's experience and the organization's meaning proposition; the brand was thus defined as a conceptual proposition, which must be materialized into some sort of manifestation, so that the customers may access it. This way, since the process of translating the brand's meaning proposition into customer experience is grounded in a triadic approach to semiotics (Image 3.3), *brand experience* was conceptualized from three different perspectives: the customer's perception, the interaction moment, and the organization's proposition.

In that sense, it was suggested that the Brand Experience Proposition is communicated to the customer through Interactive Brand Experiences, which are purposely designed to communicate the brand meaning – a.k.a. Meaningful Brand Experiences. If this semantic transformation process is successful (Karjalainen, 2004), the customer's perception – the Remembered Brand Experience – is the same as the Brand Experience Proposition. Hence, Brand Experience was defined similarly to Remembered Brand Experience as the *customer's interpretation of the meanings communicated through the qualities and characteristics of any sort of brand manifestations.*

Next, building on the understanding that brand equity is the outcome of the customer's past experience with the organization, it was suggested that the brand is the reflection of the relationships the customers value, and as such, it should define the experience proposition. Moreover, as the customer's actual perception of the brand is the outcome of a continuous interaction with the

brand proposition, a relationship metaphor has been suggested as the means to communicate the Brand Experience Proposition to the teams responsible for the design of the Interactive Brand Experience *Settings*.

As the concepts around brand and brand experience have been explained in this section, the next one moves towards branding as the process of making brands alive through service interactions. First, a brief introduction to the subject is presented, followed by an exploration of the specific characteristics of service branding; after that, the process of branding, which is conceptualized as *defining* and *delivering* the brand proposition, is developed and explained.

3.3 SERVICE BRANDING

Evolving Branding Practices

As the understanding of what a brand is has evolved, branding processes have also developed in order to cope with these changes. Brands have gone from 'markers of goods', to now being seen as the stakeholders' collective perception of the experiences co-created in the interactions with the manifestations of the company's value proposition (Klein, 1999; Semprini, 2006; Vargo et al., 2008; Merz et al., 2009). Accordingly, branding practices have shifted methods, from an image building approach focused on advertisement, to an active process of meaning (Klein, 1999; Semprini 2006; Diller et al., 2008; Batey, 2008) and value co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a) that takes place during the service interactions.

From a historical perspective, most of these developments on the approaches to branding took place in the period between 1990 and 2000, having as its tipping point the 'Marlboro Friday', when, pressured by price competition, Phillip Morris decided to cut the prices of its main cigarette brand, leading to an exaggerated panic about the death of brands. On that occasion, as consumers were becoming more skeptical about the value of brands, many companies from the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) segment saw their market value decline, largely as a consequence of the depreciation of their main assets – their brands (Klein, 1999; Semprini, 2006).

As a consequences of these events, corporate brands rose above product brands; while FMCG organizations such as PepsiCo, P&G, Heinz, and RJR Nabisco lost market value, companies such as Nike, Disney, and Starbucks were not just doing fine, but growing (Klein, 1999).

At this point, the branding logic was shifting from image management, to an active process of meaning production (Klein, 1999, Semprini, 2006); brands were no longer seen as mere repositories for meaning (Sherry, 2005) – names to which external associations would be linked (Aaker, 1991) –, but as the actual offering – meaning propositions sold in the market through the branded offerings (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård, 2004; Semprini, 2006).

As noted by Merz et al. (2009, p.334), in this period "the general focus of branding switched from brand image as a primary driver of brand value to the customer as a significant actor in the brand value creation process". These co-creative practices that replaced the image management approach recognized not only the customers' role, but also that of the employees (Merz, et al. 2009) and other stakeholders (Schmitt, 2003; Schultz et al., 2005; Ind, 2007; de Chernatony, 2010) involved in the value creation network (Vargo, 2008; Vargo et al., 2010), placing the corporate brand between the organization, its employees, the customers, and all other stakeholders (Brodie et al., 2006).

While product brands have their roots in advertisement, corporate brands are built on organizational heritage and culture. In that sense, corporate branding moved the focus from short-term campaigns, to an enduring process that includes the entire organization (Hatch & Schultz, 2008), prompting meaning associations that are richer, and which have higher socio-cultural significance than those from the FMCG approach (Schultz, 2005).

Through this transition, branding moved from an outside-in image management perspective, mainly grounded in advertisement, to an inside-out view that considers the internal resources and the organizational capabilities as a source of competitive advantage (Urde, 1999; Porter, 2002) in the value co-creation process (Brodie, 2009).

Service Branding

These changes on the branding approaches just described were not only mirrored, but also largely influenced by the development of the service sector. Service brands are strongly related to corporate branding (McDonald et al., 2001), also sitting at the intersection between the organization, its employees, the customers, and other stakeholders; in that sense, service brands mediate and facilitate the different marketing activities and processes used to realize the interactions that enable the value co-creation (Brodie et al., 2006, Brodie, 2009).

> "Branding is the cornerstone of service marketing for the 21st century and service companies usually rely on the corporate brand. Service brands were long seen as less interesting than product brands. This, however, has changed and many of today's exciting brands have emerged from the service sector" (Wallström et al., 2008, p.41).

Whether it is for a product or for a service, a brand fulfills the same basic functions; it is a conceptual promise, a cluster of meaningful associations that the company wants the customer to have (Aaker, 1991, Grönroos, 2007, de Chernatony, 2010). Essentially, what differentiates product and service branding is the execution process (Riley & de Chernatony, 2000). For Grönroos (2006), the main distinctive characteristic between products and services is the process nature of the second; it is because of this processual nature that service branding provides a stronger foundation for a relationship perspective (Grönroos, 2004).

Service branding starts in the relationship between the organizations and the employees, and becomes alive in the interactions between the customers and the service providers (Riley & de Chernatony, 2000); as such, similar to corporate branding, the role of the employees is paramount, which is especially true as service brands have numerous touch-points (Berry et. al., 2006), making the branding process even more challenging. Hence, in trying to deliver a consistent brand experience, managers should focus on service interactions, and particularly on the employees enabling these experiences (Mosley, 2007).

Furthermore, by following Service Dominant Logic (SDL; Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, 2008), service branding is understood not merely as the branding of services, but as the application of SDL to branding, where the term *service* can be used in any sort of offering; as Brodie et al. (2009, p.345) properly puts it, the "service brand is integrative where 'service' is superordinate to branding of 'goods' and/or 'services'". Since 'service' is defined as "the application of competences (knowledge and skills) by one entity for the benefit of another" (Vargo et al., 2008, p.145), value may be co-created through the service interaction, or embedded in a product as a self-service mechanism (Grönroos, 2008).

This way, service branding shifts its focus towards an experiential and relational approach that sees goods and services as resources in the value co-creation process (Grönroos, 2004); it recognizes that value is co-created during the service interaction (Grönroos, 2006), and is determined by the beneficiary (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). As such, service branding becomes a

semiotic process of experience management that focuses on delivering the Brand Experience Proposition to the customers through the service interactions (Image 3.3).

Since companies cannot control the customer's perception, they should focus on managing the brand manifestations (Stuart, 1999); yet, to do so, "managers first need to define a brand's value and then ensure employees' values and behaviors are consistent with them" (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001, p.442). In that sense, the double agency of the brand building process must be acknowledged, as branding must be concerned not only with delivering the brand proposition (Semprini, 2006; Brodie et al., 2006), but also with defining it (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

Besides, as '*branding*' is often defined as something you do to a brand (e.g. AMA, 2015), it infers a grammatical understanding of the concept that replicates the aforementioned double agency. Hence, building on Motta-Filho (2012), this thesis understands branding as the process of '*delivering* the brand proposition', which implies '*defining* the brand' as a necessary first step; accordingly, the sub-processes of defining and delivering the Brand (Experience Proposition) are seen as inexorably intertwined parts of the Service Branding process.

Thus, since brands are understood as conceptual meaning propositions, this thesis defines Service Branding as *the process of translating the brand's conceptual meaning proposition into customer experiences through tangible service interactions*; in that sense, service interactions are understood as tangible, yet ephemeral occurrences – they exist in the moment of their performance, and cease to exist right after it (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Secomandi & Snelders, 2011).

Defining the Brand Proposition

Defining the brand proposition is the first step in the Service Branding process; since service brands facilitate and mediate relationships between multiple stakeholders (Brodie et al., 2006; Brodie, 2009), this process must be inclusive and comprehensive. In order to deliver its propositions, the service brand needs support from the entire organization; consequently, it is pointless to make a promise that can not be delivered due to conflicts with the strategy or lack of funding – as Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000, p.8) notice, "an empty brand promise is worse than no promise at all".

This way, since the brand promises must be translated into actions, the organization should focus on making propositions that are feasible (Ind & Bjerke, 2007); moreover, it is important that the brand promise is not solely based on the management's or customers' wishes, but also on organizational capabilities (Mazzucato, 2002; Porter, 2002). As such, in this process of defining the Brand Experience Proposition, the organization should make a thorough analysis of not only the consumer market, and the competitive environment, but also of the organization itself (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

For Urde (1999) this means that instead of adopting a market-oriented approach – where organizations strive to "blindly" fulfill all customers' wishes –, companies should focus on brand orientation – a perspective in which the brand is seen as the framework through which the organization responds to customers' demands, and where the brand is used as a strategic resource that helps to align the company's offerings.

Since service brands are often the same as the organization's brand (Berry, 2000), building new brands from scratch can be a challenging task, being the most common strategy to associate the new services with the existing corporate brand (de Chernatony et al., 2003). Yet, grounding the brand proposition on the current organizational capabilities is not always the best approach (Mazzucato, 2002), as in some circumstances the brand might also be based on a new offering (e.g. AirBNB, Über, First Direct); as such, when an established brand wants to create a radical new proposition, or to extend into new markets, the organization might create new or sub-brands in order to protect the main brand from possible failures (Rahman et al., 2009).

In that sense, Wheeler and Smith (2002) suggest two routes to align the brand with the business strategy: *branding the experience*, where a newly created offering is associated with a brand name (e.g. AirBNB); and *experiencing the brand*, when existing brands want to create Meaningful Brand Experiences[8]. Whatever the route used to define the experience proposition, once a choice has been made, the organization must develop the right competencies to deliver on that promise (Porter, 2002). Here, since this research builds on the idea of Meaningful Brand Experiences – where the brand proposition is the basis for the experience strategy –, a route similar to *experiencing the brand* was preferred.

[8] Meaningful Brand Experience has been defined in the homonymous section as Interactive Brand Experience' Settings that are purposefully designed to deliver the Brand Experience Proposition through its qualities and characteristics.

Furthermore, since Meaningful Brand Experiences does not necessarily mean a deep and significant experience (although it can be), but rather an interaction that communicates an intended meaning, the brand proposition must be clear and well defined in order to avoid misinterpretations. Another problem to be considered when defining the Brand Experience Proposition is the conformity trap, which happens when the organization is unable to create a unique and differentiated brand (Antorini & Schultz, 2005); as such, the brand must clearly state what they stand *for* (Ind & Bjerke, 2007).

Delivering the Service Brand

Ind (2007) argues that although different organizations occasionally define their brands in a similar way, what really matters is the meaning that the brand values have for the company, and especially, how they are made alive; it is not what the organization says that creates differentiation, but how it delivers (Antorini & Schultz, 2005). As such, not only the meaning of the brand proposition must be clearly defined, but it must also be brought to life in a truthful way; by offering a valuable proposition, and successfully delivering it through value co-creation processes, the organization may convert customer's payment into profit (Teece, 2010).

Therefore, to create value for the customer, and consequently for the brand, the organization must provide the right settings for the proposed experience to emerge (Grönroos, 2007; Schmitt, 2008). For de Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2003), this can be done by supporting the customer-facing staff, and by developing the service settings[9] with which the customer will interact. Since the service brand is basically a promise about future experiences (de Chernatony, 2010), the delivery of the proposition through the service interactions is the main determinant of brand equity (Berry, 2000).

Moreover, since service brands usually follow a monolithic brand strategy (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003), sharing their name with the organization, creating a consistent brand experience becomes a challenge, as everything the organization does (e.g. corporate governance, environmental decision), and not only the marketing actions, says something about the brand, and influences its reputation (Stuart, 1999). Also, due the processual nature of services (Grönroos, 2007), every interaction is an experience for the customer (Berry et. al., 2002; Berry et. al., 2006), and as such, whether purposefully or not, a service organization is always branding (Ostrum et al., 1995).

[9] The interfaces, processes and supporting systems that enable the service interactions.

Since service brands have many touch-points (Berry et. al., 2006), the branding process is a responsibility shared by the whole organization (McDonald et al., 2001). Furthermore, since the customer's experience with the brand outweighs any planned marketing communications (Ostrum et al., 1995; Berry, 2000), it is essential that the cues surrounding the brand manifestations communicate the intended experience proposition (Calders, 2005; Berry et. al., 2006).

As service brands are built on the relationship between the customers, the organizations, its employees, and other stakeholders (De Chernatony & Riley, 1998; Brodie et al., 2006), they mediate the internal, external, and interactive marketing activities, and facilitate the interactions between the multiple stakeholders in the process of enabling the brand promise to emerge (Brodie et al., 2006, Brodie, 2009). Since the marketing function is spread across the organization (de Chernatony, 2010), in trying to deliver the brand proposition, gaps between the strategic intent, organizational culture, and customer's perception might emerge (Hatch & Schultz, 2008).

Therefore, it is important that the organization builds an explicit and shared understanding of the brand, providing a framework against which its decisions may be evaluated (Ind & Bjerke, 2007); it is essential that all employees have a clear understanding of what the brand promise is, and that the organization supports and inspires them to act accordingly; simply imposing tight control over the employees is not the best solution (Mosley, 2007).

Once all employees have been given the adequate tools to deliver on the brand promise, the organization must check if the customer's perception are aligned with the proposed experience, fixing any problematic touch-point interaction (Hatch & Schultz, 2008); since the Brand Experience Proposition should be experienced and not explained (Tybout & Sternthal, 2005), a misaligned interaction will communicate the wrong message about the brand, diminishing the brand equity (Clatworthy, 2012).

Additionally, it must be noted that brand delivery is not only the responsibility of the front line employees (Ind & Bjerke, 2007); at some point, all the elements that influence the brand delivery, such as interaction settings, back office support, and self-service platforms have been designed by someone (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Patrício et al., 2008; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). In that sense, the role of the back office employees is not to be underestimated – as Zomerdijk and Voss (2010, p.70) argue, "in experience-

centric services, back office employees help create the contextual elements of an experience and are part of that context".

As such, in order to deliver the Brand Experience Proposition to the customers, the organization must design service settings that facilitate the delivery of the proposed experience through all customers' interactions; this includes supporting the front line employees, as well as creating self-service platforms that are integrated with the overall experience proposition. As just noted in the previous paragraph, the role of the back office staff in supporting the customer interaction interfaces – either through the front line employees, or through self-service platforms – is essential.

Finally, although the importance of the corporate culture is acknowledged, the focus of this research is not to delve into organizational management, but rather to explore ways of enabling the brand to become alive through the service settings that support the delivery of the brand promise (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996). In that sense, it is understood that the organizational environment, the technologies, and processes that support the employees in delivering the brand promise are an integral part of the Service Design process. Lastly, since the development of some service interactions is often outsourced, it is important to ensure that the external stakeholders are committed to the brand.

Concluding Remarks

This section briefly described the evolution of branding practices; from a Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) approach focused on image management, to a corporate branding perspective focused on supporting the stakeholders into bringing the experience proposition to life through the value co-creation processes that take place during the service interaction (Vargo, 2008; Vargo et al., 2010). Further, it was argued that this new branding approach was not only mirrored by service branding, but also strongly influenced by the developments of the service sector.

Next, *Service Branding* was defined as an encompassing approach based on Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a; Brodie et al., 2009), which, by focusing on the customer's experience, transcends the distinction between goods and services. Since the brand value resides within the customer's perception, it was suggested that Service Branding should focus on delivering the brand proposition to the customer. However, it was noted that in order to deliver the brand to the customers, the organization should first define what is the experience proposition the brand is making.

As such, the *Service Branding* process was defined as being composed of two irrevocably interrelated sub-processes of *defining* and *delivering* the Brand Experience Proposition. Since delivering the Brand Experience Proposition requires commitment from the entire organization, Clatworthy's (2013, p.100) argument that there is "a general trend in services branding to move from a focus upon staff to a focus upon multiple touch-points" was acknowledged. Hence, it was suggested that Service Branding should not only be concerned with corporate culture, but also with the design of enablers of the service interaction.

In the next section, the process of translating brands into customer experiences through the design of the service interaction settings is explained through the processes of Semantic Transformation (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012), and New Service Development (NSD; Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996); these concepts are central for this thesis, as they ground the 'Delivering the Service Brand' sub-process, and sustain the theoretical basis for the Service Branding definition used in this thesis, enabling its operationalization.

3.4 TRANSLATING THE BRAND INTO EXPERIENCES

Semantic Transformation

As the role of the customer's experience in branding grows, the processes of designing the enablers of these experiences should be more concerned with the brand strategy (Clatworthy, 2013) – as noted by Meyer and Schwager (2007, p.3), "a successful brand shapes customers' experiences by embedding the fundamental value proposition in offerings' every feature". In that sense, it is essential that the organizations focus on designing service settings that are aligned with the brand strategy, and which deliver on the Brand Experience Proposition (Motta-Filho, 2012; Clatworthy, 2012).

For Karjalainen and Snelders (2010), the link between brand strategy and design is established by the concept of semantic transformation – "the act of encoding intentional meanings into product design elements" (Karjalainen, 2004, p.235). Throughout this process, which is based on a triadic approach to semiotics (Santaella, 2008), the "qualitative brand descriptions are transformed into value-based design features" (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010, p.8). This way, the semantic transformation materializes the *brand strategy* into *manifestations* that mediate the *brand meanings* to the customers (Image 3.6; Motta-Filho, 2012).

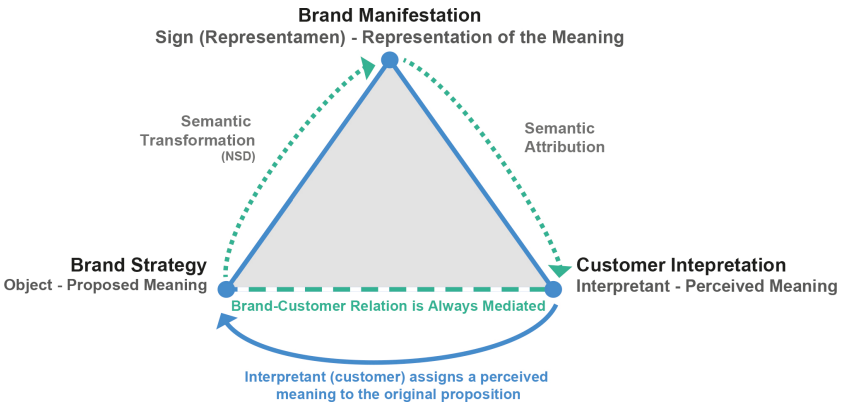

Image 3.6: Semantic transformation and the Semiotic triangle (Santaella, 2008).

Similar to semantic transformation (Karjalainen, 2004), Dumas (1994) defines design as the process of *translating concepts* into *material actions*; the role of the designer is thus to embed the right meanings into the brand manifestations (Kazmierczak, 2003; Clatworthy, 2012). Accordingly, the focus of designing shifts to the act of encoding the meanings through the design process in a way that the customer can properly reconstruct it by interpreting the signs (Image 3.6; Kazmierczak, 2003) – analogous to symbolic communication, semantic transformation also aims at creating a shared understanding (Flint, 2006), and as such, it also commands intentional meaning (Karjalainen, 2004).

From the company's perspective, the proposed brand meanings are embedded in the touch-points, which communicate them to the customers; yet, customers are not passive agents, as interpreting these meanings is understood as an active process (Kazmierczak, 2003). Consequently, distortions in the meaning attribution process (Karjalainen, 2007) may occur for two reasons: problems in the *encoding*, or during the *interpretation* process.

> "While encoding intentional meanings, for instance, to product design through specific semantic aspects to be subsequently transmitted to recipients, the company (designer) is also surmising potential interpretations of these aspects, thus in the actuality of shared meaning creation" (Karjalainen, 2002, p.3).

For Karjalainen (2007, p.79), distortions in the encoding process arise from three main reasons: "unclear brand values, ill-defined design briefs, or weak knowledge of semantic transformation". Here, it is important to notice that if

the semantic transformation process is not handled carefully, there is a risk of misalignment between the brand proposition and brand manifestations, resulting in an awry service experience for the customer (Clatworthy, 2012).

Problems may also occur in the semantic attribution (decoding) process (Karjalainen, 2007), as the meanings communicated through the interactions might not be rightly interpreted by the customers (Kazmierczak, 2003). Reasons for these misinterpretations are mainly associated with "user's weak experience in the product category, inconsistent supporting information, or differences of cultural and social contexts" (Karjalainen, 2007, p.79); since the semantic transformation is a semiotics concept, it is the meaning the customer interprets that matters (Mick, 1986; Fidalgo, 1999).

The semantic transformation process was originally developed by Karjalainen (2004), and focused on communicating brand attributes through design cues on products. More recently, Clatworthy (2012) adapted Karjalainen's process to services, by proposing a brand megaphone metaphor. In Clatworthy's model, the Brand DNA is translated into a Service Personality, which, when expressed through the Touch-Points, Tone of Voice, and Behaviors, communicates the desired brand characteristics to the customer (Image 3.7).

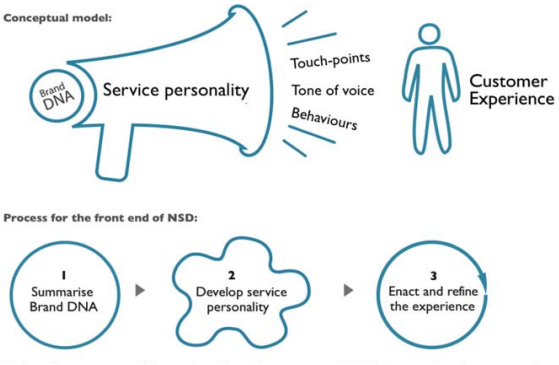

Image 3.7: The brand megaphone model (Clatworthy, 2012, p.115; reproduced with author's permission).

For Clatworthy (2013), the semantic transformation process for services has the greatest impact if it takes place the in early stages of the New Service Development (NSD) process, when the "desired brand associations are incorporated into a service concept" (Clatworthy, 2012, p.112); since the service concept guides most of the NSD process (Goldstein et al., 2002), the

potentials for improvement are quite high, especially when compared to the costs (Clatworthy, 2011).

Developing on the suggestion that the semantic transformation process takes place during the NSD process (Clatworthy, 2012), Motta-Filho (2012) proposes the Brand Experience Manual as a tool to communicate the Brand Experience Proposition to the NSD teams. Following the semantic transformation concept (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012), the assumption is that by properly informing the NSD teams of what the experience they are designing *for* is should facilitate the translation of brand strategy into service settings that support the delivery of the Brand Experience Proposition to the customer.

New Service Development

New Service Development (NSD) "is the overall process of developing new service offerings and is concerned with the complete set of stages from idea to launch" (Goldstein et al., 2002, p.122). As noted in the previous section, it is during the NSD process that the semantic transformation takes place, and that the brand strategy is transformed into the settings that will support the delivery of the Brand Experience Proposition (Clatworthy, 2012; Motta-Filho, 2012), hence, making the NSD process of central interest for this research.

Most authors in the NSD literature (e.g. Johnson et al., 1999; Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Tax & Stuart 1997; Goldstein et al., 2002; Tatikonda & Zeithaml, 2002) differentiate the early stages of the NSD process, when the *design of the service* (concept) takes place, from the execution phase, when the *development and launch of the service happens*. For Tatikonda and Zeithaml (2002, p.201) these two phases refer respectively to the *front* and *back end* of the service development process – "where the front end selects a service concept to develop more fully, … the back end implements this chosen service concept".

Distinguishing the role of designers in relation to phases of the NSD process, Gloppen (2012, p.14; Image 3.8) argues that during the front end stage, the designer should take a leadership role – a proactive approach that "seeks to position design as a central part of the business strategy" –, whilst in the back end, the role of the designer is that of a manager, helping with the "further development and implementation of the chosen concept at every touchpoint of the service journey".

Image 3.8 – Designer's role in the different stages of NSD, according to Gloppen (2012).

It is during the development of the service concept that *what* service offering the organization will propose to the customer is defined, informing *how* the service delivery processes and systems that support this offering should be implemented (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Goldstein et al., 2002), making this the ideal moment to incorporate the desired brand associations into the qualities and characteristics of the settings that support the service interactions (Clatworthy, 2012, 2013). In that sense, the service concept can be understood as *an expression of the value proposition the organization makes to the customers* (Vargo et al., 2008), being grounded on the Brand Experience Proposition.

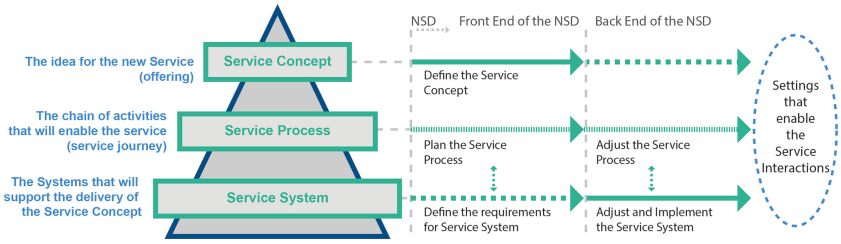

Image 3.9: New Service Development process – based on Edvardsson and Olsson (1996).

Since an organization cannot create an experience, but only the settings that allow the experience to emerge (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2011), they must focus on designing the service's infrastructure; as the offering is grounded in a cluster of integrated resources that enables the customer to co-create value (Vargo et al., 2008), the design of the systems and processes that support the service is essential (Image 3.9).

- The *service systems* represent the set of resources the organization needs to realize the service concept (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996). By integrating these resources, the organization provides the *settings* with which the customers can interact in order to co-produce the service in their own process (Johnston & Kong, 2011; Goldstein et al., 2002).

- The *service process* "relates to the chain of activities that must function properly if the service is to be produced"; it is a prototype for the different customers' processes, but it also conveys "a clear description of the various activities needed to generate the service" – it describes the front and the back stage of the service deeds (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996, p.148)

The design of the service systems requires an special attention to the mediators of the experiences – the touch-points that connect the customers' processes and the service systems, and that facilitate the service interactions (Secomandi & Snelders, 2011); as Edvardsson et al. (2000, p.121) note, "the development of the needed resources and the service process must be integrated and done in parallel since it is the resources that realize the service process". Once all the resources are in place, the organization is capable of co-creating value with the customers, and consequently, of generating revenues (Grönroos, 2008).

Limitations from the traditional NSD methods must also be recognized: first, NSD approaches do not fully acknowledge the role of customers' and employees' collaboration in the design process; second, despite the importance of the service concept to the NSD process, "there is limited work providing a methodology for developing it in practice" (Yu & Sangiorgi, 2014, p.201); finally, since services have multiple touch-points, the process of designing integrated service experiences requires a holistic perspective, which most traditional NSD methods fail to deliver. Hence, the next section explores Service Design as an approach to service innovation that addresses the aforementioned issues.

Concluding Remarks

Following Clatworthy (2012), this section explored the concept of semantic transformation (Karjalainen, 2004) as part of the New Service Development process (NSD; Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996) where the brand strategy is transformed into the settings that enable brand-based customer experiences. In that sense, it is essential that the service concept is grounded in the Brand Experience Proposition; it is the service concept that defines *what* service will be offered, informing *how* the implementation phase of the NSD process will proceed. This supports the development of the systems and processes that enables the brand to emerge during interactions with customers.

Since an organization cannot offer an experience, but just the settings for these experiences to occur, and since the brand emerges from customers' experiences with these interactive settings, the implementation of the infrastructure that supports the service interactions is central for a successful

process of semantic transformation. Hence, it is important that the design teams follow the back-end of the NSD process (Gloppen, 2012), ensuring that the service systems and processes adequately support the delivery of the service concept – the value proposition will only materialize if the right resources are in place, and properly integrated (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Vargo et al., 2008).

In the following section Service Design is presented as a designerly approach to the development of services that is fundamentally customer oriented, and more capable of handling complex problems. Then, a brief intermission section intertwines Service Design, Service Marketing, and Service Dominant Logic in order to ground Design *for* Services, which is presented subsequently, being considered as the Service Design approach that better suits the theoretical framework proposed by this research.

3.5 DESIGNING (FOR) SERVICES

Service Design

Service design emerged in the context of the transition to a knowledge-based society, at the point when the discussion about the customer's role in the value co-creation processes was in full swing (Sangiorgi, 2012). Although services – and thus the design of services – has existed for a long time[10], a systematic *designerly* approach to services has only emerged in the last 25 years (Manzini, 2009) with the development of Service Design as a design discipline[11] (Archer, 1981; Cross, 1982).

Kimbell (2009a) calls the non-designerly approach to service development 'silent design'; yet, as the author observes, the use of the term is not without problems, as even before the emergence of Service Design, other disciplines – such as operation management, marketing, and information and communication technology – have also developed their own approaches to the design of services. Consequently, "a profusion of diverse services exist, designed by all sorts of people with range of knowledge and intellectual traditions, but typically not people who have been to design school" (Kimbell, 2009a p.160).

[10] In the context of New Service Development, service design is often referred as the process responsible for defining the service concept (refer to *New Service Development* section).
[11] Service Design is understood as being within the design discipline context – the matter is not if design is composed of sub-disciples or fields, but that Service Design has the characteristics of design as discipline (Cross, 1982; refer to Section 2.1)

Clatworthy (2011, p.16) notices that "the design of the points of contact between the service provider and the customer is not new". Already in 1977, Shostack drew attention to the importance of designing the service evidences. Although Shostack's (1977) approach has been criticized for its focus on service evidencing – which is suggested to have turned Service Design into the peripheral activity of accessorizing the service (Secomandi & Snelders, 2011) –, later publications from the author (Shostack, 1982, 1984) propose a process that emphasizes the service systems, and in which evidencing is only secondary.

From its origin in operations, marketing, and technology fields, Service Design, as known today, started to develop in the 1990's. In the academic arena, the first institutions to advance this new discipline were the Köln University of Applied Sciences, and the Politecnico di Milano. Another important player in promoting Service Design was live|work – founded in 2001 in London. It is known as the first professional Service Design consultancy in the world, having an active role in disseminating the discipline (Moritz, 2005; Mager, 2009).

As the discipline of Service Design reached some maturity, the direction of the academic literature started to change from a focus on defining Service Design by connecting with other fields and disciplines, and justifying it as a discipline in its own right, to an effort to develop Service Design's own approaches to research (Blomkvist et al., 2010). Also, as the Service Design community continued to grow, the first practitioner conference specifically focused on the field took place in 2006, and by 2009, the first academic one (Segelström, 2013).

For Clatworthy (2013, p.16), Service Design "represents the application of design as a creative and culturally informed approach to services"; similarly, Segelström (2013, p.27) defines Service Design as "the use of a designerly way of working when improving or developing people-intensive service systems through the engagement of stakeholders". This *designerly ways*, mentioned by both authors, grounds Service Design as a design discipline (Cross, 1982, 2010; Kimbell, 2011b), being "what different design disciplines have in common" (Wetter-Edman, 2009, p.2).

In that sense, it is important to remember that, as a design discipline (Cross, 1982, 2010; Kimbell, 2011b), Service Design tackles (although not necessarily always) wicked problems through an abductive reasoning approach (Schön, 1982; Dorst, 2006, 2015; Martin, 2009; Kolko, 2010); as mentioned in the *Research Approach and Methods* chapter, "the abilities of

resolving ill-defined problems, adopting solution-focused cognitive strategies, employing abductive or appositional thinking and using non-verbal modeling media" (Cross, 2010, p.100) are central to the concept of *designerly ways of knowing*, and to the design discipline itself (Cross, 1982).

The main characteristic of Service Design – in comparison to traditional NSD methods – is its focus on the *customer experience*; as Wetter-Edman (2011, p. 66) properly notes, Service Design is "inherently customer and user-centered". Furthermore, the co-creative nature of Service Design is understood to be not only multidisciplinary (i.e. integrating disciplines and fields within and beyond design), but also transdisciplinary, as it goes beyond the research milieu, cooperating with parts of society outside the academic arena, focusing on real-world problems (Mager, 2009; Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2011). Therefore, Service Design offers an integrative approach, which incorporates stakeholders from different silos, operational levels, and sectors of society in the service development process.

In order to do so, Service Design uses visual tools that facilitate the design of immaterial activities through collaborative and enactive approaches (Moritz, 2005; Kimbell, 2009a, 2009b; Mager, 2009; Stickdorn, 2010b, Clatworthy, 2013), following an iterative process of evaluation and redesign (Patrício et al., 2008; Kimbell, 2009a; Clatworthy, 2013) that enables a quick prototyping and testing of new ideas. Jointly, these characteristics facilitate not only co-development of the new service offerings with customers, but they also foster organizational support for the new projects (Brown & Martin, 2015).

Since services are processes and activities created by organizations and enacted in collaboration with the customer (Johnston & Kong, 2011), they are realized in the interaction between these two parts; by coordinating and integrating the available resources, Service Design can facilitate these interactions, materializing the interfaces between the customers and the company's infrastructure – as Secomandi and Snelders (2011, p.31) argue, "the interface and the infrastructure are inextricable counterparts of the sociotechnical resources involved in exchange relations, and both can be considered a concern for service design".

In that sense, the design of the touch-points that enable the service interactions must be integrated with the development of the service systems that support these interfaces (Secomandi & Snelders, 2011).

The concept of the touch-point is central to Service Design practice and literature, and has been described in different ways. For Koivisto (2009) and

Clatworthy (2011, 2012, 2013), touch-points are the artifacts with which the customers interact; what Polaine et al. (2010) call channels, and Kazmierczak (2003) calls artifacts. Differently, Ducan and Moriarty (2006), and Polaine et al. (2010) define touch-points as the moments of interaction between the customer and the service; what Clatworthy (2011) calls service encounters – "the interaction process between the server and the served" (Cook et al., 2002, p.160).

To avoid any further confusion, touch-points are here defined as *the interfaces between the service infrastructure and the customers, which materialize the value proposition, enabling its realization through the service interactions*, and service encounters as *the moments when the customers interact with any given service touch-point*. Also, as experiences are understood as phenomenological events that emerge from any sort of service interaction (Johnston & Kong, 2011), and since brand experience do not demand consumption (Nysveen et al., 2013), in the context of this research, service encounters do not demand consumption, but just a direct or indirect contact with a brand manifestation.

Services are processes through which the company's resources interact with the customers to co-create value (Grönroos, 2006; Vargo et al., 2010), and as such, the way these processes unfold – the customer's journeys with the service – is paramount. As Clatworthy (2011, p.25) argues, "touch-point orchestration is often mentioned as central to service success"; it can help to connect different silos in the organization into delivering an aligned service, (Kimbell, 2009a), thus improving the customers' experiences (Berry et al., 2002).

For Stone and Devine (2013), touch-points don't tell the whole story, as they are sub-components of a larger picture; namely, the customer journey – "it is as if companies spend fortunes building gleaming towers and cities while the roads between them are muddy dirt tracks" (Polaine et al., 2012, p.86). Hence, since Service Design thinks of the customer's interactions holistically, considering it as an intentionally designed experience (Kimbell, 2009a), it can help "designing the experience of the arrows, which are the transitions from one touchpoint to the next" (Polaine et al., 2012, p.86).

As such, Clatworthy (2013, p.19) defines Service Design as "designed offerings to provide experiences that happen overtime and across different touch-points"; this way, the author recognizes that the focus of Service Design is not only the touch-points, but also the customer's journey and the service offerings.

Intermission – The Influence from Marketing

So far, this section has briefly described the development of the Service Design, explaining some of the main characteristics and concepts of the discipline. Moreover, as it will be further clarified next, by recognizing the importance of integrating the design of the touch-points with the development of the service systems (Secomandi & Snelders, 2011), it has been suggested that the object of Service Design is not only the touch-points, but also the systems and resources that enable the value proposition to emerge in service interactions. In that sense, touch-points are understood as interfaces that materialize the value proposition embedded in the service infrastructure, supporting the service interactions.

By building on Clatworthy (2011, 2013) and Kimbell (2009a), the orchestration of touch-points through the customer's journey with the service offering has also been acknowledged as a key characteristic of Service Design. Yet, since service offerings are understood as expressions of the value proposition made by the organization to the customer (Vargo et al., 2008), this thesis proposes the *Designing for Brand Experience* framework[12] as an approach that extends Service Design beyond touch-point orchestration, and into a strategic level, where it helps to define the value proposition, and this way, also ensures the alignment between the proposed experience and the available resources.

Following, the next two topics will present Service Marketing, and further develop on Service Dominant Logic, which has already been introduced throughout this monograph; these two subjects are essential to ground Design for Service, which will be discussed after this intermission.

Service Marketing

As a sub-discipline of marketing, service marketing has existed since the 1950's, having a period of fast development between the 1970's and the 1990's (Berry & Parasuraman, 1993); Fisk et al. (1993), explains the evolution of service marketing literature through a three stages analogy: The Crawling Out (1953-79), Scurrying About (1980-1985), and Walking Erect (1986-onwards). Providing a more contemporary examination of the literature, Baron et al. (2014) observes that once the service marketing fields were delineated (pre-1988), identifiable sub-disciplines started to develop between 1988 and 1997.

[12] The concept is further developed in the *Findings and Contributions* chapter – Section 5.3

Following, in the period that comprises 1998 to 2003, the focus of the discipline moved towards the role of technology, e-services, and customers' experience, reaching the current, and last phase with the publication of Vargo and Lusch's (2004a) seminal paper proposing Service Dominant Logic as a unifying marketing approach. Throughout its development, service marketing has grown from a hardly accepted sub-discipline fighting for its right to exist, to an established field with its own research agenda.

During most of the development of service marketing, services were seen as 'what goods were not' or 'intangible products' (Berry & Parasuraman, 1993), and the core of the literature was portrayed by the IHIP characteristics (Intangibility, Heterogeneity, Inseparability and Perishability), which were compiled by Zeithaml et al. in 1985 (Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004).

More recently, the preeminence of IHIP characteristics has been challenged by various authors. For Edvardsson et al. (2005), the IHIP concept is outdated, and does not properly reflect the idiosyncrasies of services, as it fails to adequately "delineate services from goods" (Vargo & Lusch, 2004b, p.327). Lovelock and Gummesson (2004) also criticize the concept, but for not having empirical validation; for these authors, many of the IHIP characteristics are as true for services as they are for some categories of goods – "there are now far too many exceptions to the current service paradigm for it to remain as a central tenet of services marketing" (p.32).

As the division between goods and services grew outdated (Gummesson, 1995), the emergence of Service Dominant Logic (SDL; Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, 2008) helped not only service marketing, but also the whole of the marketing discipline to break free from the "manufacturing-based model of the exchange of outputs" (Vargo & Lusch, 2004b, p.325). In the SDL perspective, service (in the singular) is viewed as "the application of competences (knowledge and skills) by one entity for the benefit of another" (Vargo et al., 2008, p.145); as such, it is seen as a transcending concept to products and services (Vargo & Akaka, 2009).

Reviewing the way the term '*service'* is described in the literature, Edvardsson et al. (2005, p.118) observe that "there are two approaches within service research: service as a category of market offerings and service as a perspective on value creation"; thus, *service* refers to a new perspective on value creation, as proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2004a, 2008), and *services* refers to a specific kind of offering, which is particular to industries and organizations usually classified within the service sector (Zeithaml et al., 2012).

In that sense, it is important to notice that although Vargo and Lusch (2008, p.4) suggest that "the perception of service economy is mostly an aberration of the G-D[13] logic thinking", the empirical research done for this thesis was developed within the service industry. Yet, as the research was grounded in the SDL, it is expected that findings reported in this monograph can be extended to different economic sectors such a goods (as means to provide service; Grönroos, 2006, 2008), and experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999).

Service Dominant Logic

Service Dominant Logic (SDL) proposes to change the focus of value creation from exchange to the use experience (*value-in-use*), such that value is understood as being phenomenologically determined by the customer's evaluation of the service experience (Sandström et al., 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). For Wetter-Edman (2009), SDL should not be seen as a theory, but rather as a perspective of value creation in which *service* – "the application of competences (knowledge and skills) by one entity for the benefit of another" (Vargo et al., 2008, p.145) – is the fundamental basis of exchange (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p.7, FP1).

Since value-in-use focuses on the customer's experience, the distinction between goods and services becomes irrelevant; as experience is a phenomenological event (Helkkula, 2011), the customer's perception does not differentiate things from activities (Wetter-Edman & Johansson, 2011). Hence, what the customers acquire is the benefit that the offering can provide; the value it helps them co-create (Vargo & Lusch, 2004b) – it is not about the goods or services per se, but the exchange of knowledge and skills (a.k.a. service), which are usually masked by "complex combinations of goods, money, and institutions" (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p.7, FP2).

As Gummesson (1994, p.78) notes, "activities render services, things render services". In that sense, goods are seen as a "mechanism for service provision" (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p.7, FP3), and as self-service artifacts that enable the customer to co-create value (Grönroos, 2008). In the words of Normann and Ramirez (1994, p.68), they are "frozen activities, concrete manifestations of the relationship among actors in a value-creating system". Therefore, a service can be provided directly, through deeds and activities, or indirectly, through tangible goods (Vargo & Lusch, 2004b; Grönroos, 2008);

[13] Good-Dominant as opposed to the Service Dominant Logic proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2004a, 2008).

nevertheless, value only emerges when the customer uses it (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a).

Viewing marketing from a service dominant perspective helps to open the *black box* of consumption (Grönroos, 2006). The goods-based marketing approach focuses on making resources available for the customer, so that they can manage their own value creation process; this way, the consumption process – where value is co-created – is out of the organization's concerns. Differently, in a service approach, the consumption process is understood as an activity where value is co-created in the interaction between the customers and the organization, and as such, it focuses on "facilitating interactions and the management of interactions between the firm and the customer" (Grönroos, 2006, p.320).

Edvardsson and Olsson (1996, p.147) argue that "the company does not sell services but opportunities for service which are generated in partially unique customer processes with partly different customer outcomes"; accordingly, it is understood that the organization does not supply a service, but the means for the customers to co-create value in their unique and individual processes – "value propositions, which customers then transform into value through use" (Patrício et al., 2011, p.181). This does not mean that the customer is creating value single-handedly, but that each value co-creation process is unique, and as such, they differ from one another.

Since "the customer is always a co-creator of value" (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p.7, FP6), value emerges from the integration of resources that each part brings into the process (Vargo et al., 2008); consequently, "the enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions" (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p.7, FP7), which are materialized through the infrastructure that supports the service interactions (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Vargo et al., 2008). Also, as "value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary" (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p.7, FP10), the exchange value depends on the customer's perception of the value-in-use (Vargo et al., 2008, p.150): "value is idiosyncratic, experiential, contextual and meaning laden" (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p.7).

Value-in-exchange emerges when one entity (e.g. the customer) needs resources from another entity (e.g. an organization) to co-create value (Vargo et al., 2008); the role of the organization is then to integrate resources in a way that it enables the customer to co-create value, and making these integrated resources available for the customers in the form of valuable offerings. In doing so, the organization can then engage in a value exchange

process with the customer – yet, as noted in the previous paragraph, the value-in-exchange depends on the customers' perception of the value co-created.

Further, by evolving Service Dominant Logic's (SDL) conceptualization of value, Vargo et al. (2010) suggest that value-in-use was a transitional concept, and propose that 'value-in-context' better reflects SDL, as it implies that not only value is always co-created, but also that it is dependent on the context, and on resource integration. Accordingly, value-in-context is strongly associated with two fundamental premises of the SDL: the phenomenological nature of value, which is personal and contextual (FP10); and the fact that "all social and economic actors are resources integrators" (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p.7, FP9).

> "Value-in-context highlights the importance of time and place dimensions and network relationships as key variables in the creation and determination of value. Thus, value-in-context is uniquely derived at a given place and time and is phenomenologically determined based on existing resources, accessibility to other integratable resources, and circumstances. Value cannot be created independent of the beneficiary and then delivered" (Vargo & Akaka, 2009, p.39).

Therefore, value-in-context implies that the customers also have their own value network, being themselves resource integrators (Vargo, 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p.7, FP9) – an understanding that extends the concept of relationships from dyads to a network-with-and-within-network view (Vargo, 2009). These value networks, also known as *service systems*[14], are arrangements of resources that include people, technology, and information, which are connected to other systems by the value proposition. As such, value is co-created in interaction between the customer's and the company's service systems, where both are integrating resources to co-create value-in-context (Image 3.10; Vargo et al., 2008).

[14] Although fundamentally similar to the concept of service system as used in the NSD literature, service system as used in the SDL literature is not exactly the same.

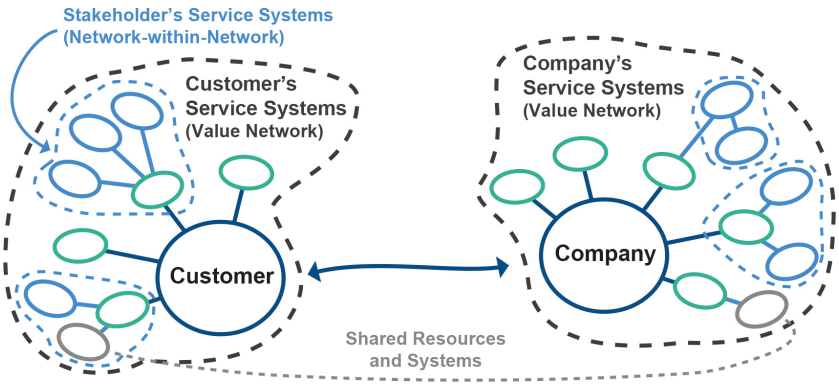

Image 3.10: Customer's and the company's *service systems* interacting to co-create value.

Furthermore, since it is understood that value emerges in the "continuous process of knowledge sharing and generation and is largely influenced by culture, competences, and context" (Vargo et al., 2010, p.150), value-in-context considers the situational variables and actors involved in the service provision; in that sense, the same service interaction might generate different results depending on the *users* and the *context* (Wetter-Edman, 2014).

/Intermission

Design for Services

Design for service (Segelström, 2013, and Wetter-Edman, 2014; Design for Services, for Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011, and Sangiorgi, 2012; Designing for Services, for Evenson & Dubberly, 2010, and Kimbell, 2011a) is an approach to Service Design that "points to the impossibility of being able to fully imagine, plan or define any complete design for a service" (Kimbell, 2011a, p.45); as such, it "acknowledges the indeterminacy of services as an object of design" (Sangiorgi, 2012, p.98-99). In that sense, it is understood that a service company does not provide a service, but the prerequisites that enables the services to emerge during the customers' interactions (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996).

Segelström (2013, p.25) suggests that *Design for Service* provided theoretical grounding for what is possibly the "most important theoretical advancement in service design this far". For Kimbell (2011a), Designing for Services is at the intersection between *design as an enquiry* and *Service Dominant Logic*. Similarly, Sangiorgi (2012) grounds Design for Services on an understanding of services as a higher order concept, in which the distinction between

products and services is no longer relevant; value is thus co-created in interactions between the different actors and the value networks that each of them brings to the process (Vargo et al., 2008).

This way, it can be argued that Design for Service operationalizes the design of service experiences under a Service Dominant Logic perspective (Wetter-Edman et al., 2014). Since Service Dominant Logic conceptualizes experience from a phenomenological perspective (Sandström et al., 2008), it is understood that organizations cannot design an experience, but only the systems that will enable the customers to develop their own experience through the service interactions (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Vargo et al., 2008).

Moreover, because of the customer's involvement in the value co-creation process, it is not possible to clearly define the service's boundaries (Kimbell, 2009c) – as suggested by Meroni and Sangiorgi (2011, p.227), services are "complex and relational entities that … cannot be fully designed, meaning predetermined". Therefore, Design for Services recognizes that what is being designed is not the service itself, but rather *a platform for action where the actors and their value network may engage in a value co-creation process* (Vargo et al., 2008; Manzini, 2011; Kimbell, 2011a).

As such, the value propositions the organization makes to the customers are manifested through the system's configurations that allow the service to take place and co-create value (Sangiorgi, 2012); a cluster of integrated resources that are made accessible to the customer as a service offering (Vargo et al., 2008). As in Shostack's (1982) analogy, service systems can be understood as potential energy, stored resources that are made available to the customer as offerings; yet, it is only in use – as kinetic energy – that this potential service co-creates value (Vargo & Lusch, 2004b).

Accordingly, in designing for a service experience, the organizations should focus on the enablers that "serve as the foundation for the actual value proposition made to the customer" (Sandström et al., 2008, p.115).

For Evenson and Dubberly (2010, p.404), Designing for Services is about the "conceiving and iteratively planning and constructing a service systems or architecture to deliver resources that choreograph an experiences that others design". In the interpretation of the authors, Designing for Services is a meta-activity – 'service' is seen as design, which is designed in-use during the interaction between the users and the supplier; as such, the role of the organization is to provide the resources that enable their service proposition to emerge through the value co-creation process (the interactions).

Yet, although Design for Services represents an important development in Service Design theory, recognizing the contextual elements of value creation, it does not fully portray the most advanced practices, which integrate the design phase with the implementation stages[15] (Yu & Sangiorgi, 2014; Hansen & Jackson, 2015; Sangiorgi et al., 2015). As such, most of the Service Design theory, including *Design for Service,* still reproduces the division of design into planning and execution (Jones, 1992), where the focus of Service Design is to create the service concept (Stickdorn, 2010a; Shostack, 1982), and the actual implementation is essentially the concern of some other discipline – a limitation addressed in the following topic.

Multilevel Service Design, and beyond

Another recent advancement in Service Design theory is the concept of Multilevel Service Design (MSD), proposed by Patrício et al. (2011) as an interdisciplinary method for the design of complex service systems; a holistic approach that highlights the *different levels of the service prerequisites* (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996) – from the value constellation of the service concept, to the necessary service processes and systems, and the detailing of all the different service encounters –, enabling the design of integrated offerings. This way, although Multilevel Service Design does not address the implementation stages, it still creates a stronger link between Service Design and the New Service Development (NSD) literature (Image 3.11).

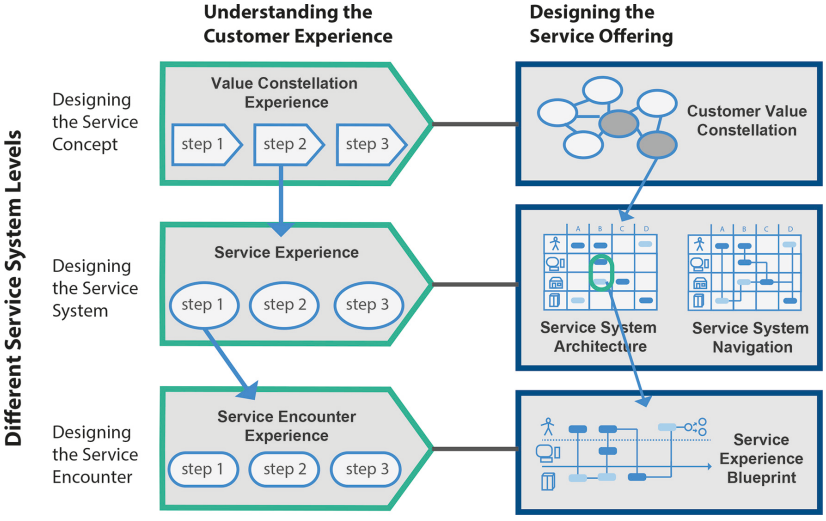

Image 3.11: Multilevel Service Design (Patrício et al., 2011, p.184).

[15] This has also been observed by the researcher during his discussions with practitioners and experts.

Similar to Design for Services, MSD "recognizes that organizations cannot design customer experiences, but service systems can be designed *for* the customer experience" (Patrício et al., 2011, p.183); for Patrício et al. (2011), the main problem with traditional Service Design methods is that they focus on one service system level at a time, instead of taking an integrated multi-level approach. Thus, by combining NSD (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996) with Service Design, MSD "responds to the call for more holistic approaches to customer experience research" (Patrício et al., 2011, p.196):

> "Service system design needs to evolve to more holistic methods that integrate the design of the different service system levels from the definition of the overall service concept to the design of each concrete interface" (Patrício et al., 2011, p.181)

Although the missing link between Service Design and implementation is not directly assessed by MSD, the stronger connection between Service Design and NSD (Patrício et al., 2011) opens new possibilities for the development of a designerly approach to the NSD process. For example, MSD can be combined with Gloppen's (2012) view of designers as *managers* during the implementation process (Image 3.8), offering a satisfactory compromise when it comes to the role of Service Design on the back end of the NSD process.

In the *Findings and Contributions* chapter, the Designing for Brand Experience framework – through the concept of Semantic Transformation for Experiences –, incorporates the theoretical developments presented throughout this chapter, presenting an approach that integrates semantic transformation (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012), design for services (Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012), and the New Service Development process (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996).

Concluding Remarks

This section combined multiple theoretical concepts, grounding the core of the delivering the brand part of the Brandslation process. First, the Service Design was introduced, and its main concepts defined; in that context, touch-points were described as *the interfaces between the service infrastructure and the customers*, and as such it was argued that service design should not be only concerned with the interface, but also with the processes and systems that support the service interactions. Furthermore, touch-points orchestration has been acknowledged as a fundamental characteristic of Service Design.

Next, an intermission presented different aspects of the Service Marketing literature, and Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, 2008) was discussed as a phenomenological approach to value creation (Wetter-Edman, 2009); regardless of the means (products or services) used to co-create value, it is the customer's perception of the experience that matters (Sandström et al., 2008). Moreover, since services are conceptualized *as processes through which the company's resources interact with the customers' to co-create value* (Grönroos, 2006; Vargo et al., 2010), the customers' participation in the service provision is deemed essential.

Hence, it was defended that both the customers and the company have their own value network (Normann & Ramirez, 1994), which they bring to the service interaction. This way, it is acknowledged that an organization cannot deliver value, but only a value proposition – value is co-created as this proposition is manifested, and the organization's service system interacts with the customer's. Analogously, it was noted that an organization cannot deliver an experience, but only the settings that allow the experience to take place during the service interaction.

This way, by integrating the insights from Service Dominant Logic, Design for Service was introduced as an approach to Service Design that recognizes that what is being designed is not a service, but rather the configurations that allow the service to exist (Sangiorgi, 2012). As such, Design for Service focuses on the design of the settings that enable the service provision, linking Service Design to the New Service Development (NSD) process (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996).

Lastly, Patrício's et al. (2011) Multilevel Service Design was presented, further incorporating NSD within Service Design by integrating the design of the touch-points with the development of the service infrastructure, closing the section.

/ CHAPTER

This chapter introduced the theoretical grounds on which this thesis is built upon. Later, in the *Contributions and Findings* chapter, these concepts will be referred to as a way to fundament '*Design for Brand Experience*' as a framework for operationalizing *Service Branding* – "*the process of translating the brand's conceptual meaning proposition into customer experiences through tangible service interactions*" –, answering to the *General Research Question*.

4. Research Process

This chapter reports on the Research Process which informed the present thesis; in doing so, it fulfills Zimmerman's et al. (2007) requirement for Process Documentation, making the research more transparent, and also answering Davison's et al. (2004, p.68) quality criteria of "carefully planned and executed cycle of activities … (and) continuous process of problem diagnosis" through the description of the action research cycles (Crouch & Pearce, 2012).

The current thesis builds on a practice-based approach to design research (Saikaly, 2005) that aims at building knowledge in the context on application (Nowotny, 2004). In such situations, the design project is seen not only as an object of study, but an integral part of the research process (Saikaly, 2005; Sevaldson, 2010), in which the researcher must take a first-person perspective (Fallman, 2007), participating as an active member of the design teams. This methodological approach was chosen because the ill-defined nature of the research problem (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Buchanan, 1992) requires a path of discovery where the process of problem definition is parallel to the solution finding.

In order to operationalize such practice-based design research (Saikaly, 2005), this thesis uses action research (Susman & Evered, 1978) as an inquiry strategy (Lau, 1997); hence, it follows cycles of design interventions (Crouch & Pearce, 2012) and reflection (Schön, 1982), integrating practice, research, and exploration (Fallman, 2008). This way, the current research combines Susman and Evered's (1978) academic approach to actions research, with Crouch and Pearce's (2012) design-based model, also absorbing ideas from Fallman's (2008) interaction design research triangle[16].

As visualized in Image 4.1, this chapter is divided into 6 sections. The first and last sections describe two stages that are mainly associated with

[16] As explained in the Section 2.2 – Modes of Design Research sub-section – the design interventions, exploration and practice went hand in hand.

academic research (Susman & Evered, 1978): *Understanding the Problem Context* (Diagnosis stage), and *Writing as Reflection* (Specifying Learning stage). Between these two parts, four sections describe the Design Interventions through a practice-based approach to action research (Crouch & Pearce, 2012). Additionally, the role of workshops as action research sub-processes will be further explored, especially in the last two Design Interventions.

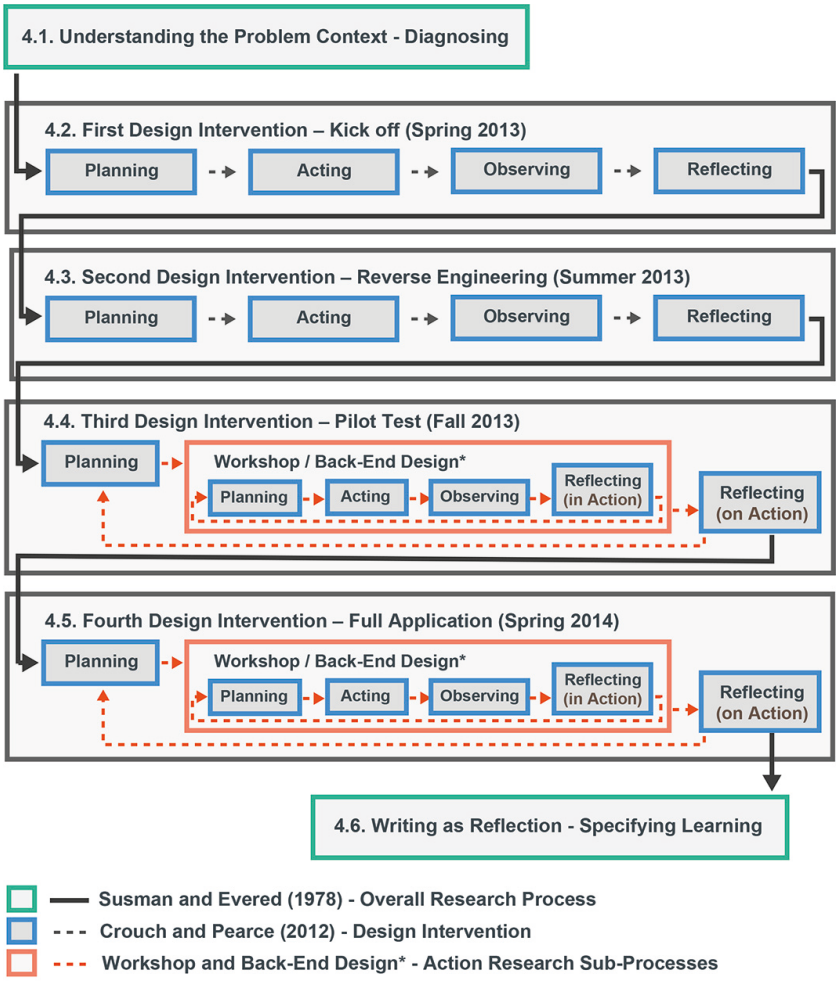

Image 4.1 - Action Research process followed by this thesis, which is based on the combination of Susman and Evered's (1978), and Crouch and Pearce's (2012) models.

4.1 UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM CONTEXT

The current research is part of a bigger initiative called Centre for Service Innovation (CSI), and was developed as part of a PhD fellowship to study *the use of Service Design for translating brand strategy into customer experience*. From the different academic partners participating in CSI, the research project was conducted at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO) under the supervision of professor Simon Clatworthy. Hence, although CSI was a new initiative, this specific research project already had an established theoretical foundation on the concept of semantic transformation (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012), and a methodological approach of choice, based on design research (Sevaldson, 2010).

During the first months of the project, the researcher focused on the theoretical studies for the PhD school, and on advancing the literature review. Moreover, as the CSI initiative had just started, an external consultant was brought in to help introduce design thinking to the partner corporations; this intervention helped not only to introduce the researcher to the partner organizations, and their ongoing challenges, but it also fostered relationship networks that were essential for enabling the collaborations on which the empirical research builds upon.

As the knowledge about the research context evolved throughout the first year, it was understood that it is the role of the design teams at the New Service Development process (NSD; Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996) to perform the semantic transformation, translating qualitative brand descriptors into design features that deliver Brand-Based Customer Experiences (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012). Yet, since the sort of brand input that would be considered adequate was undefined, it was necessary to investigate the status of the existing brand input, and to further study the semantic transformation process.

Emergence of the Brand Experience Manual Concept

Through a series of 13 semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Gaskell, 2008) with brand and Service Design consultants from 5 different countries, the usability of the contemporary brand manuals (Abbing, 2010) for the design of service offerings was explored. This investigation focused not only on what already existed in terms of brand input, but also on understanding the context from which the contemporary manuals emerged, the processes used by designers to cope with inadequate brand input, and

discussions on better ways to communicate the Brand Experience Proposition.

The main finding from this exploration (Motta-Filho, 2012) was that existing brand manuals were not oriented to the design of new service offerings, as they were meant for marketing departments (Abbing, 2010), and were far too focused on corporate identity (Kapferer, 2011), and on broadly defined brand values. Additionally, it was noticed that some organizations used design and experience manuals, which were mainly environmental guidelines comparable to a tridimensional corporate identity manual. Consequently, the outcome from the research was almost paradoxical as it found that current manuals were either too generic, or too specific, which thwarts the conversion of existing brand knowledge into new service offerings.

As such, this preliminary research pointed to the need for the development of a new sort of brand manual that could support the semantic transformation process (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012) by informing the design teams what the Brand Experience Proposition the organization is making is – a Brand Experience Manual. In that sense, it is important to note that since the brand is understood as "the core of the offering, which is delivered to the customer mainly through services" (Motta-Filho, 2012, p.672), this research uses the concept of semantic transformation as a way to operationalize service branding (Brodie et al., 2009); it is thus implied that the brand grounds the experience proposition made by the organization (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994; Semprini, 2006).

This perspective on service branding can be understood as an evolution of the branding practices, which moved from a marketing communications perspective of making promises, to a Service Dominant Logic approach (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, 2008; Merz et al., 2009) that focuses on delivering the brand proposition through the service interactions (Motta-Filho, 2012). Accordingly, during this initial exploration, branding was conceptualized as the process of *translating intangible brand concepts into tangible touch-points, so the customer can perceive it through their senses and have an experience*; a description that is clearly associated with Semantic Transformation (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012).

Additionally, this preliminary research also helped to develop knowledge of the nature of the semantic transformation within service branding; as brand experience is understood as a phenomenological event – the personal outcome evoked by brand stimuli (Brakus et al., 2009) –, the idea that one cannot design an experience, but only the settings that enable the emergence

of that experience (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010) was already acknowledged. Although the relevance of this understanding was not immediately recognized, it gradually evolved throughout the research, becoming the foundation for the Designing for Brand Experience framework (and the Semantic Transformation for Experiences).

Another significant topic raised by this initial research was the need to address organizational issues; since service brands have multiple touch-points (Berry et. al., 2006), controlling all these interactions can be challenging. Hence, in order for the brand proposition to be materialized through the service interactions, collaborators from the entire organization must support it. Because brands are as intangible for the employees as they are for the customers, the company must foster the brand internally, while also striving to reduce the gap between the internal and external values (Motta-Filho, 2012) – as Stompff (2008) demonstrates, once the brand is internalized, the service experience will consequently become brand oriented (Ind, 2007).

Despite recognizing the importance of the topic, organizational management is beyond the scope of this research; nonetheless, the Brand Experience Manual may help to tackle some issues indirectly, by supporting the design of service settings[17]. In that sense, it is implied that the development of service systems (Maglio et al., 2009) that enable the Brand Experience Proposition to emerge is inextricably linked to the implementation of environmental and organizational settings that support employees' activities (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). This way, it is suggested that the Brand Experience Manual can help organizations start a process of aligning internal and external values, adjusting the employees' situational context (Ross & Nisbett, 2011), thus promoting a culture that is grounded in the Brand Experience Proposition (Motta-Filho, 2012).

The Foundations of the Current Research

This initial exploration (Motta-Filho, 2012) has shown that a new sort of brand manual was required in order to support a structured approach to the design of brand-based service offerings. Accordingly, this thesis proposes the Brand Experience Manual as a new sort of brand expression, which can be used to inform the New Service Development (NSD) teams of the brand experience the organization wants the customers to have. Moreover, it must be noted that although this initial exploration provided important insights on the Brand Experience Manual, very little knowledge was available at that

[17] The processes, systems, and interfaces that enable the service interactions.

point on what its content should be, and how the manual should be structured, or developed.

Additional motivation for the research also emerged from the limitations faced by *Service Design* and the *branding* practices. On the design side, it was noticed that, due the lack of adequate brand input, some agencies would try to decode the brand proposition from its manifestations (Semprini, 2006). Hence, as different consultancies employ their own interpretation of the brand, the meanings communicated through the service interactions (Batey, 2008) differ, rendering unaligned brand experiences, which could compromise the brand image; on many occasions, design agencies simply lack the resources to properly explore the brand proposition (Motta-Filho, 2012).

From the branding practices, the main problems were related to the lack of a structured framework for describing the brand; often, even the most ordinary brand descriptors – except for the visual identity –, were not properly described, as the brand would reside in a mix of marketing documents, and management's tacit knowledge. Hence, the current research had to focus not only on developing an adequate means to express the experience proposition – which was a huge challenge in itself –, but also on creating a process to help the organizations define their Brand Experience Proposition.

As such, this initial exploration set the tone for the entire research process. The empirical investigation was set to focus on developing the Brand Experience Manual, creating a process to define the Brand Experience Proposition, and finding an adequate way to communicate it. On a theoretical level, the research aimed at exploring the Semantic Transformation process (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012) as the means to operationalize a Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, 2008) approach to branding (a.k.a. Service Branding; Brodie et al., 2009) through Service Design.

4.2 FIRST DESIGN INTERVENTION – KICK OFF

Once the need for a Brand Experience Manual was established (Motta-Filho, 2012), a generative and exploratory research process (Sevaldson, 2010) was developed in collaboration (Heron & Reason, 2001) with students from the 2013 Service Design 2 class (Master's degree level) from the Oslo School of Architecture and Design. On this occasion, the students were engaged as active participants, playing the role of co-researchers, having almost full autonomy over their projects. This approach was essential in order to kick-

start the development of the Brand Experience Manual, rapidly prototyping exemplars that could lead to a greater understanding of the concept.

Planning

Before the classes started, a thorough documentation for the course was developed, which included lectures on the most important theoretical concepts, and a set of exercises meant to accelerate the students' initial explorations of the brands they would be working with. It was also part of the lecturing plan to invite reputable professionals from related fields to share their experiences with the students; however, the definition of the schedule for these guests was developed throughout the course, according to necessity and availability. Moreover, before the beginning of the course, an agreement with two business partners to serve as study cases was established.

To make the best out of the student's ingenuity, they were empowered to create the Brand Experience Manual as they saw fit; nonetheless, the class' documentation suggested some characteristics for the manual, as it explained the criteria for process' evaluation:

> "The format and content of the Brand Experience Manual is open, although some recommendations are necessary: The manual should express some experiences that the brand is trying to create, thus, the meaning of such experience should be explained. Also, the reason why such an experiences was chosen, based on the brand information the students have been in touch with during the course. For example, if it's found that one of the company's experiences is Friendliness, then it should be expected that you explain what friendliness means in the context of the company and also explain why, based on what, the friendliness experiential value was chosen for that company" (Motta-Filho, 2013, p.2).

In that sense, it is important to acknowledge the role of the previous research in informing this new cycle. At that stage, the concept of semantic transformation (Karjalainen, 2004) was the main theoretical grounding, in addition to Clatworthy's (2012) the approach to service personality, which was essentially the only applied model available. Throughout the lectures and exercises, the concept and the subjacent theory of the Brand Experience Manual was conveyed to the students, allowing them to make informed choices. Furthermore, since the use of a video as an analogy[18] (Dumas, 1994) for the Brand Experience Proposition was proposed to the students early in the process, a session with a professional actress was pre-arranged.

[18] This idea was influenced by Clatworthy's (2012) work.

Acting

This design intervention took place throughout one of the three modules of the Service Design 2 class, starting in mid-February, and continuing to mid-April. For the project, the students were divided into two groups (*Group T* and *Group P*), each working with one of the partner organizations. During the early stages, the priority was to introduce the students to the project, the Brand Experience Manual concept, and its theoretical foundations, equipping them with the necessary knowledge required for their assignment; hence, the first two weeks were mainly dedicated to lectures and exercises.

As the students became acquainted with theory, and with the brands their group would be working with, visits to the partner companies were scheduled. During these visits, the students had the opportunity to meet with a member of the organization's marketing and management team, and to inquire about the brand and business strategies. Additionally, the students were also provided documented information, and instructed to interview other stakeholders, as a way to extend their knowledge of the brand with which their group would be working.

By the beginning of the fourth week, once the lectures were completed, visiting professional started to come to share their experiences; at that point, the students were already involved with their projects. As the class progressed, the number of guests was reduced, opening more space for project tutoring. By the last week, an actress was invited to help the students produce the video, which was supposed to help communicate the Brand Experience Proposition. Also, an internationally renowned design-thinking consultant was invited to help the students to adjust their project, providing some practical guidance.

By the end of the course, the students presented their work to an internal committee; yet, although the result was deemed very satisfactory, the material could be improved. As such, two students from each group were offered a paid student assistant position under the supervision of the researcher, in order to refine their project, before it was presented to the business partners. This refining process took some extra weeks, and was more focused on the Brand Experience Manual's format, than it was with the Brand Experience Proposition's content.

By the end of the second quarter of 2013, the revised versions of the Brand Experience Manual were presented to the business partners, who praised the quality and insights provided by the project.

Observing

During the entire process, the researcher took part as a participant observer (Adler & Adler, 1994), in a setting similar to Quist's practice, reported by Schön (1982, p.76) in the "design as a reflective conversation with the situation" chapter. Throughout the intervention, the researcher actively followed the students' projects, influencing their work through real-time feedback; this way, the students and the researcher could learn not only from practice (reflection-in-action), but also from one another. Moreover, the formal report produced by the students served as an important source of secondary documentation (Merriam, 2002), which was used for posterior reflection-on-action (Schön, 1982).

Furthermore, although this iteration followed a collaborative approach (Heron & Reason, 2001), the students would occasionally operate in a design-oriented approach (Verganti, 2009), isolating themselves during the production phases, and especially during the design process (Wetter-Edman & Johansson, 2011). To cope with these limitations, the researcher fostered discussions with the groups about their project, strengthening the understanding of the students' design process.

Reflecting

Through a collaborative research process developed with students, this first iteration aimed at exploring the possibilities for the development of a Brand Experience Manual. As such, this *reflecting* stage (Crouch & Pearce, 2012) focused on analyzing the students' projects and processes. In that sense, it is important to note that the students' feedback made clear that both groups understood their task; although the assignment was initially considered a little confusing, throughout the design process the students managed to cope with the concepts, and develop a functional prototype of the manual (Saikaly, 2005; Fallman, 2008; Sevaldson, 2010).

Due to limited access to the business partners' resources, both groups engaged in fieldwork to extend their understanding of the customers' and employees' perceptions of the brand, corroborating the role of both stakeholders as an important source of insights. In terms of theory, the semantic transformation triangle (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010) was undoubtedly the most influential concept, helping both teams not only understand the foundations of the Brand Experience Manual, but also explain their processes to others.

As was often the case, both teams defined their unit of analysis (Bauer & Aarts, 2008) differently; whilst *Group T* took a more holistic view to the brand, considering its multiple service interfaces, *Group P* focused their analysis on a specific touch-point, which was considered essential for the future of the brand. The same chasm happened with the approach used by the teams to define the experience proposition. *Group P* focused on understanding how the organizational values became externalized through the service interactions, and on the customers' perceptions, resulting in a more organic process that allowed the experience proposition to emerge through the organization's action.

In contrast, *Group T* developed a proposition based on a balanced view of the organization's strategy and customers' perceptions. By following a cyclical process of external (e.g. interviews, touch-point analysis, surveys) and internal (information provided by the organization) analysis, *Group T*'s approach was deemed more strategic, as the resulting Brand Experience Proposition bridged the customer's expectation and the organization's offerings.

Once both teams defined their Brand Experience Proposition, they shifted their focus to communicating this proposition through the Brand Experience Manual; once again, the approaches taken by the teams differed. *Group P* developed a digital platform that focused on communicating not only the experience proposition, but also their process, and the material collected; at the center of the portal there was a description of the values, and a set of videos that helped to define and explain the experience proposition. Differently, using a more traditional media support, *Group T* proposed a set of booklets that communicated their process, their insights, and the analogies of the experience proposition; moreover, a set of videos was developed, and referred to through a link in the booklet.

Another distinction between the groups that is worth mentioning was the way they defined the experience proposition; while *Group P* used a set of distinct values, *Group T* proposed a holistic experience defined by one single word, which was then detailed through a set of "ingredients".

Through this iteration, two prototypes for the Brand Experience Manual were developed, kick starting the empirical research. By analyzing the students' work (Schön, 1982), the researcher attained a richer understating of the sort of input needed, on how to define the Brand Experience Proposition, and most importantly, how to structure the Brand Experience Manual. These insights were essential for informing the subsequent design intervention,

which enabled the development of a structured process for defining the Brand Experience Proposition.

4.3 SECOND DESIGN INTERVENTION – REVERSE ENGINEERING

Building on the previous research cycle, the present design intervention aimed at developing a structured framework for defining and communicating the Brand Experience Proposition. To cope with the ill-defined nature of the project, where very little was known on how to proceed, a reflective practice process (Schön, 1982) was employed in order to render the tacit knowledge developed by the students explicit (Friedman, 2000), allowing for further investigation on the process of translating traditional brand descriptors into experiential expressions. Through this design intervention, a framework for defining the Brand Experience Proposition was created and tested, and a second generation Brand Experience Manual was produced.

Planning

This second iteration began in June of 2013, and was concluded and presented to the partner organization by mid-September, whilst its planning started alongside the conclusion of the previous phase; as the project that was developed in cooperation with the students was completed, it was time to systematize a process that could be replicated, simplifying the course of defining the Brand Experience Proposition, and the development of the Brand Experience Manual.

Differently to the other iterations, the participatory nature of the current intervention was rather limited, as it was conducted mostly internally, in collaboration with two assistants. Since the current project builds on the previous iteration, it made sense to hire students from the Service Design 2 class to help in the process, where their roles were defined by the group they had previously participated in.

In that sense, since *Group P*'s project process was considered more explicit, and their data more accessible, a student from this group was invited to collaborate on the design of the process; analogously, as G*roup T'*s project's visual communication was regarded as superior, a student from *Group T* was asked to cooperate with the Brand Experience Manual's graphic design. Moreover, it is important to note that the budget to cover for the student assistants' costs was also raised during the planning phase.

Acting

This design intervention began with the development of a set of simulated workshops that were grounded in the data collected by *Group P* in the previous iteration; given the exploratory nature of this project, content accuracy was not of particular concern, and consequently, the material collected by the students was considered adequate. Accordingly, the first step was to make this material more accessible, converting it to a set of personas that were represented by different posters. In total, six personas were developed, three referring to different consumers, and three referring to distinct employees' roles.

Additionally, building on a mix of secondary data (Merriam, 2002), and public domain information, three organizational elements were ascribed, representing the corporate strategy, brand identity, and corporate values, which were also printed as distinct posters. Moreover, insights regarding the competitive environment of the organization were also explored, as it was known that this information would be required afterwards. This way, the company's, customers', and employees' perspectives were considered in the "data collection" process, as was the competitive environment.

Once the data was organized, the next step was to begin with the workshop simulations, which essentially meant crossing the perspective of different stakeholders in the search for new insights; for example, in order to understand the customers' relationship with the service, the information contained in the customers' and in the employees' posters were compared. From this process, four main interaction points were found at the intersections between (a) the company and the employee, (b) the company and the customer, (c) the employee and the customer, and (d) the company and the environment. The insights resulting from this crossing were then described in four reports, which constituted the foundation for the Brand Experience Proposition.

The following step was then to group these insights into a more condensed set of *qualities* – adjectives that could convey a cluster of insights (Image 4.2); this first clustering exercise marked the transition from the *Insight-Gathering phase* to the *Synthesizing phase*. Thus, once the workshop simulations were concluded, the efforts shifted to clustering the insights from the workshops into *qualities*, re-signifying these *qualities* as *personality traits*, and then, reframing these *traits* as *behavioral actions* that would convey the desired perception. Finally, at the end of the process, the *traits* and *behaviors* were used to define the *overall experience proposition*.

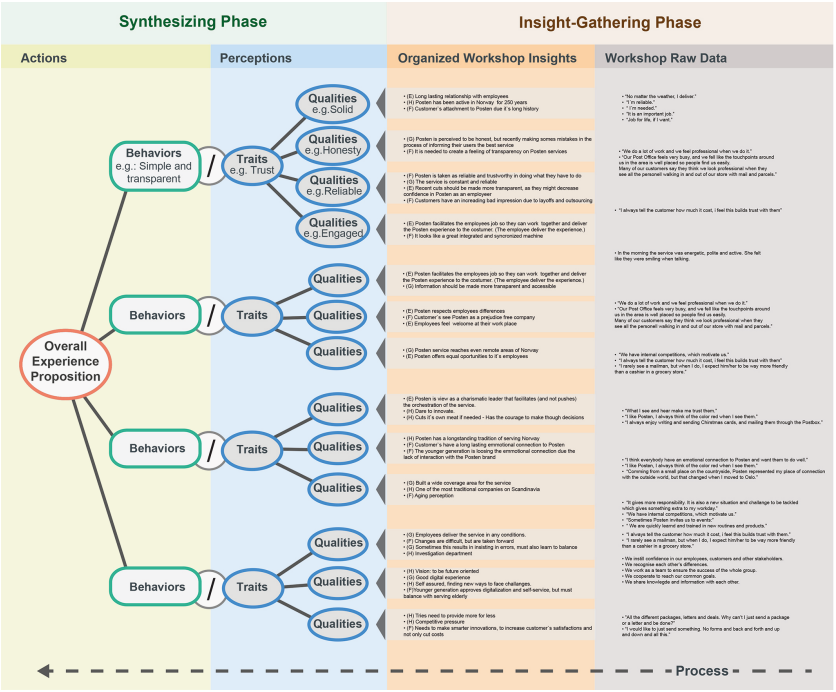

Image 4.2 – The information that grounds the Brand Experience Proposition follows a tree like structure, where more detailed descriptors (on the right) were clustered into more operational definitions (on the left).

As the Brand Experience Manual started to be designed, one of the main ideas was to make the foundations of the Brand Experience Proposition transparent, tracing the Overall Brand Experience back to its origins. In that sense, this second intervention separated the development of the content – the Brand Experience Proposition – from the actual Brand Experience Manual, resulting in an information flow similar to the process that has just been executed (Image 4.2), but in a reversed sequence, from left to right.

This very structured approach resulted in a manual draft that was deemed far too conservative, and which was clearly not the expected tool to support the service design teams through the Semantic Transformation process (Motta-Filho, 2012). To cope with this problem, an external consultancy was brought in to assist with the visualization of scenarios that could help to exemplify the application of the Brand Experience Manual in a service interaction. Throughout this collaboration, a colleague[19] from the consultancy suggested using the concept of *design principles* as way to convey the *Behaviors*

[19] Lavrans Løvlie, founding partner at Livework.

(Image 4.2) through guidelines that could help the design teams embed key characteristics of the desired experience in the service.

Together, the use of the *design principles* and the *interaction exemplars* offered a first hint of the foreseen Brand Experience Manual. By mid September 2013, this revised version of the Brand Experience Manual was presented to the partner organization, creating interest in a new iteration cycle.

Observing

More than any other research cycle (Crouch & Pearce, 2012), this design intervention was grounded in an almost pure form of reflective practice (Schön, 1982), where an experiment was devised in order to develop a framework for defining the Brand Experience Proposition, and to advance the Brand Experience Manual concept. Hence, as previously mentioned, the level of collaboration and transdisciplinarity (Nowotny, 2004; Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2011) was rather limited, as most data sources consisted of secondary documentation (Merriam, 2002) reused from the previous iteration, and public information.

In this context, the researcher was the main instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2002; Pinto & Santos, 2008), sitting at the core of the design project, while gathering insights. Consequently, the research had a strong first-person perspective (Fallman 2007), in which the dominating type observation was participatory (Adler & Adler, 1994), and where the involvement of the assistants helped to counterbalance the researcher's bias.

Reflecting

Undoubtedly, the main goal of this iteration was to develop a structured and replicable framework for defining the Brand Experience Proposition; in that sense, although advancing the format of the Brand Experience Manual was also of concern, it was not a priority. However, since this iteration produced knowledge on both concepts, this *reflecting* section reports the learning resulting from the development of a framework for translating the brand strategy into an experiential expression, as well as the insights that emerged from advancing the Brand Experience Manual.

Throughout this design intervention, by reflecting on the workshop simulations, and reviewing the theory, it was noticed that *experiences* emerge primarily through some sort of interaction; be it a direct exchange between

two stakeholders, an indirect contact through a digital interface, or an exposition to some sort of mediated communication. Consequently, when it comes to the experiences that may (directly or indirectly) influence the stakeholders' perceptions of the brand, 4 main categories of insight were found:

- Brand Image – the long-term relationship between the company – materialized in the form of the brand –, and the customers
- Service Experience – the actual interactions between the customers and any service touch-point
- Employee Experience – the relationship between employees and the company
- Future Scenario – the relationship between the company and the competitive, social, and legal environments

The acquiescence of these four categories was a key finding for this research, grounding the *Brandslation*[20] process to this day; moreover, the structure of the framework developed in this iteration did not change much, having been mainly advanced in terms of execution and application (Image 4.3).

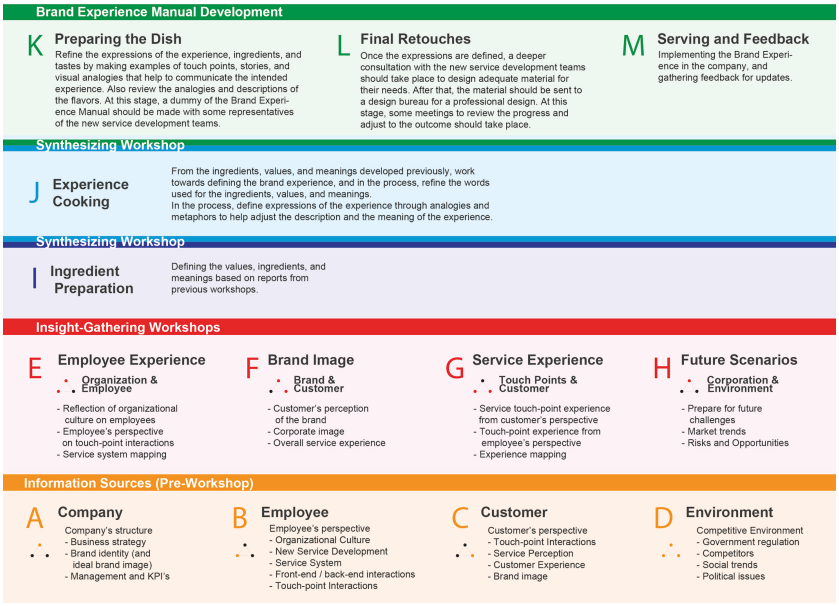

Image 4.3 – Brandslation process at the end of the second iteration.

As shown in Image 4.3, during the early stages, the Brandslation process adopted a cooking analogy, mainly due to the influence of the term

[20] The process of defining the Brand Experience Proposition.

ingredients used by *Group T* in the previous iteration. Yet, although the ingredient analogy helped to frame the Brandslation process, on that specific occasion, it was misused, resulting in an atomist approach where the experience proposition was seen as a sum of individual elements. The consequence of this mistake was that the first draft of the Brand Experience Manual was essentially organized around "ingredients" definitions, focusing far too much on describing its components, instead of communicating the experience proposition; hence, the resulting draft was still very similar to traditional value–based brand manuals.

It was only with the development of the second draft that the Brand Experience Manual evolved towards a more experiential expression. Using a cooking analogy, it can be said that the experience proposition was no longer a *sandwich*, with easily recognizable parts, but a *casserole*, where, once the ingredients are mixed, they cannot be distinguished. Central to this move was the acquiescence that the experience should be expressed in a more experiential way – as Simon Clatworthy[21] often said, "you can only experience an experience by experiencing it".

Thus, in order to create some sort of proxy for the Brand Experience Proposition, examples of touch-point interaction were developed with the assistance of an external consultancy. On that occasion, the suggestion to use *design principles* as a way to make the rather abstract *behaviors* more operational, rendering the brand's descriptors more explicit, also influenced the representations of the *touch-points interaction examples*, as these turned out to be articulated as the application of the *design principles* to a specific service interaction.

This way, the expressions of the Brand Experience Proposition represented in the second draft of the Brand Experience Manual were advanced, and a new configuration for the manual was structured: first, the concepts supporting the Brand Experience Manual were presented; after that, the overall Brand Experience Proposition was described; next, four chapters, each centered around one *behavioral attribute*, described not only the behavior itself, but also the associated *personality trait*, the *design principles* that operationalize the *behaviors*, a *touch-point example* showing the application of the *design principle*, and the *qualities* in which the *personality traits* were grounded (Image 4.2).

[21] The Researcher's Supervisor.

Through this iteration, a framework that supports the process of defining the Brand Experience Proposition was developed, fulfilling the main goal for the research cycle. As for the Brand Experience Manual, although the second generation was seen as a clear advancement, due to the separation between the processes of defining the Brand Experience Proposition and designing the Brand Experience Manual, both the manual and the analogies (Dumas, 1994) used to express the Brand Experience Proposition were considered inadequate, which became the focus of the next design intervention.

4.4 THIRD DESIGN INTERVENTION – PILOT TEST

The main objective of this iteration was to further develop the Brand Experience Manual, and to advance the Brand Experience Proposition's metaphors (Dumas, 1994), by empirically testing the Brandslation process designed in the previous iteration. However, during the first interactions with the partner organization, the original process was deemed too extensive; this way, before any actual planning could take place, the Brandslation process had to be condensed into a shorter framework, in which academic accuracy had to be balanced with business' pragmatism.

This restructuration of the Brandslation process allowed the researcher to reconfigure the framework, also making it more 'designer-friendly', since it was restructured as a Service Design method; in that sense, testing the Brandslation process through an empirical application produced a sort of knowledge that was essential to the operationalization of the research (Saikaly, 2005). By the end of this intervention, a functional Brand Experience Manual was developed, advancing the analogies used to represent the Brand Experience Proposition, and the Brandslation process was tested, and further refined.

Planning

The planning for this design intervention started right after the conclusion of the previous phase. Thanks to the positive response, the partner organization decided to support a new design intervention, as the management team agreed to engage in the new project, committing financial resources to fund the external assistance (two students and a consultant) required to execute the process. Differently to the prior research cycles (Crouch & Pearce, 2012), the

planning for this iteration was far more thorough, and the whole intervention was outlined and detailed[22] in advance.

As the Brandslation process produced in the previous iteration was shortened, the new framework condensed the four workshops meant to audit the current experience into one. In the case of the of the workshops focused on defining the Service Personality, and on expressing the Service Personality, no adjustment was necessary, as they were originally planned to be performed as one workshop each. Furthermore, the pre-workshop phase was conducted normally, as was the Brand Experience Manual Development (Image 4.3), which was mostly designed in a non-participatory fashion, having only one mid-term meeting for the stakeholders' feedback (Wetter-Edman & Johansson, 2011).

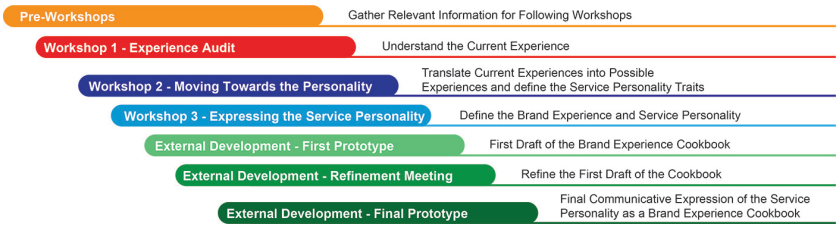

Image 4.4 – Brandslation process as originally designed for the Third Iteration.

Once the Brandslation process was redesigned, a detailed project proposal was developed, and presented to the business partner; after the costs and terms were settled, a call for external consultant bids was held, and one was chosen. Lastly, the dates for the workshops were defined, following an effort to meet the availability of the different stakeholders.

Additionally, it is worthwhile to mention that this design intervention was the first to use workshops as a transdisciplinary and collaborative approach (Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2011), resulting in a research process similar to an *action research within an action research* (Image 2.3). This way, the current research cycle (Crouch & Pearce, 2012) had sub-cycles (sub-processes), as each workshop, although planned collectively, were constructed individually.

Hence, even though the overall structure of the Brandslation process (Image 4.4) was considered consistent, a number of adjustments were necessary, as the individual parts of the process (the workshops) were designed separately.

[22] Yet, as it will be explained later, throughout the process, the plan had to be adjusted.

As such, the changes and modifications made on the workshops configuration throughout the intervention are presented in the *acting* section, as they were adjusted during the research sub-cycles.

Acting

Due to the use of workshops, the distinction between the *planning* and the *acting* phases was not very clearly defined throughout this third iteration. In that sense, it is useful to clarify that the *planning* phase was responsible for structuring the overall intervention, whilst the *acting* phase refers to the planning, acting[23], observing, and reflecting-in-action (Schön, 1982) of the intervention's sub-processes (Image 4.1). As such, this iteration was divided in a series of three workshops, and the design process itself (Table 4.1), with each sub-cycle building upon the previous one.

Because this action research within action research structure (Crouch & Pearce, 2012), and mainly due to the exploratory nature of the iteration, changes to the original plan were made throughout the entire process, even as early as in the preparation for the first workshop: on that occasion, it was noticed that the idea of auditing the brand experience through a workshop with the management teams required an external source of information in order to accelerate the initiation of the activities; accordingly, a customer journey developed by the student assistants for another school project was used to guide the discussion regarding the different stakeholders' experiences.

As the aforementioned customer journey referred to a service which is representative of a particular segment, it was clear that the use of that journey would bias the Brand Experience Proposition towards that group; yet, due to the pilot nature of this iteration, this was not considered a problem, but rather an advantage, as it allowed the researcher to narrow the process, making it easier to execute. This restructuration of the first workshop also served to accelerate the process of understanding the different stakeholders' experiences, allowing the *Service Personality* to still be defined in the first workshop, and not in the second, as originally planned.

[23] Note that there is a distinction between 'Acting' as part of Susman and Evered's (1978) process, to Crouch and Pearce's (2012) design model (Image 4.1).

Sub-Process (Interventions)	Description
Workshop 1	**Defining the Service Personality of the Brand** In collaboration with the marketing and branding team from the partner organization, the workshop started by exploring different stakeholders' journeys with a specific service. Next, the stakeholders' experiences were organized, classified according to their alignment to the brand, and then clustered into the qualities (adjectives) that were used to define the Service Personality Traits.
Workshop 2	**Describing the Behaviors and Actions for the Service Personality** The Service Personality Traits previously defined were described through analogies with famous personalities, and then translated into actions; next, with the help of a professional actress, short scripts written by the participants were narrated, helping to further understand and describe the actions associated with the Service Personality Traits. Finally, the actions that described the personality traits were used to define associated behavioral attributes.
Workshop 3	**Exemplifying the application of the Service Personality** This workshop focused on translating the Service Personality Traits, and its associated descriptors (behaviors and actions), into a set of touch-point examples. In order to do so, the participants were asked to design a brief customer journey based on the Service Personality, and then, share their view of how the different Service Personality Traits could be manifested through different touch-points; from these examples, the design principles would be developed.
Design Process	**Development of the Brand Experience Manual** The development of the Brand Experience Manual was mostly an internal design process (Verganti, 2009), in which the only participatory occurrence was a meeting for checking the feedback from the partner organization. In this instance, the main concern was for the development of the design principles, and its exemplification through a video of the customers' journey.

Table 4.1 – Description of the *action research within action research* sub-processes (as executed).

This first workshop also exposed some interesting repercussions of the Brandslation process: in the course of defining the service personality traits, the development of a more experiential expression of the brand allowed the organization to see their brand from a different perspective, and to perceive some inadequacies in their current brand identity. To cope with this situation, an additional mid-stage meeting was scheduled to discuss this new insight, and to make the necessary adjustments to re-align the service personality traits towards the brand experience the organization wanted to deliver.

Once again, although these changes were the result of an external interference, they were also not considered a problem as the new set of traits were still aligned with the business strategy; an acceptable compromise for a pilot project.

As the redesign of the first workshop allowed for the acceleration of the overall iteration, the second workshop was reformulated to focus on the translation of the service personality traits into *actions* and *behaviors* that described *what* to do and *how* it should be done in order to express the *Service Personality*. At this moment, the Service Personality was the main analogy for the Brand Experience Proposition (Clatworthy, 2012), and the *behaviors* and *actions* only helped to convey how to deliver the Brand Experience Proposition; as such, both *actions* and *behaviors* were essentially a means to an end, since the main concept supporting the *delivery* of the Brand Experience Proposition was the Design Principles.

After the second workshop was concluded, some service interaction examples were enacted by a professional actress, incorporating the *actions* and *behaviors* into the scenes' scripts, thereby helping to communicate the different expressions of the *service personality traits*. By the beginning of the third workshop, a video containing these enacted scenes was exhibited, conveying the nuances of the different *service personality traits* to the participants.

Following the video screening, the workshop attendants were divided into two groups, and then invited to design a brief customer journey, which they would then present to each other. Once the participants were familiarized with the *Service Personality*, a second exercise took place, as they were asked to describe the expressions of the *service personality traits* through different touch-points; the idea was to provide examples of how the service interaction would express the Service Personality through its performances.

By the end of this workshop, the descriptors of the Brand Experience Proposition included: a set of *service personality traits*, the *qualities* that helped to describe these traits, the *Behaviors* associated with each personality trait – which were explained and exemplified by the *Actions* (bits of the behaviors) –, and examples of performances at different touch-points.

After the conclusion of this last workshop, the process of defining the *design principles* took place, marking the beginning of the last research sub-cycle (Table 4.1) – designing the Brand Experience Manual. Building on the *personality traits'* expressions described in the previous workshop, nine

propositions summarizing the main recommendations for the New Service Development (NSD; Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996) teams were developed; the assumption was that if these teams followed the *design principles*, they would embed the Brand Experience Proposition in the NSD process.

Once the first draft of the *design principles* was developed, they were presented to the partner organization in a meeting where the management team was asked to collaboratively organize and abbreviate its description. After being refined, the principles were portrayed through the journey of a fictional character called Jane, and a video depicting her experiences was produced, together with a presentation containing the different Brand Experience Proposition descriptors, and explaining the application of the *design principles* to Jane's journey.

Observing

This third design intervention was thus far the most collaborative and transdisciplinary, reaching an audience beyond the academic arena, and advancing into the corporate world (Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2011). Throughout the iteration, different stakeholders participated as co-designers (Ehn, 2008), influencing not only the outcome of the Brandslation process, but also the academic knowledge produced through the Participatory Action Research process (Kindon et al., 2007).

Similar to the previous phases, the researcher was the principal instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2002; Pinto & Santos, 2008). Due to the use of workshops as the intervention approach, the main observation technique was participatory (Adler & Adler, 1994), which was often combined with an unstructured "quasi-focus-group" interviewing method (Gaskell, 2008). Moreover, during the planning phase, marketing documentation (Creswell, 2009) supplied by the partner organization was also used to plan and inform the workshops.

Finally, after the intervention was completed, the main stakeholders involved in the project were invited to semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Gaskell, 2008), providing feedback that was valuable not only for evolving the Brandslation process, but was also essential for the overall research.

Reflecting

The main objective of this iteration was to advance the Brand Experience Manual, and the metaphors (Dumas, 1994) used to express the Brand Experience Proposition; yet, as the intervention advanced, it was noticed that the knowledge resulting from reframing the Brandslation process was also a central contribution from this research cycle (Crouch & Pearce, 2012). Additionally, although several of the limitations faced throughout the intervention were solved concurrently, many others could only be assimilated in the next iteration; in that sense, it is acknowledged that some insights developed over the next research cycle, actually started to emerge during this one.

As already noted, the current iteration was so far the most collaborative and transdisciplinary (Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2011); although this characteristic can also be associated with the use of workshops, it was mainly a consequence of the empirical application of the Brandslation process – whereas the workshops made the process more co-creative, it was the involvement of the partner organization that allowed for a transdisciplinary collaboration between academia and businesses. Hence, this third iteration can be understood as a transition from a more internal and isolated process, to a more participative and co-creative practice – qualities that are further advanced in the next research cycle.

The challenges faced by this iteration were numerous; in terms of the *design intervention*, the complications went beyond the reframing of the Brandslation process, to include a number of communication issues, such as the lack of an adequate vocabulary to explain to the partners what the project was about. This semantic limitation created additional problems, especially in relation to the expectation management, which was further aggravated by the uncertainties regarding the process, and the lack of a shared mental concept of what the outcome would be. Moreover, it was often the case that participants would not fully understand their role in the process.

Although many of these communicational issues were untangled throughout the intervention's sub-cycles, they were still a time consuming annoyance that strengthened the argument for the systematization of the Brandslation process. Yet, despite the developments achieved by this iteration, the current knowledge was still insufficient to support the full codification of the framework – while a lot was known about the translation of the stakeholders' insights into an experience proposition, due the use of recycled data from

another project, the methods for gathering insight were rather underdeveloped.

In terms of *outcomes*, the knowledge emerging from this iteration focused on the metaphors used to convey the Brand Experience Proposition; in that case, the main difficulty was the balance between a prescriptive and a descriptive sort of expression. The root of this problem was the ambition to create some kind of *philosopher's stone* that could communicate what the Brand Experience Proposition was by itself, whilst also ensuring its operationalization – an idea that was built around the concept of *design principles*. As a consequence, most of the descriptive elements of the Brand Experience Proposition were neglected; even though the Service Personality, and the *behaviors* were described in the manual, they were basically a step in the process of defining the *design principles.*

This lack of experiential expressions created a vacuum, where descriptive examples that could have helped convey the Brand Experience Proposition through metaphorical proxies were essentially nonexistent, apart from the video telling the story of Jane – a fictional customer that illustrates, through her journey, how the Brand Experience Proposition should be operationalized, and experienced by the customers.

Moreover, important theoretical reflections also emerged from the findings developed throughout this iteration; some confirming old assumptions, and some exposing new insights, as in the case of Daniel Grönquist's[24] observation that the current framework was not only developing a *Brand based Customer Experience Proposition*, but also a *Customer Experience based Brand Proposition*. This argument helped to make the connection between the brand and the customer's experience more evident – on one hand, brands need the customers' experiences to become alive; on the other hand, a design process that does not consider the brand has no strategic intent.

Also, many of the theoretical reflections that are central to the Designing for Brand Experience framework (and the Semantic Transformation for Experiences) started to mature during this iteration; for example, although the notion that services cannot be designed, but only the settings that support it was already acknowledged (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996), it was only after this project that the understanding of services as capacities embedded in, and

[24] Daniel Grönquist is Principal Consultant at Bekk Consulting AS, Senior Advisor to CSI, and has participated in the Brandslation process executed during this third iteration.

enabled by a dynamic configurations of resources (Maglio et al., 2009) that facilitate the process of value co-creation began to emerge, and that the concepts that ground the *Designing for Service* approach (Evenson & Dubberly, 2010; Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012; Wetter-Edman, 2014) started to be internalized.

Another example of theoretical development resulting from this iteration was the conceptualization of *experience*. Due to the focus on conveying the service personality traits through the service interactions' qualities and characteristics, *experiences* were no longer seen as being merely *good* or *bad*, but as the outcome of the customers' responses to an event – the meaning emerging from a service interaction (Batey, 2008), which is ultimately linked to a brand name (Aaker, 1991). This understating helped to distance the concept away from Pine and Gilmore's (1998, 1999) view of experiences as an economic offering – often associated with extraordinary experiences (Arnould & Price, 1993) –, and more towards a phenomenological perspective (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008), in which experiences emerge even from mundane situations (Fournier, 1998).

Additionally, conceptualizing experiences as a phenomenological interpretation of the meanings conveyed by the service personality traits further supports the definition of Service Branding used in this thesis – *the process of translating the brand's conceptual meaning proposition into customer experiences through tangible service interactions*; in that sense, services are seen as tangible events that communicate a meaning proposition to the customers through its qualities and characteristics.

As such, the current iteration helped to evolve the research on three fronts: first, it advanced the knowledge of how to convey the Brand Experience Proposition, suggesting the use of different types of expressions and metaphors (Dumas, 1994), thus pointing towards a more holistic Brand Experience Manual; second, it started to systematize the Brandslation process, exposing many of the issues that needed to be addressed; third, it evolved the theoretical groundings for the Designing for Brand Experience framework (and for the Semantic Transformation for Experiences), helping to consolidate the academic knowledge supporting the research.

Following, the next section presents the fourth design intervention. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the influence that the findings from the current research cycle (Crouch & Pearce, 2012) had on the decision of performing this new iteration; although the current research had already delivered a satisfactory outcome, it was realized that there were still things

that needed to be done to lift the quality of the Brandslation process, and its outcome. Accordingly, despite the time constraints posed upon the research, a new iteration was planned in order to cope with the limitations that emerged in this third intervention.

4.5 FOURTH DESIGN INTERVENTION – FULL APPLICATION

This last iteration was essentially a response to the limitations of the previous project; it was noticed that without further investigation, the quality of the research outcome would be compromised. Accordingly, building on the findings from the previous research cycle (Crouch & Pearce, 2012), a new design intervention was planned in order to streamline the Brandslation process, define an adequate metaphor (Dumas, 1994) for the Brand Experience Proposition, and develop an improved version of the Brand Experience Manual.

As such, the Brandslation process was refined, and then applied in collaboration with a partner organization, developing a Brand Experience Manual in a setting similar to a consultancy project. By the end of this iteration, the Brandslation process was not only systematized, but also validated; in that sense, the empirical outcome of the research was corroborated, providing a closure point for the design interventions.

Planning

As the research evolved, communicating and explaining the ideas behind the concept became easier; nonetheless, finding the right partner organization was still a challenge. Once the decision to go for a fourth iteration was made, the first step was to organize a preliminary proposal, and present it to a corporate partner. However, during the early conversations with the first potential partner, it was noticed that their expectations were not aligned with the research's goals, and as such, another company from the same group was invited for a meeting.

This second conversation was not only successful, but also deemed more suitable to the research, as the brand was simpler, with a narrower customer segmentation, making a real-world application of the Brandslation process easier. As in the previous iteration, external assistance was required, and as such, a detailed description of the process needed to be developed in order to enable the budgeting for the intervention.

Building on the insights from the previous iterations, the Brandslation process was then structured into a series of 8 workshops, divided into two phases. The first phase built on the *four categories of insights* proposed in the second intervention, and consequently, it was divided into four workshops[25]: the first exploring the brand image; the second the customers' experiences with the service; the third the employees' role, and experience facilitating the customers' interactions; and lastly, the organizational perspective, which was explored through the competitive environment, brand positioning, and business strategy.

The second series was grounded in the findings from the third iteration, and was also structured as a sequence of 4 workshops, in a way that each workshop builds upon the previous one: starting with defining the Brand Experience Proposition; testing this proposition with customers; developing the *Service Principles*[26] that could help to embed the desired experience into the service interactions; and finally, a follow up meeting, where the first draft of the Brand Experience Manual was presented to the management team, and its content and format reviewed (Image 4.5).

The planning for this design intervention had to cope with two limitations: fulfill a complete Brandslation process; and do it within the limits of the budget the partner organization agreed to fund. As such, once the Brandslation process was reframed, a detailed description of the design intervention was sent to the consultancy for budgeting. In this instance, the way the roles were distributed would exceed the budget limits; accordingly, a second proposal was devised, increasing the participation of the researcher in the design process, and reallocating the production of parts of the manual to student assistants – this way, the costs were redistributed, and the new plan fit the allocated budget.

More than any other iteration, the current design project was methodically planned; yet, differently to the third iteration, the execution was far truer to the plan. In that sense, this research cycle (Crouch and Pearce, 2012) systematized the Brandslation process into a replicable framework. Furthermore, the use of workshops was also much more extensive, resulting in a design intervention that reached far beyond the academic arena,

[25] At this point, the research focused on understanding 'who the customers were', which was spread over different parts of this phase; later, this knowledge is used to define the Archetypal Customer used to facilitate the development of the Relationship Metaphor.
[26] In order to align the text with the iteration, the term design principle (used previously) will be replaced by service principles; nonetheless, the concepts are essentially similar.

achieving new levels of collaboration and transdisciplinarity (Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2011).

Acting

The *planning* phase for this iteration detailed the Brandslation process quite thoroughly, structuring it as a systematized framework; as such, differently to the previous iteration, the distinction between the *planning* and *acting* phases was well defined, as the main objective of the *action* stage was to test the Brandslation process in a real-world setting, and to detail the framework by defining the tools used in the individual workshops. Through this application, an adequate metaphor (Dumas, 1994) for the Brand Experience Proposition was developed, and the Brand Experience Manual was grounded in a mix of descriptive and prescriptive elements.

As just mentioned, the current intervention was divided into two series, each composed of four workshops; whereas the first series of workshops was meant to gather insights from the customers, employees, and the organization, the second series intended to develop the content of the Brand Experience Manual through a sequence, where one workshop built upon the previous one (Image 4.5). Moreover, similarly to the previous cycle, this iteration also follows an action research within action research structure, in which the *action* phase (Susman & Evered, 1978) comprises planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Crouch & Pearce, 2012) sub-processes (Image 4.1).

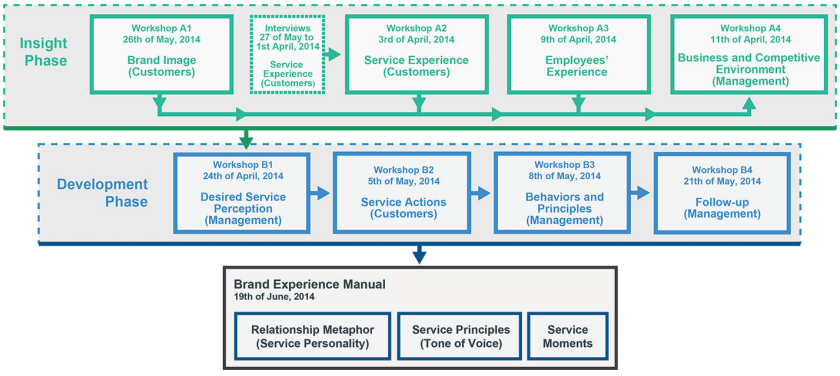

Image 4.5: Brandslation process as planned for the fourth iteration.

The first workshop took place in late May, and its main goal was to assess the customers' perceptions of the brand, their reasons for their choices, and how value emerged in the use context[27]; throughout the intervention, the brand positioning was also discussed, as was its relationship with the parent organization. In the end, a report explaining the workshop's process, findings and insights was written[28] and shared with the management team partaking in the process.

Next, in preparation for the second workshop, a series of five semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Gaskell, 2008) were held in order to explore the ways the customers interact with the service; from the outcomes of these conversations, a generic service journey was outlined. Then, the second workshop took place, focusing on understanding the customers' experiences, but also investigating the brand image. Throughout the discussions, the workshop explored how the customers interact with the service, and what the main touch- and pain-points[10] are. Finally, the participants were also invited to propose ideas on how to improve the service.

Following, the third workshop investigated the service interaction from the employees' perspectives; their experience with the corporation, views on customers' needs, and perceptions of the brand[10]. Notwithstanding, although the original focus of the process was to explore the relationship between employees and the organization's infrastructure, most of the findings related to the customer's experience. In that sense, it was assumed that front line employees saw their roles as facilitators, as they consistently conveyed their interpretations of the customers' experiences.

The last workshop from the first phase was with the management team. On this occasion, the emphasis was on the challenges and opportunities faced by the organization, and their expectations for the brand. Moreover, doubts regarding the brand identity were clarified, providing crucial knowledge for the next workshop, where a deeper understanding of the current brand descriptors was central. After that, a slightly longer interval was taken in order to allow for adequate preparations for the next workshop, which was considered the most important of the whole process.

Two weeks later, the first workshop from the second phase took place, with the presence of key stakeholders from the brand, and from the parent organization; the goal then was to define a personality for the brand's

[27] These conversations helped inform 'who the customers were', and their motivations.
[28] Reports were written from all interventions, apart from the last workshop (B4); hence, for now on, the production of a report will not be mentioned again.

services by describing it as a character, and the relationship between this character and an archetypal customer. This process, which will be further explained in the *Findings and Contributions* chapter (and Appendix I), started by reviewing the brand identity with the workshop participants, and presenting the insights from the first phase (Image 4.5); next, the key insights were collaboratively highlighted, prompting conversations over labeled points.

Building on these insights and discussions, the participants started to ideate the relationship between a brand character and the archetypal customer; by imagining these two personas interacting in scenarios based on the insights previously highlighted, the participates assigned qualities to the brand character. Then, by clustering these adjectives, personality traits started to emerge. Once this workshop was concluded, a metaphor for the relationship between the brand and the customer started to emerge, together with a description of the personality of the brand character.

In the following workshop, this brand character was put to the test with customers; first, the personage was introduced, and his[29] relationship with an archetypal customer explained; next, the customers were asked to discuss their perceptions of this brand character, and their expectations regarding his behaviors across different situations and touch-points. After that exercise, the participants were asked to build a service journey, describing how the interactions with this character should be; in this instance, by putting their ideas for the touch-points interaction in motion, the customers made their desired experience clearer, and easier to understand. The findings from this workshop improved the brand character's description, adding a layer of expected behavioral attributes.

At the beginning of the third workshop from the second series, this enhanced description of the brand character was presented to the management team. The main objective was to codify the recurrent actions and actual behaviors that could help to convey the brand through the service interactions, and translate them into actionable *Service Principles*: a set of design guidelines that facilitate the infusion of the Brand Experience Proposition into the qualities and characteristics of the service settings (service prerequisites; Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996), enabling the right experience to emerge.

Throughout this second phase, the Brand Experience Proposition descriptors kept evolving, becoming more precise and understandable. After that

[29] In this case, the brand character was a young man.

workshop, a two-week interval preceded the subsequent gathering, as a preliminary version of the Brand Experience Manual was being developed. This first draft of the manual was then reviewed in the Follow-up Workshop (Image 4.5), and the feedback from the discussions used to inform its final version, which was completed nearly one month later. Moreover, through this conversation, the management team to choose between two sets of scenarios for the Brand Experience Proposition – one bolder and another more conservative –, informing the design team what sort of experience would be better aligned with the business strategy.

Once concluded, the Brand Experience Manual was presented to the partner organization, where a discussion followed, providing relevant feedback on the process. Additionally, semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Gaskell, 2008) were conducted with stakeholders that took part in the intervention, and also with professionals from the field of Branding, Service Design, and Management. In the end, the reflections emerging from these conversations were used not only to make sense out of this specific intervention (Schön, 1982), but also to inform the entirety of the research.

Observing

As with the previous research cycle (Crouch & Pearce, 2012), this design intervention was collaborative and transdisciplinary, also advancing beyond the academic arena into the corporate world (Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2011). However, this iteration included interactions with different stakeholders, extending the number of participants, and also improving the co-creative practices; accordingly, not only the management teams, but also front line staff and customers contributed to the Brandslation process, helping to co-design (Ehn, 2008) the Brand Experience Proposition.

Even more than previously, the action research within action research (Crouch & Pearce, 2012) sub-processes were present (Image 4.5). Moreover, due to the large number of stakeholders involved in the process, a Participatory Action Research (Kindon et al., 2007) strategy was used to facilitate the co-creative practices required by the Brandslation process, whilst still contributing to the overall academic research.

Once again, the researcher was the main instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2002; Pinto & Santos, 2008). During the workshops, an unstructured "quasi-focus-group" interview approach was taken (Gaskell, 2008), where observation was essentially participatory (Adler & Adler, 1994). Additionally, official documentation provided by the partner company

(Creswell, 2009) was used as a source of market insights, also informing the official brand identity.

After the completion of the workshop, participating stakeholders and experts from related fields were consulted through a series of semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Gaskell, 2008). These conversations, which extended for months, helped the researcher to make sense out of the insights that emerged from the intervention, supporting the reflection-on-action (Schön, 1982) process.

Reflecting

This last iteration further advanced the three key research fronts noticed by the end of the previous section: it developed a metaphor for the Brand Experience Proposition, defining the final structure of the Brand Experience Manual; it systematized the Brandslation process; and it expanded the basis for the Designing for Brand Experience framework (and the Semantic Transformation for Experiences). Although the original intent was to refine the Brandslation process, by allowing the Brand Experience Manual to emerge organically, its format and contents evolved, resulting in a Brand Experience Proposition expression that was communicated through a mix of prescriptive and descriptive elements.

Certainly, the main contribution from this iteration was the development of the relationship metaphor for the Brand Experience Proposition. Although the emergence of this analogy was in part a consequence of the process used – which was grounded in the analogy of a movie, and where characterizing the brand as an active partner to the customers (Fournier, 1998) was part of the process of defining the *service personality* traits –, the realization of the relationship metaphor was the outcome of a lengthy reflection process (Schön, 1982) resulting from the exploration of different ways to convey the Brand Experience Proposition.

Following these advancements, the Brand Experience Manual was adjusted, and the *service personality traits'* role extended to assist in the description of the relationship metaphor, expressing who the brand character is, his behavioral qualities, and the feeling that these qualities (are expected to) elicit in the customer. Additionally, *Service Principles* were also used as prescriptive guidelines meant to help the New Service Development (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996) teams embed the Brand Experience Proposition in the service offering through the design process.

One further expression of the Brand Experience Proposition used in the Brand Experience Manual was the *Service Moments*: a series of interaction scenarios that exemplified the application of the Relationship Metaphor[30] and Service Principles to the customer's journey. By integrating different descriptive and prescriptive components, this last iteration delivered a functional Brand Experience Manual, effectively conveying the Brand Experience Proposition through the Relationship Metaphor, providing guidance to the service design teams through the Service Principles, and exemplifying the desired customer experience through the Service Moments.

In terms of the process' structure, Brandslation did not change much, still building on the format developed during the second iteration; in that sense, the main advancement was the creation of the tools for the workshop, particularly in the case of the Insight Phase (image 4.5), where the four categories of insight – also established in the second iteration – were applied. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that thanks to the previous project, explaining the process and ideas was much easier, since an example was available, ameliorating the issues around the lack of adequate vocabulary.

Evaluating

As previously mentioned, this iteration not only systematized, but also validated the Brandslation process. Accordingly, although the objective of practice-based design research is to build knowledge through the design process (Saikaly, 2005, Fallman, 2007) – and not to study the artifact itself –, since the Brandslation process was developed through an exploratory approach grounded in an action research (Susman & Evered, 1978) and on research by design (Sevaldson, 2010), it is considered an important finding in and of itself, making the evaluation of the framework pertinent.

On the subjective level, the outcome[31] of the empirical research was consistent with the initial ambitions: a tool to inform the Brand Experience Proposition to the New Service Development (NSD) teams. Moreover, endorsement also came from the semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Gaskell, 2008) conducted after the iteration with stakeholders involved in the process, and experts in the field – although some quality issues and disagreements emerged, the general feedback was that the Brand Experience

[30] Which also includes the service personality traits.
[31] Brandslation is the process through which the Brand Experience Manual is developed; since both are the result of the empirical explorations, they are considered as one intertwined outcome, but nonetheless, two findings.

Manual was communicating the Brand Experience Proposition in an adequate and usable way.

In regards to the Brandslation process, the responses were very positive – the participants recognized the value of the co-creative and collaborative practices, which included not only the management, but also employees and customers; as the leader from the partner company said, the methods used to interact with the customers provided insights that were rather different to the ones they usually obtain through their traditional methods. Moreover, the process of defining the Brand Experience Proposition (Development Phase; Image 4.5) helped the organization reflect who they are, and explore new ways to serve the customer (e.g. Abbing, 2010).

As for quality issues and disagreements, they were essentially associated with the Brand Experience Manual, and not the Brandslation process *per se*. The main problems clustered around the quality of the service principles, comprehension of the Brand Experience Manual concept, and operationalization – how to get the NSD teams to use the Brand Experience Manual, and implement the Brand Experience Proposition.

Once again, the embryonic nature of the concept was an obstacle, as the parts that composed the manual were not properly comprehended nor explained – a problem that was only properly resolved after months of *reflection through writing* process (Richardson, 1994). Nevertheless, there was an understanding that the Brand Experience Proposition was being communicated through the mix of descriptive and prescriptive elements present in the manual. Regarding the format of the Brand Experience Manual, the main comments were about its length, that it should explain itself better, and provide more operational examples.

This feedback exposed a central issue regarding the comprehension of the Brand Experience Manual concept: it is a tool that was created to facilitate the Semantic Transformation process (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012) by informing the NSD teams what the Brand Experience Proposition is – it is not a Service Design outcome in itself, and it is not meant to be implemented without going through a proper Service Design process (Designing for Brand Experience – Semantic Transformation for Experiences).

Although an operational Brand Experience Manual would be a sensible idea, it creates a serious impasse. Since the goal is to facilitate a brand-grounded Service Design process, an overly comprehensive description – or even examples – of the service interactions could limit the ability to adapt the

Brand Experience Proposition to new situations and contexts. In that sense, the Brand Experience Manual has to sit in a balance between generic guidelines, and an unambiguous experience metaphor. Furthermore, it must be noted that the development of NSD tools is beyond the scope of the Brand Experience Manual (however, this topic is explored by the Semantic Transformation for Experiences model, which is presented in the *Findings and Contributions* chapter).

By the end of this iteration, the Brandslation process was streamlined, and the Brand Experience Manual further developed. Even though the idea of designing brand-based interactions is not new, this research codified the Brand Experience Proposition, facilitating the semantic transformation process (Karjalainen 2004; Clatworthy, 2012), making it easier and less ambiguous. Moreover, through the Designing for Brand Experience framework (and the Semantic Transformation for Experiences) presented in the *Findings and Contributions* chapter, a process for designing brand-based service experiences is advanced, and further aligned with new theoretical approaches such as Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, 2008) and Design for Services (Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012).

4.6 WRITING AS REFLECTION

The transition point between the last design interventions the reflection and the current *Writing as Reflection* stage (Richardson, 1994) is rather undefined; yet, a white paper published in the *designresearch.no* blog on June 2015 (Motta-Filho, 2015b) may serve as a threshold. Once the interventions were concluded, the researcher's focus shifted to reviewing the literature, and writing the *Research Approach and Methods* chapter, this way, distancing himself from the empirical studies, and allowing for a more unbiased, and theoretically informed reflection-on-action (Schön, 1982).

It was through the writing of the said white paper (Motta-Filho, 2015b) that the research's findings and reflections were fully put in perspective for the first time, and many of the insights presented throughout this thesis were understood. Of the findings resulting from this process, the realization of the three key findings – the metaphor for the Brand Experience Proposition, the systematization of the Brandslation process, and the Designing for Brand Experience framework (which later also included Semantic Transformation for Experiences) – was possibly the most important, helping to fine-tune the specific research questions, thus influencing the structure of this entire thesis.

Furthermore, the *Designing for Brand Experience* concept was also established, as it was noticed that the current approach to Semantic Transformation (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012) did not support the operationalization of *Service Branding*[32], being consequently unable to sustain the Brand Experience Manual. As it will be further explained in the *Findings and Contributions* chapter, a Service Dominant Logic approach (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, 2008) to Service Design (Design for Service; Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012; Wetter-Edman, 2014), and to semantic transformation needed to be advanced, and incorporated into an integrated framework, together with the Brandslation process.

Acknowledging the necessity for the Designing for Brand Experience framework added a new layer of complexity to the research, which resulted in an extensive literature review (Creswell, 2009) that covered topics from experience and experience management, to different approaches to branding, semantic transformation, new service development, service marketing, service dominant logic, Service Design, and Design for Service (see *Theoretical Review* chapter for references). It was only through that comprehensive review that the Designing for Brand Experience framework could be structured. In that sense, the influence of the empirical research to the framework was indirect – it pointed to the need.

However, as the writing evolved (Richardson, 1994), it was noticed that the use of the same terminology (i.e. Designing for Brand Experience) for the framework that operationalizes the Service Branding process, and for the process that supports the delivery of the Brand Experience Proposition – which is just one part of the Service Branding process – created an unnecessary complexity. As such, since the core of the *delivering the brand* process is to develop the settings that enable the provision of brand-based service experiences through semantic transformation, this concept was then advanced as Semantic Transformation for Experiences.

Differently to the Designing for Brand Experience framework (and Semantic Transformation for Experiences), the conceptualization of *relationships* as a metaphor for the Brand Experience Proposition was much more balanced, as it was developed empirically, as the consequence of the research process, but it was also grounded in literature review that informed this thesis.

[32] As conceptualized in this thesis: the process of translating the brand's conceptual meaning proposition into customer experience through tangible service interactions.

Moreover, although the Brandslation process did not changed much throughout the writing of this thesis, a deeper comprehension of the individual components of the Brand Experience Manual was attained, and the dynamics between the different components of the manual was further understood. For example, the idea that the service personality traits can be used to express the "how" of the service interaction, and that a description of the behaviors (or tone of voice) is not necessarily indispensable was a recent insight. Finally, the relationship between the *service (design) principles* and the *service personality traits* was also advanced.

During the writing process, the material gathered through the entire research, and especially during the design interventions was analyzed; these artifacts helped the research to remember the state of the research at the different moments, facilitating the report of the research cycles described in this section. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the main source of knowledge was the appraisal of the empirical outcome in the light of theory; as such, the academic literature review (Creswell, 2009) was essential to this phase, providing a foundation for reflection-on-action (Schön, 1982), allowing the research to develop new knowledge.

This way, the *Writing as Reflection* concluded the research inquiry, as the writing of this thesis was itself the last reflective action (Richardson, 1994) – it was through this last action research iteration (Susman & Evered, 1978) that the Designing for Brand Experience framework, and the Semantic Transformation for Experiences were developed, that the Relationship Metaphor was grounded in theory, and that the final adjustments in the Brandslation process and the Brand Experience Manual were made. In that sense, the findings and insights resulting from this last reflective process are spread throughout this thesis, but essentially communicated in the *Findings and Contributions* chapter.

/ CHAPTER

This chapter presented the research process, from the early stages of understanding the problem (Crouch & Pearce, 2012), and to exploring ways to cope with the situation at hand (Dorst, 2006). Through empirical research, the first and the second specific questions (SQ1, SQ2; *Introduction* chapter) of the research were answered; moreover, the second specific question was further supported by the theoretical investigations (literature review; Creswell, 2009) that followed during the *Writing as Reflection* stage (Richardson, 1994) of the action research (Susman & Evered, 1978).

This theoretical research also developed the Designing for Brand Experience framework, which was initially motivated by current theoretical limitations first noticed during the empirical research, and further developed in the process of writing the *Theoretical Review* chapter (Richardson, 1994), resulting in the Semantic Transformation for Experiences concept, which answers the third specific question (SQ3; *Introduction* chapter). Together, these three topics are the pillars on which the General Research Question (refer to *Introduction* chapter) sits. Next, in the *Findings and Contributions* chapter, these three pillars are further explained and discussed.

5. Findings and Contributions

This chapter reports on the Findings and Contributions from the current study. It starts by briefly reviewing the *Specific Questions*, and the theoretical assumptions that ground the research and support the findings. Next, the following three sections answer to the *Specific Questions* by presenting each one of the research findings (Table 5.1). Finally, in the *Contributions* section, the practical, and the theoretical developments resulting from the study are discussed, and the response to the *General Research Question* reviewed[1].

Section	Research Question
5.1 – The Brandslation process	Specific Question 1 (SQ1) – How can a brand strategy be translated into an experiential expression of the brand proposition – a Brand Experience Proposition?
5.2 – The Brand Experience Manual (Relationship Metaphor)	Specific Question 2 (SQ2) – How can the Brand Experience Proposition be communicated to the New Service Development teams?
5.3 – Designing for Brand Experience	Specific Question 3 (SQ3) – How does a Brand Experience Proposition become translated into Customers' Experiences?
5.4 – Contributions: Contextualizing the Findings	General Research Question – How can Service Design enable the transformation of brand strategy into customer experience? [33]

Table 5.1: Distribution of the chapter's content is in relation to the research questions.

It can be argued that in trying to cope with the research problem, the present research focused on operationalizing Service Branding: *the process of translating the brand's conceptual meaning proposition into customer experiences through tangible service interactions* (*Theoretical Review* chapter). Accordingly, since the processes of defining and delivering the

[33] Essentially, Section 5.3 answers the General Research Question by presenting the *Designing for Brand Experience* framework; in Section 5.4, this answer is reviewed together with the Theoretical and Practical Implications of the Research.

brand are usually executed by different teams, finding an adequate way to communicate the Brand Experience Proposition also became a central issue. This way, in developing a framework to operationalize Service Branding, the current research had to answer all three specific questions – how to *define*, *communicate*, and *deliver* the Brand Experience Proposition –, thus addressing the *General Research Question*.

Grounding Assumptions

The current research builds on three theoretical assumptions, each associated with a Specific Research Question (Table 5.2); of these assumptions, two are based on the concept of *Semantic Transformation*, whilst the third develops on the research's understanding of *experience*. Furthermore, since the Semantic Transformation (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012) was established from the beginning of the project as a theoretical foundation, the insights rooted in this concept are more explicit and pervasive – yet, even though the definitive approach to experience was only structured latterly, its understanding was implicitly present throughout the entire research process.

Specific (Research) Question	Assumption
SQ1 – How can a brand strategy be translated into an experiential expression of the brand proposition – a Brand Experience Proposition?	1st – The brand is the basis for the experience proposition, as it provides its meaning
SQ2 – How can the Brand Experience Proposition be communicated to the New Service Development teams?	2nd – It is the role of the NSD teams to perform the Semantic Transformation (for Experiences) during the Service Design process
SQ3 – How does a Brand Experience Proposition become translated into Customers' Experiences?	3rd – The brand experience does not necessarily have to be highly experiential, but convey a meaning proposition

Table 5.2 – Grounding Assumptions and associated research Specific Question.

The first assumption argues that the brand is the foundation for the experience proposition the organization is making (Table 5.2). The reasoning behind that statement builds on the core of the Semantic Transformation concept, which focuses on translating qualitative brand descriptors into settings that support brand aligned experiences (Karjalainen, 2004; Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010; Clatworthy, 2012; Motta-Filho, 2012). This argument is also strengthened by the research's view of brands as key strategic assets (Urde, 1999; Brodie et al., 2006) that reflects the

organization's value proposition, their relationship with the customers, and their internal capabilities (Theoretical Review chapter).

The second assumption, which emerged from the conceptualization of brand experience under a triadic semiotics approach (Lencastre & Côrte-Real, 2007; Santaella, 2008), suggests that the Semantic Transformation (for Experiences[34]) takes places during the New Service Development process, when service design teams translate the Brand Experience Proposition into Meaningful Brand Experiences[35] (Image 3.6; Clatworthy, 2012; Motta-Filho, 2012). Accordingly, it was understood that in order to ensure a successful translation, the service design teams need proper brand input (Motta-Filho, 2012).

Finally, the third assumption builds on the research's view of experiences as a phenomenological event (Helkkula, 2011) – the customer's evaluation of the service interaction (Sandström et al., 2008). In that sense, it is argued that a Meaningful Brand Experience does not necessarily imply an extraordinary experience (Arnould & Price, 1993), but an interactive experience that conveys the intended brand meaning (Theoretical Review chapter), where the experientiality degree of the interaction is defined by the meaning proposition of the brand (Image 3.2), which is communicated through the qualities and characteristics of the service offering.

Whereas the first and second assumptions grounded the first and second specific questions (SQ1 and SQ2; Table 5.2), also helping to inform the empirical explorations, the third assumption did not define the third specific question (SQ3; Table 5.2), but provided the foundation for the framework used to respond to it. The reason for this difference is because the third assumption is associated with a research question that was responded to theoretically, while the other two are linked to a practice-based inquiry (Saikaly, 2005; Sevaldson, 2010).

Thus, building on the two first assumptions (Table 5.2), a series of action research based (Susman & Evered, 1978) design interventions (Crouch & Pearce, 2012) took place, leading to the development of the Brandslation process, and the Brand Experience Manual. This way, the empirical research responded to the first and the second specific questions (SQ1, SQ2, Table 5.1), which are presented in the following two sections. Additionally, the response to the second specific question was also reinforced by theoretical

[34] For more on Semantic Transformation for Experiences, refer to Section 5.3.
[35] Interactive Brand Experience Settings that are purposefully designed to deliver the Brand Experience Proposition through its qualities and characteristics.

studies (Creswell, 2009) developed during the *Writing as Reflection* stage (Richardson, 1994) of the research (Image 4.1).

As the empirical explorations progressed, the theoretical knowledge evolved through the cycles of action and reflection (Schön, 1982; Reason & Bradbury, 2008), in a process where theory informed practice, and practice advanced theory (O'Brian, 1998). Once the design interventions were concluded, it was noticed that the current approach to Semantic Transformation needed to be further developed, in order to support the operationalization of the Service Branding. Accordingly, building on the third assumption (Table 5.2), the third section of this chapter (5.3) introduces the Semantic Transformation for Experiences and the Designing for Brand Experience framework as a response to this limitation, answering the third specific question (SQ3; Table 5.1).

5.1 THE BRANDSLATION PROCESS

The Brandslation process is an instrument, a method devised to define the Brand Experience Proposition; in that sense, the main objective is to develop the Brand Experience Manual as a tool to communicate the Brand Experience Proposition to the teams responsible for the Semantic Transformation for Experiences (Image 5.1; Motta-Filho, 2012). In terms of design research, the Brandslation is a hybrid – it is both the outcome of practice-based research (Saikali, 2005), and a process meant to define the Brand Experience Proposition; research through (by; Sevaldson, 2010) and for design (Frayling, 1993; Jonas, 2007) at the same time.

In the context of Service Branding, the Brandslation process is responsible for the first part, translating the brand into an experience proposition; in a sense, it can be understood as a kind of Semantic Transformation[36], which is responsible for *the conversion of traditional brand descriptors into the Brand Experience Proposition*, supporting the Semantic Transformation for Experiences (Image 5.1) – the act of encoding intentional brand meanings into the qualities and characteristics of the settings that enable the service experiences (Section 5.3).

[36] A broader definition of Semantic Transformation (Clatworthy, 2012), based on the semiotic process, is adopted in this context.

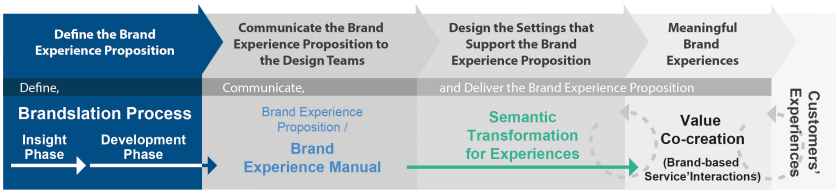

Image 5.1: The *Brandslation* process (dark blue) in relation to the overall research, and in the context of Service Branding.

Since service brands sit at the intersection between the organization, customers, employees, and external actors – facilitating internal, external, and interactive marketing actions (Brodie et al., 2006; Brodie, 2009) –, the Brandslation process must be comprehensive, involving multiple stakeholders. The case for inclusiveness is further reinforced by the fact that delivering a service brand requires commitment from the entire organization (McDonald et al., 2001). Therefore, it is important to include the employees in the process – not only because they have key insights on the customers, but also because their support is essential to brand delivery. As Riley and de Chernatony (2000) notice, a service brand begins in the relationship between the organization and its staff, and comes to life in the interactions between staff and customers.

In order to ensure its viability, the Brand Experience Proposition also needs to be supported by the business strategy (Fraser, 2012) – "an empty brand promise is worse than no promise at all" (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, p.8). By acknowledging the contributions of the internal resources perspective (Mazzucato, 2002, Schultz, 2005), this thesis recognizes organizational competencies as strategic enablers of the customers' experiences (Normann & Ramirez, 1994; Porter, 2002). Hence, it is crucial that the organizations focus on creating brand propositions that are feasible, that can be supported by their internal capabilities (Ind & Bjerke, 2007), and that are not solely based on the management or customers' wishes.

Conversely, since the brand is the outcome of the customers' perceptions from their previous experiences (Aaker, 1996, Grönroos, 2007), it also reflects the organizational competencies – the "technologies, specialized expertise, business processes and techniques that the company has accumulated over time and packaged in its offering" (Normann & Ramirez, 1994, p.74) – manifested over time through the service interactions. Ultimately, the brand resides in the customers' minds as the result of their experiences with the branded offerings.

In that sense, the brand also recounts the organizations' relationship with the customers – it is a storehouse for all the customers' meanings associations (Sherry, 2005). Since brand value emerges from associations and perceptions that influence the customers' attitudes (Aaker, 1991; Calkins, 2005; Kapferer, 2011; Keller, 2013), it is grounded in the customer's relationship with the brand. As such, in order to create value for the customers, and for themselves, the organizations should focus on delivering a consistent brand experience, strengthening their relationship with the customer.

This means that in defining the Brand Experience Proposition, a balanced perspective should be adopted, and the different stakeholders involved in the development of the brand relationship included. Furthermore, although the customers are at the center of the Brandslation process, the brand must be seen as a strategic resource – a framework through which the organization respond to customers' demands (Urde, 1999). As argued in the *Theoretical Review* chapter, it is the brand's meaning proposition that differentiates the organizations' offering from the competitors', providing an important competitive advantage in a market where most sources of differentiation have been commoditized.

Fittingly, the Brandslation process involves not only the customer's, but also the employees, and the organization (represented by the management teams), exploring the brand identity, service experiences, meaning associations, business environment, organizational competencies, and future wishes; thereby, the resulting Brand Experience Proposition is a composite of the customers' aspirations, internal capabilities, and corporate strategies that is feasible, desirable, and viable (Brown & Barry, 2009).

Brandslation as Research for Design

As mentioned in the beginning of this section, Brandslation is the outcome of a design research (research through/by design), but also a research for design process (Frayling, 1993; Jonas, 2007; Sevaldson, 2010). As a Service Design method, the Brandslation process takes a collaborative and transdisciplinary approach (Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2011) to the exploration and generation of the Brand Experience Proposition that is similar to participatory action research (Susman & Evered, 1978; Kindon et al., 2007).

By incorporating stakeholders from different silos, operational levels, and sectors of society, the Brandslation process develops a richer understanding of the organization behind the brand, reaching insights that are beyond the scope of most design projects. As reported in the *Research Process* chapter,

when faced with inadequate brand input, some design agencies try to access the brand proposition by decoding the signs manifested through the service offerings and marketing communications, resulting in interpretations that are biased, and that fail to acknowledge important strategic aspects (Motta-Filho, 2012). Accordingly, the Brandslation process aims to bridge this gap through comprehensive research, providing a functional expression of the Brand Experience Proposition.

In that sense, the involvement of the brand management teams is essential to counterbalance the limitations imposed by the lack of structured brand manuals (Motta-Filho, 2012). This is critical as often even the most ordinary brand descriptors – except for the visual identity – are not properly described, and the brand proposition is embodied in a mix of different marketing documents, and management's tacit knowledge (*Research Process* chapter).

This way, the Brandslation process links *Branding* and *Service Design*, ensuring that the new offerings are developed under the brand and business strategies, strengthening the link between business strategy and service design (Goldstein et al., 2002). The collaborative approach adopted by the Brandslation process also facilitates the involvement of the organization's stakeholders in the co-creation of the Brand Experience Proposition, generating rich organizational learning by endowing the participants with a deeper comprehension of the brand, which is a relevant outcome in itself. In addition, the involvement of the brand management teams assures that the Brand Experience Proposition is clearly defined, and understood by the organization.

Finally, it must be noted that the Brandslation process is also customer centered; its main objective is to develop a proposition that is focused on and grounded in customer's experience – what a colleague called a *Customer Experience based Brand Proposition*[37]. This customer centeredness is thus present in the process itself; throughout the entire exploratory stages, the customer's wishes, life moments, and situations are studied. Furthermore, the customers not only provide insights about themselves, but they also actively participate in the co-creation of the Brand Experience Proposition, as explained in the next section.

[37] Daniel Grönquist – Principal Consultant at Bekk Consulting AS, and Senior Advisor to the CSI project.

The Structure of the Brandslation Process

The Brandslation process is composed of two main phases – the first, focused on gathering insights, and the second, dedicated to the development of the Brand Experience Proposition. Originally, each of the process phases were designed as a series of four workshops. Yet, instead of describing the steps required to execute the Brandslation process – which is done in *Appendix I* – this chapter focuses on explaining the core of the method, providing a general understanding that can be adapted to different projects and circumstances (Image 5.2).

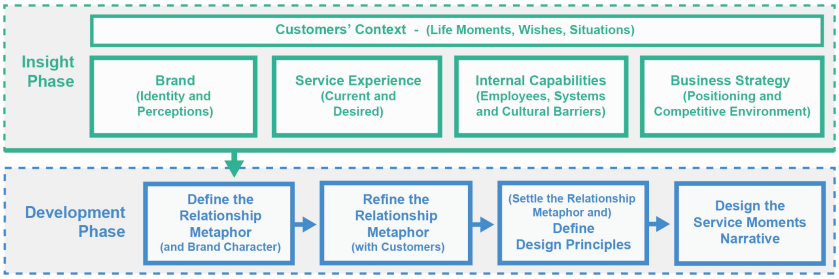

Image 5.2 – General structure of the Brandslation process.

Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that the objective of the Brandslation process is to define the Brand Experience Proposition, enabling the first part of the Service Branding. Later in this chapter, the Brand Experience Manual will be presented as a tool to communicate the Brand Experience Proposition to the service design teams, and the Designing for Brand Experience section will propose a framework for the operationalization of the Service Branding process.

Insight Phase

The *Insight* phase focuses on exploring the different issues that influence customer experience, supporting the development of a Brand Experience Proposition that is feasible, desirable, and viable (Brown & Barry, 2009). Accordingly, there are five key arenas that must be analyzed (Image 5.2): the *customer's context, brand identity and perceptions*, the *service experience*, the *internal capabilities* of the organization, and the *business strategy*. Moreover, it is important that these arenas are studied from the perspective of different agents, for the same subject may affect the stakeholders in distinct ways. For example, the brand perception influences not only the customers, but also the employees; conversely, the employees can help not only with the

internal capabilities, but also with insights about the customers' context, and service experiences.

Customers' Context

The Brandslation process focuses on developing a proposition for the customers' experiences with the brand; hence, the customers are at the center of the process, informing not only their perceptions and expectations, but also providing the context (situations; Sandström et al., 2008) through which the service takes place, and value is co-created (Vargo & Akaka, 2009; Vargo et al., 2010). As the customers are active economic actors, bringing their own value networks to the service interactions (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Vargo et al., 2008), the way these value co-creating systems are integrated influences the service provision, and thus the customers' experiences; therefore, understanding the customer's context is essential for of defining the Brand Experience Proposition.

Nevertheless, as further described in *Appendix I*, the Brandslation process does not have a specific workshop for understanding the customer's context; instead, different exercises explore the distinct aspects of the customer's world throughout the research. Additionally, it is important to address the type of affiliation, and the length of the customer's life cycle; different companies create different relationships, with distinct narratives.

Brand

The concept of brand can be seen in two main perspectives: the brand as the customer's perception (brand image; Grönroos, 2007; Kapferer, 2011; Keller, 2013), and the brand as the organization's proposition (brand identity; Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Semprini, 2006; Batey, 2008), each influencing the customer's experience in a different way. As a source of meaning (Sherry, 2005), the brand differentiates the organization from the competitors, adding a unique connotation to its offerings (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård, 2004; Semprini, 2006); as a storehouse of meanings (Sherry, 2005), the brand is a repository for the perceptions and associations the customers develop over their relationship with the brand.

The brand image influences the Brandslation process in three main ways: First, since the brand image is the reflection of the customers' relationship with the organization (Grönroos, 2007), it is strongly related to brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2013); hence, as the brand value emerges from customers' past evaluations of the branded offerings (Calkins, 2005;

Kapferer, 2011), the brand image conveys – to a degree – customers' preferences. Second, because the customers' views on the brand influence their assessment of future experiences (Verhoef et al., 2009; Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010), it is important to understand what the current brand perceptions are.

Third, as the brand image is the outcome of customers' past experiences with the service offerings (Aaker, 1991), it also reflects the organizations' internal capabilities, as those competencies define the qualities and characteristics of the service interactions (Normann & Ramirez, 1994; Porter, 2002). Moreover, as a whole, the brand image also serves as a starting point; it helps the teams running the Brandslation process to understand where the brand stands, so they can build a Brand Experience Proposition that is grounded in reality.

On the other hand, the brand identity influence is greater within the organization; as a proposition, it is the brand image the company wants the customers to have (Grönroos, 2007), mirroring the positioning of the corporation – its vision, mission, and values (Schultz, 2005; Kapferer, 2011). For Semprini (2006), the brand is the 'product' being sold in the post-modern market – a rich meaning proposition that creates socio-cultural relevance for the organization's offerings (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård, 2004), differentiating it from the competitors'. Therefore, the Brandslation process builds on brand-orientation (Urde, 1999), using the brand as a strategic resource that frames the experience proposition.

Accordingly, whilst defining the Brand Experience Proposition, the teams running the Brandslation process need adequate information about the identity of the brand they are working with. Yet, as already noted (*Research Process* chapter), brand descriptors are frequently poorly described, and complementary research is often necessary. In exploring brand identity, it is also important to consider the organization's brand architecture, the brand's positioning, its core-meaning proposition, and its long- and short-term strategies.

Service Experience

Whilst the explorations on the brand image focus on the past, the research on the service experience aims at the current and desired perceptions. As explained in the *Theoretical Review* chapter, since this thesis adopts a phenomenological definition of the concept of experience (Helkkula, 2011), it is understood that any sort of interaction, and not only those regarded as

highly experiential – e.g. raking high on the experientiality scale (Image 3.2) –, creates an experience for the customer (Johnston & Kong, 2011).

Building on Kahneman (2011), it is understood that the interactions with the service offerings are the main source of remembered experiences; in other words, the service experience is the main source of brand meaning, and brand equity (Berry, 2000). This means that in order to create value for the customers, and for the brand, the service interactions must convey the intended "targeted customer perception" (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994, p.9) through its qualities and characteristics (Berry et al., 2006); thus, comprehending how these interactions are perceived, is essential for the definition of the Brand Experience Proposition.

Finally, as brand value emerges from customers' evaluation of their interactions with the branded offering (Kapferer, 2011), realizing how the customers wish the service experiences were can help the teams running the Brandslation process understand where the Brand Experience Proposition should aim; opening space for wishful thinking can provide new directions not only for the services, but also for the brand.

Internal Capabilities

Building on Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, 2008) – and Design for Service (Kimbel, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012) –, services are seen as *capacities embedded in, and enabled by a dynamic configuration of resources* (Maglio et al., 2009) *that facilitate the process of value co-creation* (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Vargo et al., 2008); this way, the internal capabilities provide the company with a unique strategic differentiator. From these organizational competencies, three drivers of customers' experience are of special concern for the Brandslation process: the culture, the employees, and the systems' infrastructure[38].

In that sense, it must be noted that although this research does not focus on corporate culture, it acknowledges its influence; hence, organizational aspects are reviewed indirectly, by considering the possible internal barriers imposed on the service processes. Due to the difficulties of implementing cultural changes (Schein, 2010), this thesis adopts an environmental (Belk, 1975; Russell & Mehrabian, 1976) and social (Ross & Nisbett, 2011) psychology perspective that focuses on the design of the settings that support the

[38] Knowledge is considered as being embedded in those three drivers.

employees[39]; thus, it is implied that the same qualities and characteristics of the offerings that influence the customer perception, also affect the employees, and the service environment in general (Servicescape; Bitner, 1992; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010).

Delivering the brand proposition is not the sole responsibility of the front line employees (Ind & Bjerke, 2007). Since all enablers of the service experience – be it an internal platform used by the front-line staff, or a digital self-service tool (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Patrício et al., 2008; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010) – have been designed by someone, all employees must support the service experience, and as such, the cooperation of the back office staff is essential. Hence, while exploring the organizational competencies, the teams running the Brandslation process must include stakeholders from the front line and from the back offices.

Finally, the third key internal capability considered is the service system*;* the arrangement of resources that includes people, technology, and information that are connected to other systems by the value proposition, enabling the service concept (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Maglio et al., 2009), and which exert a great influence on the customers' experiences. Once again building on the Service Dominant Logic, it is understood that organizations cannot design an experience, but only the systems that will enable the service interactions (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Vargo et al., 2008).

This approach also helps to clarify the differences between 'designing a service' and 'designing for a service'; whilst the second centers on developing the service enablers, the first focuses on the service concept (Yu & Sangiorgi, 2014). Therefore, since services are processes enacted in collaboration with the customer (Johnston & Kong, 2011), they are not totally under the control of the organizations (Verhoef et al., 2009; Evenson & Dubberly, 2010; Kimbell, 2011a) – consequently, the company should focus on developing the prerequisites that support the emergence of the right customer experience through the service interactions (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996).

Business Strategy

Although this thesis takes an approach to strategy that is closer to the internal resources perspective (Mazzucato, 2002), it also acknowledges the influence of external market factors on the organizations; accordingly, the Brandslation

[39] For more on this topic, refer to the *Discussions* Section.

process takes a balanced perspective that considers the tradeoffs and fits between the organizational competencies and the market positioning (Porter, 2002), and where both the corporation's proposition – which is reflected in the brand –, and the configurations of the value networks (Normann & Ramirez, 1994) are seen as sources of sustainable competitive advantages.

This way, there are two strategic attributes the teams running the Brandslation process should focus upon; the organization's positioning, and the competitive environment. In defining the Brand Experience Proposition, these two features should be balanced against each other (Porter, 2002), and the different market influences on customers' experiences considered. It is thus advised that the discussions over this topic take place last, so they can build on the insights developed throughout the entire exploratory stage – especially the broader knowledge about the internal capabilities –, helping the organization align their experience positioning with the external threats and opportunities.

Development Phase

It is during the *Development* phase that the insights from the previous phase are translated into the Brand Experience Proposition, and that the content for the Brand Experience Manual is co-created in collaboration with customers, employees, and management teams. Following the efforts to present the *Brandslation* process as a finding, and not as a framework – which is done in *Appendix I* –, this phase will be presented as a sequence of four generic *actions*. Moreover, so as not to entangle the current findings with those from the Brand Experience Manual (Table 5.1), the emphasis is on the characteristics and configurations of the procedures, and not so much on the outcomes[40].

1st action - Define the Relationship Metaphor (and Brand Character)

Undoubtedly, this is the most important moment of the Brandslation process, as it is when the insights generated throughout the previous phase are assessed and used to develop the core of the Brand Experience Proposition, outlining the Brand Character and the Relationship Metaphor[41]. The objective is to co-create a balanced experience proposition that considers the different perspectives of the main stakeholders; this means that the brand perceptions,

[40] Yet, it can be useful to check the examples in *The Brand Experience Manual* Section. Additionally, *Appendix I* may help clarify the more abstract parts of the process.
[41] Previously called *Service Personality.*

service experiences, and future expectations should be seen from the angle of the customers, the organization, and the employees.

Initially, the insights from the previous phase must be discussed, with a special attention to the brand identity descriptors, which should be reviewed with the management teams. Then, the idea is to filter the insights through the brand identity, generating an experiential proposition for the brand that is grounded in the organization's internal capabilities, the customer's wishes, and brand strategy. So as to facilitate this process, the current *action* focuses on developing the Brand Character – a metaphor for *who the brand is* in the relationship with the customers –, and in describing the relationship between this Brand Character and an archetypal customer.

Building on the concept of *service personality* (Clatworthy, 2012), the Brand Character[42] advances interpersonal descriptors, defining the personality traits of the brand (Aaker, 1997) in the context of the service interactions. Moreover, it also creates a richer representation of *who the brand is* by adding personal characteristics (e.g. gender, age, profession), thus fully portraying the brand as a person in a relationship. From this portrayal, a relational analogy should be used to explain *whom* the Brand Character and the archetypal customers are to each other, describing the Relationship Metaphor – which incorporates the Brand Character as part of its descriptions (for more, refer to Image 5.6).

At the core of this *action* is the idea of expressing the brand through a narrative – a story that recounts the relationship between the brand and the customers, where the scenarios for the story are described by the *insights* from the preceding explorations. Hence, in order to operationalize this translation, the outcomes from the *Insight* phase must be structured in a way that facilitates the discussions – since the co-creation of the Brand Experience Proposition involves multiple stakeholders, it is crucial that all parts involved have easy access to the information (e.g. Image 5.3).

[42] More on the *Brand Character* and *Relationship Metaphor* will be presented in Section 5.2, which focuses on the Brand Experience Manual.

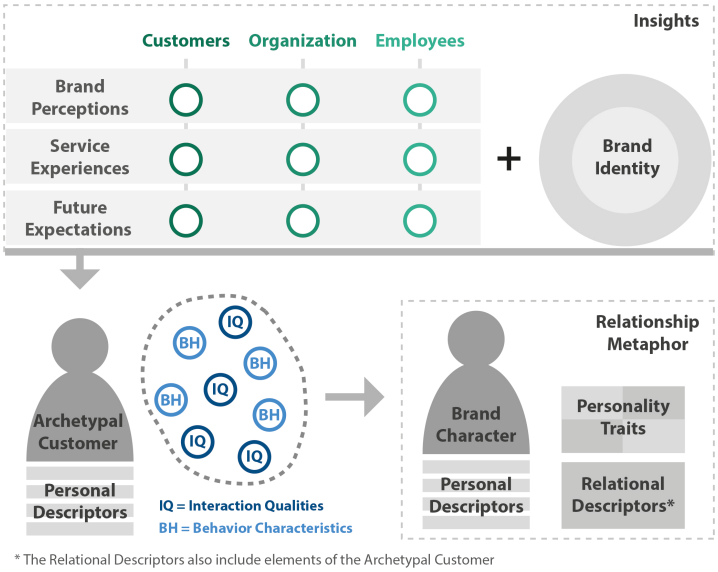

Image 5.3: Example of how to structure this *action.*

Since the brand is the outcome of the negotiations between the customers' perceptions, and the meaning proposition delivered through the service interactions (*Theoretical Review* chapter; Image 3.4), the insights from the previous phase provide the setting through which the customers interact with the brand. The goal is thus to envision how the brand – as defined by the brand identity and the discussions – would act in different situations. Moreover, it must be noted that this narrative does not necessarily have to be portrayed as an actual service interaction; the brand behaviors can, and often should be conveyed as an analogy.

As this narrative develops, the qualities and behaviors of the Brand Character become more evident, and its personality traits start to emerge. From this point, the objective is to advance the description of the relationship between the archetypal customer and the brand – the metaphor for the Brand Experience Proposition.

2nd action - Refine the Relationship Metaphor (with Customers)

Although the Brand Experience Proposition developed in the previous *action* built on insights from multiple stakeholders, it was still defined from the perspective of the organization. Yet, due to the Brandslation' transdisciplinary practices (Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2011), it is understood that the formulation of the Brand Experience Proposition should

also involve the customers. In that sense, the objective of the current *action* is to include the customers in this process, evolving the Brand Character and the Relationship Metaphor, collaboratively refining the Brand Experience Proposition.

Additionally, in preparation for the following *action*, a service journey portraying the customer's expected interactions with the Brand Character – in the context of the Relationship Metaphor – should be co-created. This way, the current *action* is divided into two parts: revising and adjusting the Brand Experience Proposition; and co-creating the exemplary journey. Accordingly, the reviewing part should take place first, as it also introduces the customers to the brand, preparing them for the service journey mapping exercise. Although the customer inputs play an important role in advancing the Brand Experience Proposition, these contributions must be balanced with the insights from the previous *action*.

This means that in developing the 'ideal service journey', the customers' wishes must be responded to through a brand's lenses (Urde, 1999). It is crucial that the customer's vision for the service experience does not completely redefine the Brand Experience Proposition – the objective of the Brandslation process is to create a balanced experience proposition that considers the multiple aspects that influence customers' experience. Hence, allowing the customers' wishes to override the brand relationships, the internal capabilities, and the business strategy is to ignore the very foundation of the process.

The goal is to adjust, and not to redefine the Brand Experience Proposition. As such, while co-creating the exemplary journey, it is important that the customers are constantly brought back to the Brand Character and the Relationship Metaphor developed in the previous *action*. Finally, it must be noted that the Relationship Metaphor, as referred to in this section, is the analogy of the Brand Experience Proposition, and as such, it encompasses all of its descriptors (Image 5.3), including the Brand Character – the distinction made between these terms until now was essentially to improve the text's readability.

3rd action - Settle the Relationship Metaphor and define the Design Principles

This *action* translates the Relationship Metaphor into a set of Design Principles, facilitating the application of the Brand Experience Proposition by the teams responsible for the development of the new service offerings.

Nonetheless, before this can be done, the insights from the previous *action* must be reviewed, and the descriptors of the Brand Experience Proposition conclusively defined. Since customer feedback may have changed the Brand Experience Proposition, the management teams must ensure that its final version is feasible, and properly aligned with the brand, creating a consensus around it.

The core idea behind the development of the Design Principles is to find common patterns of experience enablers – performances that must be enacted consistently so as to deliver the Brand Experience Proposition. In order to operationalize the elaboration of the Design Principles, the exemplary journey developed in the previous *action* must be reviewed by the management teams, ensuring its alignment with the Brand Experience Proposition, and then, 'planned for' (Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012); once the prototypal journey is defined, the focus shifts to understanding how to deliver this ideal experience, and to mapping the common enablers – it is by clustering these deeds that the Design Principles emerge.

Hence, the objective of this *action* is not to design the "perfect brand journey", but to find the key catalysts for the right experience; by analyzing multiple service interactions, it is possible to find the patterns that enable the delivery of the Brand Experience Proposition, translating them into Design Principles.

4th action - Design the Service Moments Narrative

This last *action* of the Brandslation process aims at developing a descriptive account of the Brand Experience Proposition by narrating the experience of an archetypal customer with the "perfect brand journey". The idea is to create an experiential proxy that will allow the users of the Brand Experience Manual to experience the Brand Experience Proposition[43], by applying the Relationship Metaphor and the Design Principles to the customer journey. Whereas the previous exemplary journeys were instrumental – helping to define some experiential descriptor –, this is in itself an expression of the Brand Experience Proposition.

To operationalize the development of this narrative, the journey should be broken into key Service Moments – fragments of the customer's journey that convey a specific situation (e.g. subscribing to the service, or buying a new

[43] As explained in the *Research Process* chapter, this answers to Simon Clatworthy's "you can only experience an experience by experiencing it".

house). As such, each Service Moment may encompass multiple touch-points, and different service encounters (Clatworthy, 2011). The objective is to convey the Brand Experience Proposition, and not to design isolated interactions. Accordingly, the Service Moments should focus on the overall experience, and not on the individual touch-points.

Moreover, since the frame of reference for the Service Moments sits between the service encounters and the customers' journeys, it considers the micro-journeys within the service life cycle (Polaine et al., 2010), offering a different framework for the service concept (Goldstein et al., 2002).

Concluding remarks

This section presented the Brandslation process, making a conscious effort to explain it as a finding, and not as a framework – which, as mentioned before, is done in *Appendix I*. A second concern was not to entangle the research outcomes, introducing the findings from the Brand Experience Manual; in that sense, some aspects of the Brandslation process (e.g. the Service Moments) might become clearer after the following section.

Finally, it must be noted that the goal of the Brandslation process is to define the Brand Experience Proposition; something that is closer related to the idea of designing a service (as opposed to designing *for* a service[44]; Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012). Next, the Brand Experience Manual is presented as a tool that informs the design teams what is the experience they are designing for, enabling the Designing for Brand Experience framework (Section 5.3).

5.2 THE BRAND EXPERIENCE MANUAL

The Brand Experience Manual is a tool for communicating the Brand Experience Proposition to the teams responsible for the development of the new service offerings. Since Semantic Transformation (for Experiences; Section 5.3) takes place during the New Service Development (NSD) process (Clatworthy, 2012; Motta-Filho, 2012), it is crucial that these teams know what experience they are designing *for* (Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012). Hence, it can be implied that the main objective of the Brand Experience Manual is to support the Semantic Transformation (for Experiences) process,

[44] I would like to thank to Daniel Jackson for our discussions on the difference between designing a service and designing for a service.

ensuring that the Brand Experience Proposition is properly conveyed, and understood.

Conceptually, the Brand Experience Manual builds on a phenomenological approach (Helkkula, 2011) which understands that experiences cannot be designed, but only designed *for* (Vargo & Lusch, 2008); this means that in order to design *for* the service experiences, the organizations should focus on the enablers of the service interaction – the systems, processes, and interfaces that support customer experience (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Secomandi & Snelders, 2011). This way, by bridging the sub-processes of *defining* and *delivering* the Brand Experience Proposition, the Brand Experience Manual enables the Service Branding process, facilitating the design of Meaningful Brand Experiences[45] (Image 5.4).

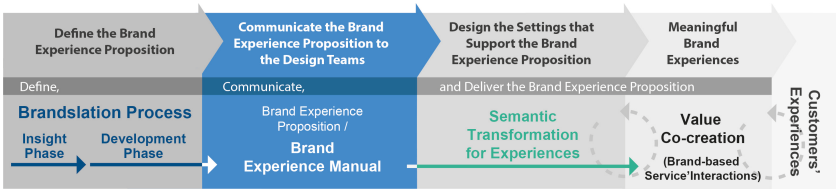

Image 5.4: The *Brand Experience Manual* links the sub-processes of defining (Brandslation) and delivering (Semantic Transformation for Experiences) the Brand Experience Proposition.

In terms of design research, the Brand Experience Manual is the outcome of the Brandslation process, and also a finding from a practice-based research (Saikali, 2005); it is both the result of research through (by; Sevaldson, 2010) design, and the product of research for design (Frayling, 1993; Jonas, 2007), which is performed through a Service Design process. Although an experience cannot be designed, it can be devised as a proposition; in that sense, Brandslation is the Service Design process (Yu & Sangiorgi, 2014) of developing the Brand Experience Proposition.

As a tool meant to inform the NSD teams what is the experience they should design *for*, the Brand Experience Manual must be concerned with aspects of brand usability (Abbing, 2010); a poor comprehension of the Brand Experience Proposition may result in distortions in the Semantic Transformation (for Experiences) process, producing an awry service experience for the customers (Clatworthy, 2012). Therefore, the Brand Experience Manual structures a format for communicating the Brand

[45] Define as *Interactive Brand Experience Settings* that are purposefully designed to deliver the Brand Experience Proposition through its qualities and characteristics.

Experience Proposition, reducing interpretation biases by providing practical brand input to the teams responsible for the development of new service interactions.

> "Brand usability is the extent to which a brand, as it is found in an organization, can be used by those who need it to do their work… In the traditional use of brands, it will be the marketing department using it, mostly for marketing communication… In brand-driven innovation's use of brands, it will be designers, developers, researchers and engineers using it, as a resource to develop new products and services" (Abbing, 2010, p.84).

Since Designing *for* Services involve stakeholders from different levels of the organization, it is crucial that the decisions regarding customer experience are consistent, and based on one well-defined proposition (Goldstein et al., 2002). Yet, as the initial explorations have shown (*Research Process* chapter), the contemporary brand manuals – reviewed on the occasion (Motta-Filho, 2012) – are not adequate for the development of new service offerings, as they are essentially visual identity bibles (Kapferer, 2011), too focused on communications, and not as much on the customers' experiences.

As a result, in order to cope with limited brand input, the design teams often had to resort to other means of assessing the Brand Experience Proposition, such as trying to decode the brand from its manifestations (Harvey & Evans, 2001; Semprini, 2006), thus creating two other problems: First, as the process of reading the brand proposition is subjective, the interpretations will vary, resulting in irregular brand meanings (Batey, 2008); Second, decoding the brand through its manifestations does not convey proper strategic insight, as it does not delve into the internal configurations of the organization. Furthermore, it was also noted that design agencies would often lack the resources, and the mandate to properly explore the brand proposition (Motta-Filho, 2012).

This way, in order to bridge this knowledge gap, the current research focused on developing an "experience-centric brand documentation" (Clatworthy, 2012, p.125); yet, as the same problems with the lack of structured brand and strategic descriptors also affected the development of the Brand Experience Manual, a process to explore the different enablers of the customers' experiences was necessary. Hence, the Brandslation process was developed to inform the content of the Brand Experience Manual, ensuring strategic depth to the Brand Experience Proposition communicated through the manual.

Accordingly, the Brandslation process and the Brand Experience Manual are two faces of the same concept; whilst the first focuses on properly defining the Brand Experience Proposition, the second ensures that it is properly communicated.

The Brand Experience Manual as the outcome of Design Research

As the outcome of practice based design research (Saikali, 2005), the Brand Experience Manual was developed through a series of action-research iterations (Image 4.1; *Research Approach and Methods* chapter), alongside the development of the Brandslation process; whereas the Brandslation process focused on overcoming the deficiencies of the current brand and strategic descriptors, defining the Brand Experience Proposition, the Brand Experience Manual focused on finding how to express and communicate the Brand Experience Proposition – the best analogies, and combination of elements.

This way, the development of the Brand Experience Manual, the Brand Experience Proposition, and of the Brandslation process were mutually dependent: in order to structure the Brand Experience Proposition, it was necessary to first develop a Brand Experience Manual through the Brandslation process; yet, because the Brandslation process defines the Brand Experience Proposition, it must be grounded in the content of the Brand Experience Manual. This rather conflicting situation required an abductive approach (Dorst, 2006; Kolko, 2010), which facilitated the development and testing of hypothetical solutions, through cycles of action and reflection (Susman & Evered, 1978; *Research Process* chapter).

Throughout the development of the Brand Experience Manual, the main challenge was finding *how* to properly convey an experience proposition, as even the idea of what constitutes an experiential descriptor is not clearly established. As noted in the *Theoretical Review* chapter, experiences are not the same as perceived quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988), satisfaction (Pullman & Gross, 2004), or evaluation (Kahneman & Riis, 2005), but the phenomenological interpretation of a meaning proposition (McCracken, 1986; Batey, 2008).

Accordingly, building on Clatworthy's brand megaphone model (2012), and by framing the brand as an active partner in its relationship with customers (Fournier, 1998), this research advanced the concept of service personality, proposing a Relationship Metaphor for the Brand Experience Proposition; an analogy that was developed throughout the research iterations (Image 4.1),

and which has shown empirically and theoretically[46] to be a sound expression for the Brand Experience Proposition.

The current research also explored other means of conveying the Brand Experience Proposition, as it was noticed that using a mix of prescriptive and descriptive representations would be the best way to communicate the Brand Experience Proposition, and to produce a useable (Abbing, 2010) Brand Experience Manual. In that sense, the Design Principles and the Service Moments[47] are (respectively) proposed as auxiliary means for informing the Brand Experience Proposition to the NSD teams, ensuring that it is both understandable and adaptable to new contexts. By mixing descriptive and prescriptive expressions, the Brand Experience Manual balances generic guidelines and experiential proxies, guaranteeing its usability.

The structure of the Brand Experience Manual

As the outcome of research for design (Frayling, 1993; Jonas, 2007), the content and the structure of the *Bra*nd Experience Manual is defined by the Brandslation process. As shown in image 5.5, the Brand Experience Manual is composed of three key components – the Relationship Metaphor, the Design Principles, and the Service Moments –, which are combined so as to properly convey the Brand Experience Proposition. This means that the Brand Experience Manu*al* needs all three expressions in order to be effective – the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, as the components complement each other.

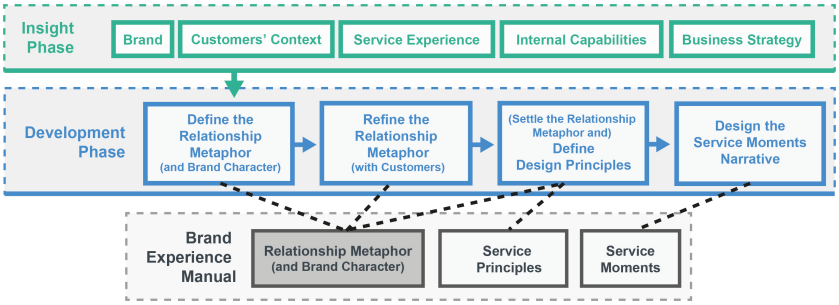

Image 5.5 – The link between the Brandslation process and the structure of the Brand Experience Manual.

For example, as the main representation of the Brand Experience Proposition, the Relationship Metaphor expresses how the Brand Character interacts with

[46] The *Relationship Metaphor* is further discussed later in this section.
[47] The *Design Principles* and *Service Moments* are further discussed later in this section.

the customers through a relational analogy; yet, it does not really say how to embed the Brand Character into the qualities and characteristics of the service settings, which is done by the Design Principles. Conversely, as prescriptive guidelines, the Design Principles does not tell how the interactions should unfold – something that is done by the Relationship Metaphor. Moreover, as it can be hard to contextualize the Design Principles, the Service Moments act as inspirational examples, helping to convey the Brand Experience Proposition, making it easier for the NSD teams to understand it.

Through the combination of these three different expressions, the Brand Experience Manual realizes the research' initial ambition of developing a tool to communicate the Brand Experience Proposition to the NSD teams. Finally, it must be noted that the format for the Brand Experience Manual is not fixed; it can be a mix between a handbook and digital media, a website, or even a fanzine. Next, in the following three sections, the individual components of the Brand Experience Manual are further detailed.

Relationship Metaphor

In the context of the Brand Experience Manual, the Relationship Metaphor is certainly the most relevant finding. Although the idea of creating some sort of impersonation of the brand was present throughout the entire research, it was only during the last design intervention (Image 4.1), when a movie analogy was used in the process of defining the Service Personality (Clatworthy, 2012) that the concept of Relationship Metaphor – and the Brand Character – emerged. On this occasion, the brand was framed as an active partner in the relationship with the customers (Fournier, 1998), through figurative[48] interactions, thus producing a metaphorical representation for the Brand Experience Proposition.

The use of metaphors for portraying the Brand Experience Proposition was essential, for as just mentioned in the prior section, there was no established format for articulating experience descriptors. Accordingly, since the goal was to convey the Brand Experience Proposition to the NSD teams, metaphors have shown to be a great approach to build "a shared mental model" (Dumas, 1994, p.76).

[48] The interactions were translated to a context different to the actual service offering.

> "What better device could we find, therefore, than a metaphor, when we wish to build a shared view of a particular world – the micro-world of the cross-functional team. The sharing of perceptions frees individuals, but more importantly; knowledge, especially tacit knowledge, is 'heaped up'" (Dumas, 1994, p.74).

This view of brands as relationships has also been supported by the literature (Fournier, 1998; Grönroos, 2004; de Chernatony, 2010) – conceptually, it is grounded in the understanding that customer perception of the brand is the result of the sum of past experiences with the branded interactions (Aaker, 1991; Berry, 2000; Semprini, 2006; Keller, 2013). Consequently, the brand is seen as the outcome of the continuous negotiations between the meaning proposition manifested through the qualities and characteristics of the service offerings, and the customers' interpretations of these interactions.

In that sense, from the customers' perspective, the brand image and the brand relationship are the same – both the product of the Remembered Brand Experience (*Theoretical Review* chapter). This also means that the experience the organization wants the customer to have is the same as the relationship they want to foster (Image 3.5). Thus, in describing the desired relationship, the company is also defining a metaphor for the Brand Experience Proposition.

Therefore, since it is the customers' perception that creates value for the customers and for the brand (Aaker, 1991; Vargo & Lusch 2004a, 2008; Kapferer, 2011; Keller, 2013), in order to strengthen the brand, the organization should focus on the relationship it wants to develop, and then, design the service settings in a way that enables its emergence.

In the process of defining the Relationship Metaphor, the Brand Character is the most important part. Advancing on the service personality concept (Clatworthy, 2012), the Brand Character describes who the brand is in the context of the relationship with the customer; by conveying personal features, it contextualizes the personality traits, and how these traits influence the customers – the desired perceptions for each part of the brand character personality. As such, in defining the Brand Character, a customer archetype must be formulated, and ascribed to the relationship.

Building on the Brand Character and the customer archetype, the Relationship Metaphor expresses the Brand Experience Proposition through a figurative account of the relationship between these two personages – the idea is to narrate how the brand acts towards the customers through an

analogy that takes the interactions out of the service context; for example, a financial brand can become a down-to-earth, involved, and handy neighbor (Image 5.6), who has grown up on a farm, and has great tips for home repairs. Accordingly, although the Brand Character defines the core of 'who the brand is', it only it becomes a metaphor for the experience proposition in the context of the relationship.

As conceptual meaning propositions (Klein, 1999; Batey, 2008), brands need to be enacted by the organization in order to make the Brand Character an active partner in the relationship (Fournier, 1998). Since customers have no difficulty in associating human characteristics to the brand (Aaker, 1997), every brand manifestation (Semprini, 2006) can be seen as occurrences through which the brand character is communicated (Fournier, 1998) – hence, in trying to deliver the Brand Experience Proposition, the organization is actually trying to strengthen the relationship between the customers and the Brand Character.

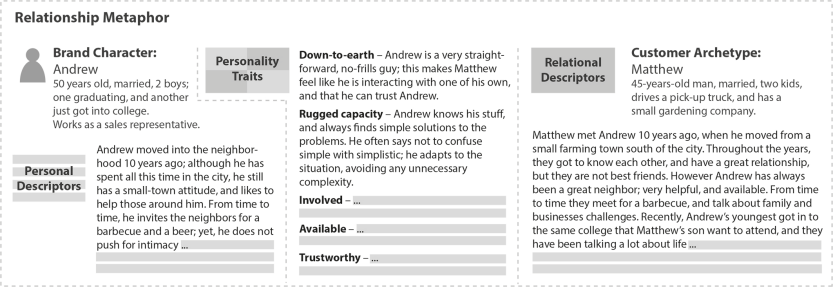

Image 5.6: Simplified example of a Relationship Metaphor for a financial *brand* focused on middle-income workers.

Throughout the current research, the Relationship Metaphor emerged as the most appropriate expression for the Brand Experience Proposition, creating a shared understanding that served to inform the cross-functional teams partaking in the NSD process (Dumas, 1994). This way, so as to convey a full representation of the desired brand relationship – and an adequate metaphor for the Brand Experience Proposition –, the descriptors of the relationship metaphor include the brand character, the customer archetype, and the portrayal of the relational analogy (Image 5.6).

Finally, it is important to note that the personality of the Brand Character is defined not by the individual traits in isolation, but by the sum of all traits; as such, although some traits may seem obvious, or even "no-brainers", it is the composite of the personality that counts. Moreover, the Relationship

Metaphor shown in Image 5.6 is just an example used to convey the overall structure; in a real project, the content would need to be further developed, and detailed.

Design Principles

The Design Principles are prescriptive expressions of the Brand Experience Proposition, meant to facilitate its implementation by the NSD teams. At its core, the main objective is to define patterns that must be consistently enacted in order to enable the development of the Meaningful Brand Experiences[49] (Image 5.7). As mentioned in the *Research Process* chapter, the concept of Design Principles emerged during the second design iteration (Image 4.1) as a suggestion from a colleague; on that occasion, the principles were basically recommendations for how to embed the individual service personality traits in the service settings (prerequisites; Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996).

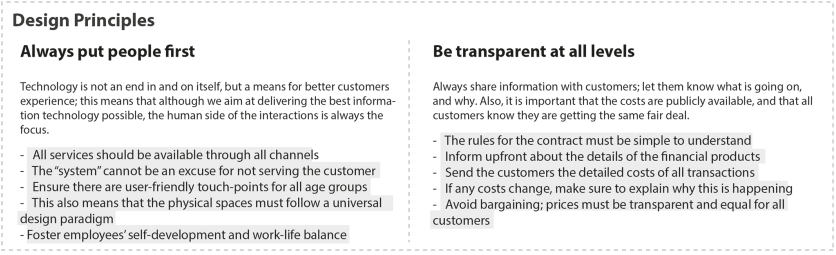

Image 5.7: Simplified example of two *Design Principles* for the *Relationship Metaphor* developed in the prior section.

By the third design iteration (Image 4.1), the Design Principles became the main expression of the Brand Experience Proposition. Then, the Design Principles were grounded not in the individual traits, but in the whole of the personality, generating a comprehensive set of recommendations that were supposed to support the full implementation of the Brand Experience Proposition. As a consequence, the following Brand Experience Manual was far too prescriptive. This failure in conveying the Brand Experience Proposition motivated further research, resulting in the development of the Relationship Metaphor.

It was only by the fourth design iteration (Image 4.1) that the Design Principles were finalized. Similarly to the third iteration, the Design Principles were developed through the clustering of actions necessary to

[49] Service Interactions purposefully designed to deliver the *Brand Experience Proposition.*

bridge the current experience with the desired one. In practical terms[50], this means translating the Relationship Metaphor into the "perfect branded journey", comparing this ideal journey with the current experience, analyzing what needs to be changed and consistently done in order to ensure the delivery of this ideal experience, and then, organizing these insights into actionable instructions (Image 5.7).

One last development that emerged during the *Writing as Reflection* stage of the research (Image 4.1; *Research Process* chapter) was the comprehension that the Design Principles do not necessarily have to express *how* the brand should deliver the experience. As already mentioned, the Brand Experience Manual functions as a whole, and the responsibility for describing *how* the brand should behave towards the customers is from the Relationship Metaphor. As such, the role of the Design Principles became clearer; it is meant to inform *what* needs to be done in order to bridge the gap between the current and the desired service experiences.

This way, in its final version, the Brand Experience Manual balanced the prescriptive role of the Design Principles with the descriptive expressions of the Relationship Metaphor.

Service Moments

The Service Moments are descriptive expressions of the Brand Experience Proposition that exemplify the customers' experiences with a service grounded in the Relationship Metaphor and the Design Principles. Throughout the research, it was noticed that the use of the Service Moments helped not only to convey the desired experience, but it also facilitated the comprehension of what the Brand Experience Manual is about. In that sense, although the idea of building a manual based on Service Moments seems reasonable, it is important to remember that the objective is to enable the translation of the Brand Experience Proposition into new contexts, and not to design the services themselves. As such, an overreliance on exemplary expressions could hinder the development of new applications.

As mentioned previously (section 5.1), so as to articulate the narrative of the ideal customers' experience, the Service Moments follow an intermediary timeframe, which is longer than the service encounters, but shorter than the service journey. Accordingly, the Brand Experience Manual encompasses multiple Service Moments, each conveying a particular service situation – a

[50] For more on how to develop the Design Principles refer to *The Brandslation Process* Section.

sequence of interactions that support a specific service (e.g. opening a bank account, applying for a house mortgage, or choosing a mobile subscription; Image 5.8). This also means that the Service Moments may include more than one service encounter, and different touch-points (Clatworthy, 2011).

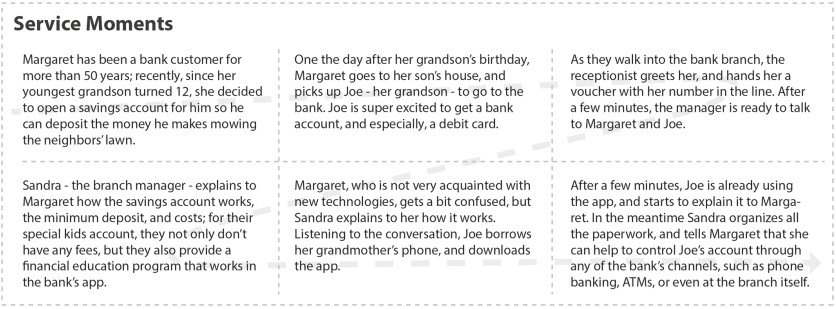

Image 5.8: Simplified example of *Service Moments* for the *Relationship Metaphor* and the *Design Principles* developed in the prior sections.

By expressing the Brand Experience Proposition through clusters of related interactions, the Service Moments have two main purposes: First, as a descriptive expression of the desired customer's experience, it serves as a proxy for the NSD teams to "experience the experience"[51]. Second, by focusing on the service from the use perspective, it explores the sub-journeys within the customer's lifecycle, offering a different frame of reference to the "design object" – the sequence of interactions that must be designed *for* (Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012). This way, the concept of Service Moments transcends the Brand Experience Manual, as it can help to outline the subject of the Service Design process.

Differently to the Relationship Metaphor, and the Design Principles, which are co-created during the Brandslation process workshops, the Service Moments are developed afterwards, through a design-oriented approach (Verganti, 2009), hence, limiting the participation of the organization at the early stage when the plot of the narrative is defined. Since the Service Moments are representations of different use situations, delineating the right sequence of events is crucial. Yet, this process is less complex than it seems, as the demarcation of the Service Moments often happen naturally during the Brandslation process.

Although each Service Moment focuses on one service situation, they are developed in the context of the Brand Experience Manual, as an expression

[51] As often mentioned by Simon Clatworthy.

of the Brand Experience Proposition – therefore, each fragment of the customer's journey is devised as an integrated part of a holistic experience proposition. Moreover, by breaking the overall experience proposition into smaller sections, the Service Moments facilitate the process of designing for the Brand Experience Proposition, and the operationalization of the Service Branding concept.

Concluding remarks

The *Brand* Experience Manual builds on the understanding that the teams responsible for defining the Brand Experience Proposition are often not the same as the ones responsible for the Semantic Transformation (for Experience) process (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012; Section 5.3); in that sense, by informing the design teams what the experience they are designing *for* is (Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012), it bridges the gap between branding and NSD, facilitating the development of the settings that support the service experience, and enabling the Service Branding process.

In the next section, a framework for designing for the Brand Experience Proposition (a.k.a. Semantic Transformation for Experiences) is presented, supporting the 'delivering the brand' part of the Service Branding process.

5.3 DESIGNING FOR BRAND EXPERIENCES

The previous two sections introduced the Brandslation process and the Brand Experience Manual as means to define and communicate the Brand Experience Proposition; yet, as mentioned earlier, the Service Branding process is also concerned with delivering the brand. Accordingly, this section presents the Designing for Brand Experience as a framework that operationalizes the Service Branding process (Image 5.9) through the concept of Semantic Transformation for Experiences – a theoretical approach, which integrates the different scholarships that ground the current research into a comprehensive model that supports the implementation of the Brand Experience Manual, and the development of Brand-based Service Interactions – a.k.a. Meaningful Brand Experiences.

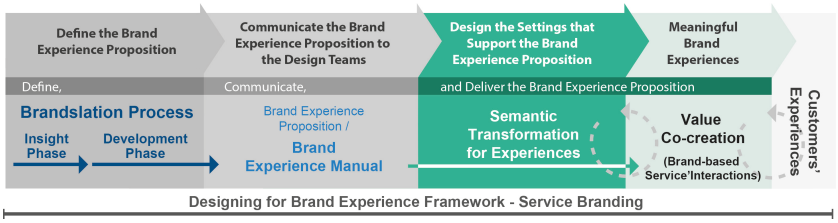

Image 5.9: The *Semantic Transformation for Experiences* facilitates the development of Brand-based Service Interactions, which enables Brand-aligned Customer Experiences.

At the core of the *Designing for Brand Experience* framework, the *Semantic Transformation for Experiences* facilitates the translation of the Brand Experience Proposition into the service settings that support the interactions through which the customers experience the brand. As such, it is responsible for the third part of the Service Branding process: delivering the Brand Experience Proposition. Different to the other two findings (Brandslation process, and Brand Experience Manual), the Semantic Transformation for Experiences is the outcome of a theoretical enquiry. Yet, even though it was not empirically tested, it was developed through an extensive literature review (Creswell, 2009), responding to the inadequacies of the current Semantic Transformation (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012).

Grounding the Semantic Transformation for Experiences

The concept of Designing for Brand Experience builds on the assumption that the brand experience does not necessarily have to be highly experiential (although it can; i.e. experientiality scale, *Theoretical Review* chapter), but convey the right meaning proposition. This perspective is consistent with the phenomenological approach adopted by the current research, which defines experience as *the customer's interpretation of the meanings embedded (purposefully or not) in the qualities and characteristics of the offering, resulting from the perception emerging from any sort of interaction* (*Theoretical Review* chapter). Therefore, it is understood that any sort of interaction may create an experience for the customer (Johnston & Kong, 2011); even those that are "common, frequent, and within the realm of everyday life" (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014, p.2).

In that sense, the meanings communicated through the service interactions (Batey, 2008) are central to the Service Design process, regardless of how extraordinary the propositions are (Arnould & Price, 1993). As Carbone and Haeckel (1994, p.9) note, "engineering an experience begins with the deliberate setting of a targeted customer perception". Hence, building on the

findings presented on *The Brandslation Process* section (5.1), it is understood that the organizations' experience proposition should be grounded in the brand – a Brand Experience Proposition.

As the reflection of the customers' interactions with the service offerings (Grönroos, 2007), the brand operates as a storehouse for meaning associations, defining the brand value (Aaker, 1991; Kapferer, 2011). As a powerhouse of meanings, the brand informs the experience proposition, creating differentiation for the organization (Sherry, 2005; Schultz, 2005). However, in order to be perceived by the customers, the Brand Experience Proposition must be manifested through the service interactions. Accordingly, the role of the New Service Development (NSD) process as the enabler of the Semantic Transformation (for Experiences; Image 3.6; Clatworthy, 2012; Motta-Filho, 2012) is acknowledged as a key tenet for the Designing for Brand Experience framework.

This way, the Designing for Brand Experience framework's goal of facilitating the incorporation of the Brand Experience Proposition – developed through the Brandslation process, and communicated through the Brand Experience Manual – in the service interactions becomes very clear, as does the role of the Semantic Transformation (for Experiences) process (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012) in supporting the development of service settings that facilitate the delivery of Brand-aligned Customer Experiences (Image 5.9). Yet, as previously noticed, the current approach to Semantic Transformation is considered inadequate for the operationalization of Service Branding, as it does not fully acknowledge Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, 2008), and its developments.

In the case of Karjalainen's (2004) conceptualization, the issue is very clear; not only did the author focus on product design, but also, his research was developed before the emergence of Service Dominant Logic. As for Clatworthy's (2012) Semantic Transformation for Services model, the limitations seem to originate from the embryonic nature of the research, which was an early exploration on the topic. Although Clatworthy's (2012) paper offers an important contribution to the research on the link between brand strategy and customer experience, and even though it considers the Service Dominant Logic[52], it focuses on the early stages of the NSD process (the fuzzy front end), and on the design of the service concept, and not so much on the enablers of the service.

[52] Clatworthy (2012, p. 112) mentions that the "… article takes the position that experiences cannot be designed, rather that they can only be designed for".

Differently, the current research builds on the Design for Service approach to Service Design, which focuses on the development of the settings that support the service interactions (Kimbell, 2011a; Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011; Sangiorgi, 2012; Segelström, 2013, Wetter-Edman, 2014). It was the Design for Service literature that elucidated the implications of Service Dominant Logic to Service Design, and to the Semantic Transformation concept – i.e. that the transformation of brand strategy into customers' experiences involves multiple translations; that these processes are handled by different teams; and most notably, that in order to be experienced, the Brand Experience Proposition must be embedded in the settings that support the service interactions – designed *for*.

Thus, the Semantic Transformation process has been defined in the context of Service Branding as *the act of encoding intentional brand meanings into the qualities and characteristics of the settings that enable the service experiences* (*The Brandslation Process* section; *Theoretical Review* chapter), and termed *Semantic Transformation for Experiences*. Moreover, it is important to note that although the concept of *Semantic Transformation for Experiences* is central to the *Service Branding* process, they are not the same – the former is responsible for the development of the settings that support the *Brand Experience Proposition*, which is only a part of the latter (Image 5.9).

Operationalizing Service Branding

Designing for Brand Experience is proposed in this thesis as a framework that operationalizes Service Branding – the *process of translating the brand's conceptual meaning proposition into customer experiences through tangible service interactions* (*Theoretical Review* chapter). As such, in order to be feasible, the framework must incorporate the Brand Experience Manual, as it is imperative that the teams responsible for the Semantic Transformation for Experiences know the Brand Experience Proposition. Accordingly, the Designing for Brand Experience framework is composed of three steps – defining, communicating, and delivering the *Brand Experience Proposition* – , each facilitated by a finding presented in this chapter (Table 5.3).

Section	Finding
5.1	The *Brandslation* process, which collaboratively co-creates the *Brand Experience Proposition*
5.2	The *Brand Experience Manual*, which informs the teams responsible for the development of the service offerings what the experience they are designing for is; the *Brand Experience Proposition*
5.3	The *Semantic Transformation for Experiences*, which proposes a theoretical approach to embedding the *Brand Experience Proposition* into the qualities and characteristics of the settings that support the service interactions

Table 5.3: Insights that support the Service Branding process.

By integrating the Brandslation process, the Brand Experience Manual, and the Semantic Transformation for Experiences, the Designing for Brand Experience framework connects the Branding strategic capabilities, with Service Design (more specifically, the Design for Service approach) focus on the development of customers' experiences, operationalizing the Service Branding process.

The triple Semantic Transformation[53]

The Service Branding process can be understood as a sequence of three Semantic Transformations; the first translates the brand strategy into a Brand Experience Proposition, the second translates this experience proposition into the settings that support the service interactions, and the third is the actual interactions, which take place during the service provision (Evenson & Dubberly, 2010; Clatworthy, 2012). Additionally, there is also the Semantic Attribution (Karjalainen, 2007), which is the phenomenological process through which the customers decode the meaning communicated through the service interactions (McCracken, 1986; Kazmierczak, 2003; Table 5.4).

[53] A broader definition of Semantic Transformation is used here.

Semantic Transformation	Description
Brandslation process	Translates the brand strategy into an experiential proposition for the brand – the *Brand Experience Proposition*
Semantic Transformation for Experiences	Translates the *Brand Experience Proposition* into the settings that support the service – grounded in the NSD process, it is concerned with the development, and implementation of the *service concept*
Value Co-Creation	Following Evenson and Dubberly (2010), it is understood that the actual service is 'designed' (co-created) during the interaction – the last Semantic Transformation, as also noticed by Clatworthy (2012)
Semantic Attribution	By building on a triadic approach to semiotics (Lencastre & Côrte-Real, 2007), Karjalainen (2007) acknowledges the phenomenological nature of the meaning attribution process

Table 5.4: Insights that support the *Service Branding* process.

From these four translation processes, only the Brandslation, and the Semantic Transformation for Experiences are controllable; the Value Co-Creation process can be managed, but only indirectly, through the design of the enablers of the service interactions, and the Semantic Attribution is out of the organization's control (Verhoef et al., 2009) – yet, as a response to the service interactions, it can be influenced through the qualities and characteristics of the offering.

> "… organizations cannot control the ultimate customer experience because experiences are dependent on many personal and contextual factors. At best, organizations create or stage the prerequisites that enable customers to have the desired experiences" (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2011, p.65)

Moreover, since the teams responsible for the development of the Brand Experience Proposition are often not the same as the teams responsible for the Semantic Transformation for Experiences, it is important to acknowledge the role of the Brand Experience Manual in informing the Brand Experience Proposition to the NSD teams, facilitating the development of Brand-based Service Interactions. In that sense, the Brand Experience Manual links the first and the second Semantic Transformations (Image 5.10), being a key component of the Service Branding process.

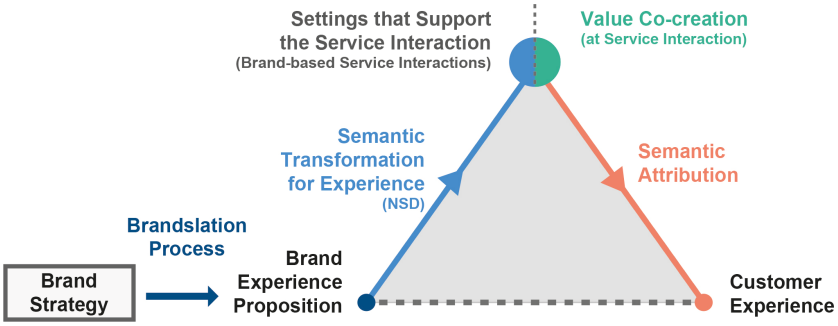

Image 5.10: The multiple semantic transformations across the Designing for Brand Experience framework (Table 5.4).

By recognizing the distinctions between the Brandslation process and the Semantic Transformation for Experiences, the Designing for Brand Experience framework adds to Karjalainen's (2004) and Clatworthy's (2012) models, offering tools to define the Brand Experience Proposition. Moreover, since it is understood that an experience cannot be designed, but only the settings that support the service – designed *for* (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, Vargo et al., 2008; Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012) –, the Semantic Transformation for Experiences focuses not only on the development of the *service concept*, but also on the design and the implementation of the infrastructure that enables its delivery.

Although Clatworthy's (2012, p.112) Semantic Transformation for Services model also acknowledges that "experiences cannot be designed, rather … designed *for*" (emphasis added), the author's focus on the Value Co-Creation process (Table 5.4) results in a construct similar to Evenson and Dubberly's (2010) view of service as performances designed in-use, and does not provide guidance on how to design these service enablers, only recognizing that value is co-created during the service provision – an understanding also adopted by the Designing for Brand Experience framework.

This limitation is associated with the interpretation of the 7th fundamental premise of Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, FP7), and may been influenced by the emerging nature of the research on the link between Service Design and Service Dominant Logic. Differently, the Semantic Transformation for Experiences understands 'designing *for'* as the development of a "platform for action with which diverse actors will engage over time" (Kimbell, 2011a, p.45); in other words, the systems and processes that support the service concept (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996).

Accordingly, the Semantic Transformation for Experiences process starts by translating the Brand Experience Proposition into a service concept – a.k.a. Service Experience Proposition –, and then, developing the settings that support the emergence of this proposition. Later in this section, a process grounded in Edvardsson and Olsson's (1996) New Service Development model (Patrício et al., 2011) is proposed for the Semantic Transformation for Experiences (Image 5.12).

Towards a Semantic Transformation for Experiences model

The Semantic Transformation for Experiences, which is the core of the Designing for Brand Experience framework*,* builds on different scholarships. Besides the foundation on the Semantic Transformation (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012), subjects such as New Service Development (NSD), Service Design, Service Dominant Logic, and Design for Service also contribute to the operationalization of the concept. As already introduced, the main distinction between Semantic Transformation for Experiences and Clatworthy's (2012) approach – the Semantic Transformation for Services – is the interpretation of the 7th fundamental premise of Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), and its implications for the conceptualization of 'designing *for'*.

Building on Design for Service (Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012), the Semantic Transformation for Experiences concept understands that although the service experience cannot be designed, it can be designed *for* through the settings that support the customer's interaction (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). In that sense, it is important to note that this interpretation does not change the understanding that the Semantic Transformation (for Experiences) takes place during NSD; much to the opposite, it only broadens the scope of the Semantic Transformation for Experiences in the NSD process, extending its role from the front end, where the *service concept* is developed, to the implementation phase (Tatikonda & Zeithaml, 2002).

Traditionally, the NSD literature differentiates the "overall process of developing new service offerings" (Goldstein et al., 2002, p.122), to the more specific service design process. More recently, with the development of Service Design as an autonomous discipline (Blomkvist et al., 2010), a clearer distinction between service design as a part of the NSD process, and Service Design as an approach to service innovation has emerged (Yu & Sangiorgi, 2014). As an approach to innovation, it is argued that Service Design can help the NSD process with the development of the service

concept, with "human-centered design methods" that enable the collaboration with customers and employees (Yu & Sangiorgi, 2014, p.202), and with a holistic approach that facilitates the coordination of multiple touch-points (Kimbell, 2009a; Clatworthy, 2011; Polaine et al., 2012).

Yet, Service Design research also has its limitations, especially when it comes to the back end of the NSD process. Although "there is growing evidences that service designers are working for service implementation" (Yu & Sangirogi, 2014, p.202), the academic literature has not followed up with the most advanced practices. In a way, it can be said that Service Design research has focused on the development of *Customer-based Experience Prepositions*, through co-creative, iterative, and visual methods (Moritz, 2005; Kimbell, 2009a, 2009b; Stickdorn, 2010a, 2010b; Clatworthy, 2011), whilst neglecting its delivery.

Such detachment from the implementation of the *service concept* is particularly worrisome for the current research, as it hinders the operationalization of the Service Branding process, which is also concerned with the delivery of the Brand Experience Proposition. It was only with the development of the Design for Service approach (Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012; Segelström, 2013; Wetter-Edman, 2014) that the link between the design and the implementation of the service concept has been restored. Building on Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, 2008), Design for Service "acknowledges the indeterminacy of services as an object of design" (Sangiorgi, 2012, p.98-99), which cannot be predetermined, nor designed (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011), and as such, the focus is upon the design of the enablers of the service interactions.

Designing for Value Co-creation

Since value is co-created in the use context, during the interactions between the companies' and the customers' *value networks*[54] (Vargo & Akaka, 2009) – dynamic configurations of resources that include "people, organizations, shared information (language, laws, measures, methods), and technology" (Maglio et al., 2009, p.399), which are arranged so as to render the service (Vargo, 2008) –, it is understood that both customers and organizations are resource integrators (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, FP9). Yet, although it is the customers (beneficiary) that determine the value (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, FP10), it is the organization that must design the value proposition, integrating their resources into service offerings (Edvardsson & Olsson,

[54] Service ecosystems – "resource-integration networks" (Vargo & Akaka, 2009, p.38).

1996; Vargo et al., 2008). Once the settings that support the value co-creation are in place, the customers may bring their own value network to interact with the organizations' – it is the service systems that ground the value networks that enable value co-creation (Wetter-Edman et al., 2014):

> "A service system can be described as a configuration of actors, resources, and technology designed to enable and direct value co-creation – and innovation – resulting in the intended value-in-context for the involved actors… Thus, value co-creation is based on how resources are being integrated and used" (Wetter-Edman et al., 2014, p.106).

This way, Design for Service focuses on the value proposition (service concept), and on the resources that enable this proposition to emerge, and co-create value. By emphasizing the customer's experience, Service Design (and more precisely Design for Service) acts as an integrative discipline that defines not only what the service offering is, but also how the service settings should be arranged in order to deliver the intended experience. However, despite Design for Service's efforts to facilitate the development of the infrastructure that supports the service, it is the Multilevel Service Design (MSD) method (Patrício et al., 2011) that provides the best link between Service Design and NSD. By proposing an approach to the design of the different components of the service prerequisites (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996), MSD facilitates the operationalization of the design concept.

Yet, although MSD strengthens the link between Service Design and NSD, it does not emphasize the implementation processes. In that sense, the designers' role as managers, helping with the "further development and implementation of the chosen concept" (Gloppen, 2012, p.14), connect the last missing link between *Service Design* and the *back end of the service development* (Yu & Sangiorgi, 2014). Moreover, since services are complex entities, it is understood that no single discipline is capable of comprising all the knowledge necessary for the implementation of most services. Hence, by recognizing the limitations of the Service Design discipline, the role of the service designer as a champion of the service concept, ensuring its adequate implementation, must be acknowledged.

Introducing the Semantic Transformation for Experiences

The Semantic Transformation for Experiences is proposed in this chapter as a Service Design process that facilitates the translation of the Brand Experience Proposition into the Brand-based Service Interactions. Building on Design for Service, it understands that a service experience can only be designed

through the settings that support its provision. As a concept, the Semantic Transformation for Experiences must be understood in the right context – defined as *the act of encoding intentional brand meanings into the qualities and characteristics of the settings that enable the service experiences*, it acknowledges the role of design (and of the designer) as being responsible for the process of translating concepts into material manifestations (Dumas, 1994), embedding the brand meanings into the service interactions settings (Kazmierczak, 2003; Clatworthy, 2012).

At the core of the Semantic Transformation for Experiences concept, the triadic approach to semiotics (Lencastre & Côrte-Real, 2007; Santaella, 2008) serves as the theoretical foundation for the current research, grounding the process through which the brand is experienced (Image 3.3; 5.10). As a process, Semantic Transformation for Experiences builds on the New Service Development (NSD) model proposed by Edvardsson and Olsson (1996). Yet, it also acknowledges the advancements prompted by Service Design, and Service Dominant Logic. Hence, similarly to Multilevel Service Design (MSD), the focus is on the development of the *service concept*, and on the design of *processes*, *interfaces*, and *systems* that enable the delivery of that proposition. Additionally, the implementation process is also considered through Gloppen's (2012) perspective on design management.

The Semantic Transformation for Experiences process

The Semantic Transformation for Experiences process starts with the development of the Service Experience Proposition – *a service concept grounded in the Brand Experience Proposition*. Co-created through a traditional Service Design approach, this "Service Experience Proposition" defines *what* the service offering is, and *how* it will be delivered, describing the overall service journey, and outlining the different touch-points necessary to support the service. Essentially, the Service Experience Proposition is the value proposition the organization is making to the customers, and as such, it must be grounded in cluster of integrated resources that enables value to be co-created in the interaction with the customers (Vargo et al., 2008).

Hence, in order to operationalize the Service Experience Proposition, the process through which the service is delivered must be designed, so that the required resources are integrated in the proper sequence. Whilst planning the service process, the organizational capabilities, and the limitations of the internal systems must be considered – as Edvardsson and Olsson (1996, p.157) note, "the service process and service system should be developed interactively on the basis of the possibilities and limitations of the latter".

Consequently, the design process needs to be iterative, as the service concept and the service process will need to adjust to the restraints imposed by the service systems.

Moreover, it is important to note that although the *service process* and the *service journey* are closely related, they are not the same. Whereas the latter describes the sequence of interactions through which the customer experiences the service, being already defined during the development of the service concept, the former consists of a "description of the various activities needed to generate the service" (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996, p.148) – the service encounters, and the back end support. As such, since the service process addresses both the front and the back stage of the service delivery, it should also tackle the service journey – e.g. through service blueprinting (Shostack, 1984; Patrício et al., 2011).

In that context, touch-points are seen as mediators – *interfaces between the service infrastructure and the customers, which materialize the value proposition, enabling its realization through the service interactions* (*Theoretical Review* chapter; Secomandi & Snelders, 2011). Throughout the customer's journey, every interaction – either direct or indirect (Nysveen et al., 2013) is mediated by a touch-point (Image 5.11). Accordingly, once the service process is defined, the interfaces that enable the customer's interaction must be designed – although the Service Experience Proposition outlines the touch-points, its goal is to express the desired experience, and not to detail the service interfaces.

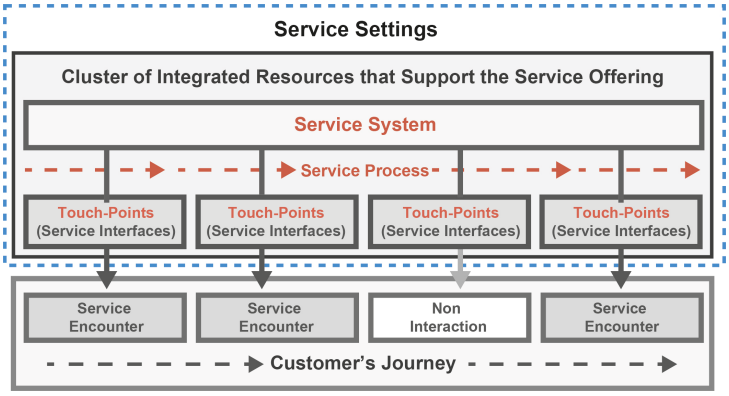

Image 5.11 – The Settings that enable the Service Interactions.

After the development of the touch-points, the service systems – "the resources that are required by or are available to the service process in order

to realize the service concept" (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996, p.148), and that support the service interfaces (Image 5.11) – must be designed. Also, similarly to the service process, the design of the touch-points and the service systems are mutually dependent. Although ideally the service systems would be developed in order to deliver the service concept, in reality, it is often the case that the technologies, strategies, and internal capabilities of the organization impose limitations to the operationalization of the Service Experience Proposition.

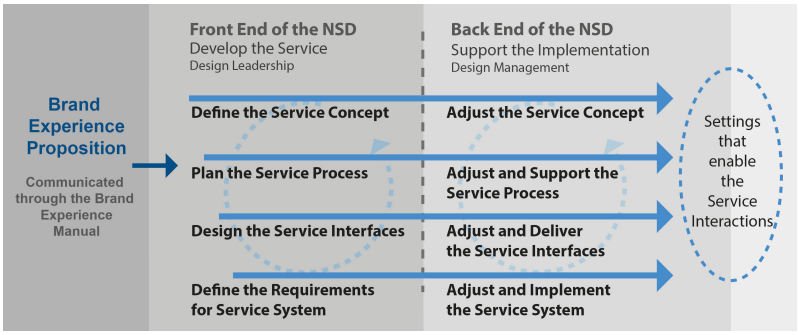

Image 5.12 – Semantic Transformation for Experiences process.

Once the *service concept*, *process*, *interfaces* and *system* are designed, the back end of the NSD process begins. Then, the designer's role as a leader, developing the Service Experience Proposition, and facilitating the design of the settings that support its delivery – in cooperation with the organization – changes to that of a design manager, assisting the professionals involved in the implementation process, ensuring that the service concept will be delivered (Gloppen, 2012). As previously mentioned, hardly any discipline can support the implementation of complex systems such as services. Hence, in order to enable the delivery of the Service Experience Proposition, cooperation with other fields is essential. In that sense, Service Design must act as an integrative discipline that coordinates the development and implementation of the service concept.

By integrating the different theoretical perspectives reviewed throughout this section (and further elaborated on the *Theoretical Review* chapter), the Semantic Transformation for Experiences process (Image 5.12) facilitates the translation of the Brand Experience Proposition into Brand-Based Service Interactions, supporting the delivery of Brand-Based Customers' Experience, operationalizing the third part of the Service Branding process. Next, Designing for Brand Experience is presented as a framework that facilitates the Service Branding process.

The Designing for Brand Experience Framework

The Designing for Brand Experience framework operationalizes the Service Branding process by integrating the Brandslation process, the Brand Experience Manual, and the Semantic Transformation for Experiences (Image 5.13) into one comprehensive model. In doing so, it also answers to the General Research Question (Table 5.1), explaining how Service Design approaches (Table 5.5) can enable the transformation of brand strategy into customers' experiences through the triple Semantic Transformation (Table 5.4) – a conceptualization central to the Service Branding concept, which explains the brand communication process.

Semantic Transformation	Service Design Approach
Brandslation process	As process meant to define the *Brand Experience Proposition*, the Brandslation is essentially grounded in *Service Design*
Semantic Transformation for Experiences	As presented in this section, the *Semantic Transformation for Experiences* builds on the *Design for Service* and *Multilevel Service Design* approaches to Service Design
Value Co-creation	The *Value Co-creation* process is understood in the context of the triple Semantic Transformation similarly to the conceptualization of *Design for Service* proposed by Evenson and Dubberly (2010).

Table 5.5: Service Design approaches used to operationalize the *triple Semantic Transformation.*

Hence, the objective of the Designing for Brand Experience framework is to convey the brand proposition to the customers through the service interactions, and as such, it can be understood as an Experience Management approach, where the brand defines the experiential goal (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994) of the service that is being designed *for*[55]. Yet, since the customers' interpretations of the *brand meanings* are co-created during their interactions with the brand manifestations (Semprini, 2006; Diller et al., 2008), the organization can only influence customers' perceptions indirectly through the design of the settings that facilitate the service interactions. This also means that the last Semantic Transformation, the Value Co-creation process (Table 5.5), takes place during the service interaction (Clatworthy, 2012).

As noted by Shostack (1982), services are capacities (potential energy), stored resources that co-create value in interaction with the customer (kinetic

[55] The service is thus the means through which the *Brand Experience Proposition* is delivered.

energy). In that sense, services are 'designed' (co-created) in use, during the provision, and Designing for Service is understood as the meta-activity of designing the structures that enable the design of the service during the interaction (Evenson & Dubberly, 2010). Accordingly, since the Value Co-creation process cannot be designed, but only designed *for*, being essentially outside the organizations' control, the *Designing for Brand Experience* framework focuses on the other two Semantic Transformations – the Brandslation process, and the Semantic Transformation for Experiences (Table 5.5) –, which are manageable.

As presented previously, Brandslation is the Service Design process through which the Brand Experience Proposition is defined – although an experience cannot be designed, it can be devised as a conceptual proposition. Analogously, an experience can also be designed *for*, by developing the settings that support the service – i.e. through the Semantic Transformation for Experiences. Connecting these two processes is the Brand Experience Manual, which conveys the Brand Experience Proposition to the teams responsible for the Semantic Transformation for Experiences, ensuring that the service interactions are aligned with the brand proposition. This way, the Designing for Brand Experience framework goes as follows:

- First, the *Brandslation* process translates the traditional brand descriptors into a *Brand Experience Proposition*, through the process presented in Section 5.1
- Next, the *Brand Experience Proposition* is communicated to the design teams through the *Brand Experience Manual*, a concept presented in Section 5.2
- Finally, the design teams, in cooperation with the organization, facilitate the translation of the *Brand Experience Proposition* into Brand-based Service Interactions through the *Semantic Transformation for Experiences* process – presented in the current Section (5.3)

In doing so, the *Designing for Brand Experience* framework supports the Value Co-Creation process, ensuring that the Customer Experience is as aligned with the Brand Proposition as possible (Image 5.13).

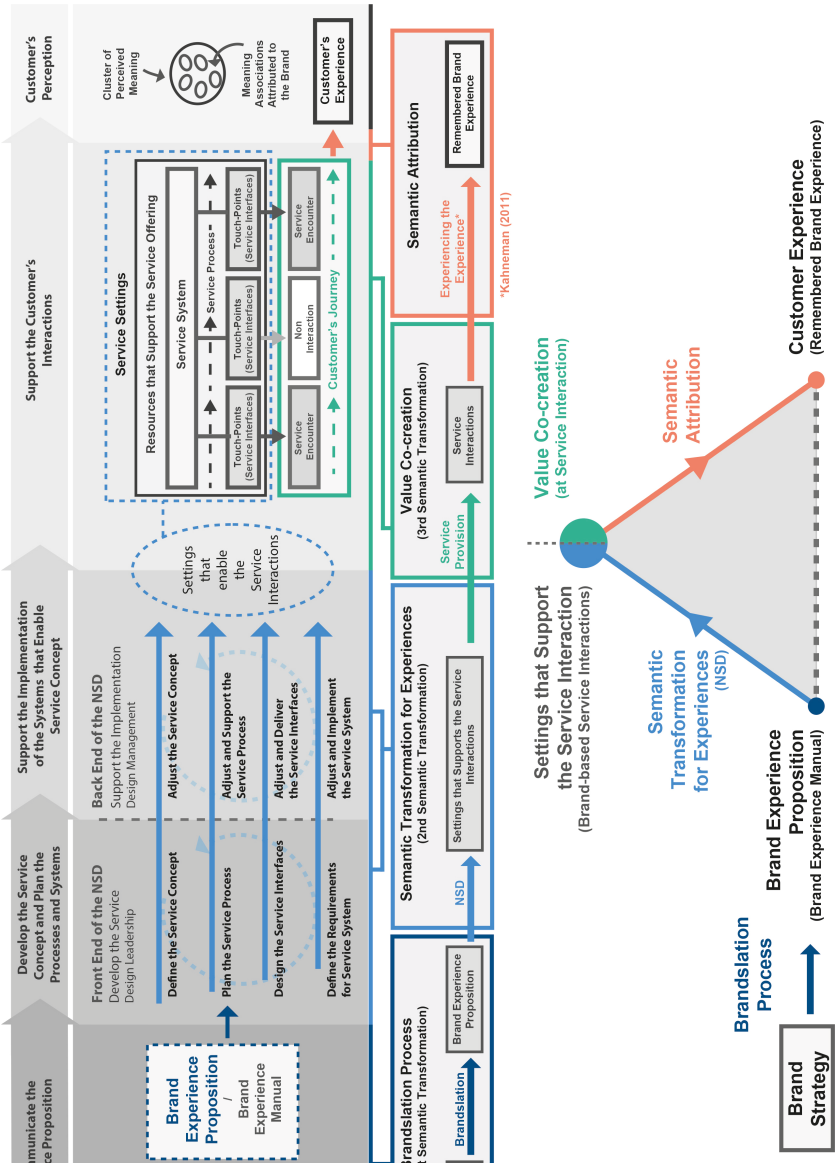

Image 5.13 – The Designing for Brand Experience framework.

Concluding remarks

The Semantic Transformation for Experiences has been presented in this section as a theoretical approach that integrates different academic research, enabling the process of designing for the Brand Experience Proposition – the delivering the brand part of the Service Branding process. Then, Designing for Brand Experience was introduced as a comprehensive framework that combines the current research's findings, operationalizing the entirety of the Service Branding process. By combining the Brandslation process with the Brand Experience Manual and the Semantic Transformation for Experiences, Designing for Brand Experience also answers to the General Research Question, which is further discussed in the following section, which also introduces the Theoretical and Practical implications of the current research.

5.4 CONTRIBUTIONS: CONTEXTUALIZING THE FINDINGS

The research reported in this thesis explored how to translate brands into customers' experiences. Starting with the Semantic Transformation concept (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012), it was understood from the early stages of the explorations that in order to be experienced, the brand must be expressed through tangible artifacts with which the customers may interact – in the case of services, the touch-points at the service interactions. As Edvardsson and Olsson (1996, p.151) note, "the intangible service becomes tangible for the customer in the encounter with individual staff" – or other types of touch-points. Accordingly, service interactions are understood as tangible, yet ephemeral events, that exist in the moment of their performance, and cease to exist right after it (*Theoretical Review* chapter).

Consequently, the touch-points have been defined as the *interfaces between the service infrastructure and the customers, which materialize the value proposition, enabling its realization through the service interactions* (*Theoretical Review* chapter). Since the touch-points are seen as interfaces, they must be grounded in *processes* and *systems* that enable their performances (Image 5.11). This means that the object of the Service Design process is not only the touch-points, but also the whole settings that support the delivery of the desired customer experiences (Wetter-Edman et al., 2014); hence, the design of the enablers of the service offering (*processes*, *systems*, and *interfaces*) is central to the delivery of the brand proposition, and consequently, to the Service Branding process.

As argued throughout this chapter (more on the *Theoretical Review* chapter), it is during the New Service Development (NSD) process that the brand descriptors are translated into the settings that support the service provision. In that sense, although it would be expected that the teams responsible for the Semantic Transformation (for Experiences) have an adequate input regarding the experience they are designing for, it was noticed during the early explorations (Motta-Filho, 2012) that contemporary brand manuals were not adequate for the design of service offerings. As such, the current research started with the aim of developing a Brand Experience Manual as a tool that bridges the gap between *Branding* and *Service Design*, facilitating the development of Brand-based Service Interaction – a.k.a. Meaningful Brand Experiences.

However, the same problem with poor brand usability (Abbing, 2010) that hindered the Service Design processes also affected the elaboration of the Brand Experience Manual. Therefore, Brandslation was developed as a Service Design process meant to define the Brand Experience Proposition, informing the content of the Brand Experience Manual. As presented in the Research Process chapter, through a series of action research iterations (Susman & Evered, 1978; Crouch & Pearce, 2012), the Brandslation process was designed, a format for communicating the Brand Experience Proposition described, and a structure for the Brand Experience Manual developed. This way, processes of defining, and of communicating the Brand Experience Proposition were settled.

Yet, once these findings were contextualized in the light of the contemporary approach to semantic transformation (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012), it was noticed that said approach did not support the implementation of the Brand Experience Manual, nor the operationalization of Service Branding process, for it did not acknowledge the indeterminacy of services discussed in this chapter – i.e. services cannot be designed, but only the settings that support their provision (Sangiorgi, 2012). Accordingly, the current research advanced towards the concept of Semantic Transformation for Experiences, integrating different approaches to Service Design (Table 5.5) into a comprehensive model that facilitates the translation of the Brand Experience Proposition into Meaningful Brand Experiences[56], enabling the last part of the Service Branding process – delivering the brand.

[56] *Interactive Brand Experience Settings that are purposefully designed to deliver the Brand Experience Proposition through its qualities and characteristics* (Image 3.3).

This way, in developing the Designing for Brand Experience framework (Image 5.13), the current research explored the different steps necessary to enable the Service Branding process: translate the traditional brand descriptors into a Brand Experiences Proposition (*Brandslation* process; Section 5.1); communicate *the Brand Experiences Proposition to the teams responsible for the development of Meaningful Brand Experiences* (the *Brand Experience Manual*; Section 5.2); and the actual process of designing *for* (Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012) the Brand Experiences Proposition (the *Semantic Transformation for Experiences;* Section 5.3). In doing so, the three Specific Questions were answered, as was the General Research Question (Table 5.1).

On the Semantic Transformation for Experiences

In terms of theory, the main contribution of this research was the development of a Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, 2008) approach to the Semantic Transformation concept (Karjalainen, 2004, Clatworthy, 2012). In that sense, the Semantic Transformation for Experiences proposes a theoretical model for translating the Brand Experience Proposition into the settings that enable Brand-Based Customer Experiences, integrating different scholarships on service research (e.g. New Service Development, Service Design, Service Dominant Logic, Design for Service, and Multilevel Service Design). In a certain way, the Semantic Transformation for Experiences process can be understood as a Design for Service (Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012) approach, where the service is the means to deliver the Brand Experience Proposition.

Another way of understanding the Semantic Transformation for Experiences is through the value co-creation process. Since value emerges from the interactions between the social actors' (e.g. the customers' and companies') value networks (Vargo, 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2016), the role of Semantic Transformation for Experiences is to integrate the company's resources in a way that they may interact with the customers' networks, co-creating (Vargo et al., 2008; Maglio et al., 2009) value in the use context (Wetter-Edman, 2011). As such, the focus shifts from the design of services as value propositions, to also include the development of the processes and systems that enable its delivery through the service interactions.

This approach focused on the service systems build on the conceptualization of service as "the application of competences … for the benefit of another" (Vargo et al., 2008, p.145), where service is "the fundamental basis of exchange" (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p.7, FP1). Since a company cannot

provide a service, but only the settings that enable its realization (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996) – for value is co-created in the interaction between the actors' value networks (Vargo, 2008; Maglio et al., 2009; Vargo & Akaka, 2009) – the focus of the value co-creating activities falls on the service systems that support these value networks: the arrangement of integrated resources (capacities) that enable the interactions with other value networks, facilitating the value co-creation process (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Maglio et al., 2009; Vargo & Akaka, 2009).

As Vargo and Akaka (2009, p.38) note, "the idea of the customer as a co-creator is tied to the identification of all parties as resources integrators". This means that each stakeholder has its own value network, which they bring to the service interaction; yet, value can only be co-created if these networks interact properly – "… service involves at least two entities, one applying competence and another integrating the applied competences with other resources (value-co-creation) and determining benefit" (Maglio et al., 2009, p. 399). Hence, in designing the service concept, the customers' value constellations (Normann & Ramirez, 1994) must be considered; consequently, the role of customer participation in the design of the value proposition must also be acknowledged (Wetter-Edman et al., 2014).

It is the value proposition that defines the structure of the service systems – it starts by making a value co-creation proposal to another value network; once the other entity agrees with this proposition, the service systems must deliver the proposal (Maglio et al., 2009). Therefore, similarly to the design of the service concept, the value proposition must consider the systems that enable its provision; yet, differently to the NSD (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996) approach, these systems are not restricted to the organizations, but it also comprises the customers' value networks (i.e. the value proposition must consider customers' resources). In that sense, the Semantic Transformation for Experiences suggests that the development of the Service Experience Proposition adopts traditional co-creative Service Design practices, involving multiple stakeholders.

After the definition of the Service Experience Proposition, the focus changes to the design of the settings that enable the service provision – the processes through which the service is delivered, the interfaces that facilitate the interactions, and the systems that support the service offering (Vargo & Akaka, 2009; Patrício et al., 2011; Wetter-Edman et al., 2014). This emphasis on the enablers of the service experience is the main difference between traditional Service Design, and the approaches grounded in the Service Dominant Logic (e.g. Design for Service, Multilevel Service Design).

Finally, the Semantic Transformation for Experiences also adopts the view of designers as managers that ensure the implementation of the service concept (Gloppen, 2012) as a way to tackle to the back end of the NSD process.

This way, by integrating different theoretical perspectives into a model that enables the translation of the Brand Experience Proposition into the settings that support a brand-based customer experience, the Semantic Transformation for Experiences facilitates the 'delivering the brand' part of the Service Branding process. By acknowledging the influence of Service Dominant Logic, it shifts the focus towards the enablers of the value co-creation process, further developing the Semantic Transformation (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012) concept. Finally, by exploring the role of the value co-creation networks, the Semantic Transformation for Experiences advances the Designing for Service approach, pointing towards a Designing for Value Co-Creation (Wetter-Edman et al., 2014) model.

On Experience and Brand Experience

As a concept, experience can be defined in terms of different perspectives: perception (Helkkula, 2011), interaction (Kahneman, 2011), and offering (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999). In this monograph, a phenomenological interpretation is adopted, and experience is defined as "*the customer's interpretation of the meanings embedded (purposefully or not) in the qualities and characteristics of the offering, resulting from the perception emerging from any sort of interaction"* (*Theoretical Review* chapter). Such a definition also implies that an experience is the outcome of an interaction – as Sundbo and Sørensen (2013a, p.2) note, an "experience is something that happens in peoples' minds, it is determined by external stimuli". In other words, this means that it is the experience of the experiencing-self informs the remembered experience (Kahneman, 2011).

However, the most controversial definition is that of experiences as a category of economic offering (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999) – which focuses on staging extraordinary experiences (Arnould & Price, 1993) –, as it is understood that experiences emerge even from the most mundane interactions (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014). Furthermore, a phenomenological view of experience also comprises the 'experience as an offering' perspective, as the focus is upon the customer's perception, where any sort of interaction is accounted for. Another essential characteristic of the description of experiences adopted by this thesis is the understanding of what *a phenomenological experience means* – indeed a phenomenological view implies perception; yet, the conceptualization of that perception influences

not only the basic comprehension of the concept, but also informs how to communicate an experience.

In that sense, as the aforementioned definition suggests, experiences are seen as clusters of perceived meanings (Image 3.1) resulting from the interactions with the service offering; they are not binary evaluations (Kahneman & Riis, 2005), satisfaction (Pullman & Gross, 2004), nor perceived quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Consequently, experiences are understood as conveyors of meaning propositions (McCracken, 1986; Batey, 2008), where the experientiality degree (Image 3.2) of the offering is defined by this proposition – e.g. the service interactions can be designed to convey a premium service, a quirky image, or the perception of being super cost effective. Even if the organization does not purposefully manage the customer's experience, a perception will still emerge, and meanings will be attributed to the organization, and to its brand.

This means that in managing the customers' experiences, an experiential target should be defined (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994); it is this target that defines the qualities and characteristics of the service offering, creating differentiation from the competitors – otherwise, all organizations would be competing either on price, or premium experiences. Hence, as presented though this monograph, this thesis sees the brand as the best source of meaning proposition for the experience. One way of understanding the role of brands as the experience proposition is through the relationship they build with customers over the years, where the brand acts as a storehouse for the customer's past interactions with the service offering (Sherry, 2005).

Since brand value (Kapferer 2011) emerges from the meanings the customers associate with the brand – and more specifically, from the influence that these associations have on customer behavior (Calkins, 2005) –, in trying to foster the brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2013), the organization should focus on strengthening these associations by consistently delivering it through the different service interactions. Furthermore, as previously discussed in this thesis, the customers' perceptions of the brand also reflect the organizations' capabilities manifested through the service interactions; "*the brand is a reflection of the organization's value proposition, their relationship with the customers, and of their internal capabilities*" (*Theoretical Review* chapter.)

Accordingly, the brand can be conceptualized in terms of triadic semiotics (Lencastre & Côrte-Real, 2007; Santaella, 2008): it is a meaning proposition that defines the qualities and characteristics of the service offering; an interaction through which the customers experience the proposition; and a

cluster of associations linked to the brand name, similar to the experience of the remembering self (Image 3.3). Moreover, since a brand interaction does not presume consumption (Nysveen et al., 2013), any direct or indirect contact with a brand manifestation conveys the brand meaning to the customer (*Theoretical Review* chapter), and generates an experience. Consequently, a Meaningful Brand Experience does not necessarily have to be highly experiential (i.e. extraordinary experience; Arnould & Price, 1993), but convey the right meaning proposition through the brand interactions.

This conceptualization of experiences as the customers' interpretations of the meanings embedded in the qualities and characteristics of the service offering grounds the Service Branding process in the Semantic Transformation for Experiences, as it is understood that brand proposition is delivered through the service interactions (Image 3.3). It also implies that the Brand Experience can be designed *for*, through the settings that enable the service provision, where the qualities and characteristics of the interactions are planned so as to convey the Brand Experience Proposition. Finally, viewing experiences as clusters of meaning association (Image 3.1) also supported the development the Brand Experience Manual.

On the Relationship Metaphor

One particular challenge faced by the current research was finding how to express an experience proposition (i.e. the Brand Experience Proposition*)*; in that sense, a metaphorical approach was used as a way of creating "a shared mental model" among the actors involved in the service development process (Dumas, 1994, p.76). Yet, an adequate kind of metaphor emerged only during the last design intervention (Image 4.1), when a movie analogy was used to define the service personality (Clatworthy, 2012) – on that occasion, it was noticed that framing the brand as an active partner in the relationship with the customers produced an appropriate representation of the meaning associations the organization wanted the customers to perceive.

In theoretical terms, customer perception of the brand – the brand image – can be understood as the product of the customers' past experiences with the service offering (Grönroos, 2007; Kapferer, 2011; Keller, 2013). Accordingly, the brand is conceptualized as the outcome of the relationships that emerge from the continuous negotiations between the organization's propositions, which are realized through the service interaction, and the customers' experiences (Image 3.5). As the customers engage with the brand over the service interactions, the brand expresses its personality through the marketing actions (Fournier, 1998) – as long as the brand behaves as an

active partner, the customers can build a relationship with the brand (de Chernatony, 2010).

Since the brand relationship is a reflection of the customers' experience with the service offerings, it can also be used to convey the experience proposition the organization is making to the customers. As such, it is understood that the Brand Experience Proposition – the experience the organization wants the customer to have – can be expressed in terms of the *brand relationship* the organization wants to foster; as mentioned in the *Theoretical Review* chapter:

> "… in trying to deliver the Brand Experience Proposition to the customer, the organization is actually trying to reinforce the relationship between the customers and the proposed brand personality through consistent Interactive Brand Experiences" (*Theoretical Review* chapter; Image 3.5).

Therefore, the purpose of the *Relationship Metaphor* is to convey the Brand Experience Proposition through an analogy of the interactions between the brand – represented by the Brand Character –, and an Archetypal Customer, expressing the sort of relationship the organization should foster with the customers over the service interactions. To do so, the Relationship Metaphor describes *who* the brand is, and *how* it should behave as it engages with the customers, articulating not only the *Personal Descriptors* and the *Personality Traits* of the *Brand Character*, but also contextualizing the desired relationship through the use of exemplary narratives – *Relational Descriptors* (Image 5.6).

On the Designing for Brand Experience Framework

Designing for Brand Experience has been proposed in this thesis as a framework that operationalizes a Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, 2008) approach to branding through Service Design – a.k.a. *Service Branding* (*Research Process* chapter). Building on the Brandslation process, the Brand Experience Manual, and the Semantic Transformation for Experiences, the Designing for Brand Experience framework can be characterized as a contribution to both practice and theory. In terms of theory, the Designing for Brand Experience integrates different scholarships necessary to support the concept of Service Branding; however, the main contribution of the framework is to practice, as it informs the process of translating the brand strategy into customers' experience.

The Designing for Brand Experience framework starts with the development of the Brand Experience Proposition through the Brandslation process, which

is then communicated to the service design teams through the Brand Experience Manual. Next, during the Semantic Transformation for Experiences, a Brand Experience Proposition based service concept (a.k.a. Service Brand Experience) is developed through traditional co-creative and transdisciplinary Service Design practices, defining the service offering, the service journey, and outlines the touch-points. Notice that at this point, it is essential to consider the organizational capabilities, and the business strategy, as this concept must not only be desirable, but also viable and feasible (Brown & Barry, 2009).

After the definition of the Service Brand Experience, the focus shifts to the design of the interfaces, processes, and systems that support the delivery of the service. In that sense, the Designing for Brand Experience framework adopts a Service Dominant Logic approach (Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, 2008) to Service Design (Design for Service), acknowledging the importance of designing the settings that enable the service provision. As previously discussed, although some Service Design practitioners already work with service implementation, most of the Service Design literature still focuses on the creation of experience propositions. Moreover, by building on the Semantic Transformation for Experiences concept, the Designing for Brand Experience framework also addresses the back end of the NSD process, through the role of designers as managers (Gloppen, 2012).

Although the Semantic Transformation for Experiences has not been empirically tested – and it is not as detailed as the Brandslation process –, it does provide a structure for the NSD process, supporting the last part of the Designing for Brand Experience framework: delivering the Brand Experience Proposition. In addition, by incorporating important theoretical developments, the framework also provides practical guidance to a Service Dominant Logic approach to branding through Service Design (i.e. Service Branding). Finally, as a contribution to theory, the Designing for Brand Experience helps to advance the Service Branding concept, underlining the paradigmatic change in branding practices noted in the *Theoretical Review* chapter (Section 3.3) – from making promises, to delivering the Brand (Experience) Proposition.

Further Contributions to Practice

The Designing for Brand Experience framework adds to practice in two ways: through the Semantic Transformation for Experiences, it structures a theoretical model for delivering the Brand Experience Proposition; yet, the most relevant practical contribution is the combination of the Brandslation

process and the Brand Experience Manual, which provides an approach to the definition and communication of the brand that is not grounded in visual consistency, but on service experiences, supporting the early stages of the Service Branding process. Together, the Brandslation process and Brand Experience Manual help to bridge the gap between business strategy and service design (Goldstein et al., 2002), informing the NSD teams – at the Semantic Transformation for Experiences – what is the experience they should aim to designing *for*.

Although the Brandslation process and the Brand Experience Manual were developed empirically through a series of action research based design interventions (*Research Process* chapter), they are also grounded in a solid theoretical foundation. Academic literature helped not only in how to frame the initial explorations (e.g. through preexistent methods), but it also informed a balanced approach to the definition of the Brand Experience Proposition, which considers both the organization's and the customer perspective (*Theoretical Review* chapter). Through the use of co-creative and transdisciplinary practices, the Brandslation process engages stakeholders from within and outside the organization, ensuring that the Brand Experience Proposition reflects the customers' wishes, the organizational capabilities, and on the brand heritage, fostering a strategic depth that is often beyond most design projects.

Once the Brand Experience Proposition is defined, it is essential that it is objectively communicated to the NSD teams – the challenge is to ensure that the Brand Experience Manual is useable, and that it conveys the Brand Experience Proposition in a way that reduces possible biases. Accordingly, the proposed structure for the Brand Experience Manual by this thesis builds on a combination of different expressions that add to each other: the Relationship Metaphor articulates through an analogy how the organization would like the customers to experience their offerings; the Design Principles describe how to embed the Brand Experience Proposition in the service settings; and the Service Moments express the Brand Experience Proposition through an inspirational narrative.

This way, the combination of the Brandslation process and Brand Experience Manual responds to the research's initial ambition of the creating instruments to define, and to communicate the Brand Experience Proposition to the NSD teams, supporting the design *for* brand based customer experiences.

Organizational Issues

As previously mentioned, although this research focuses on the enablers of the service experiences, and organizational management is considered to be beyond its scope, the importance of cultural issues must be acknowledged due to their influence on the service delivery (*Research Process* chapter). In that sense, this thesis takes an environmental approach (Russell & Mehrabian, 1976) that emphasizes the employees' situational context (Ross & Nisbett, 2011), aligning the internal culture with the Brand Experience Proposition (Motta-Filho, 2012) through the design of the settings – interfaces, processes, and systems (which also includes KPIs, and organizational parameters) – with which the employees interact during the service provision, improving the employees' experiences.

As with the customers', the employees' experiences are also personal and contextual (Sandström et al., 2008), and as such, many factors cannot be controlled. Yet, the same way the environment (context clues; Carbone & Haeckel, 1994) affects the customers, it also influences the staff (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010) – as Bitner (1992, p.57) suggests, "… in service organizations the same physical setting that communicates with and influences the customers may affect employees of the firm". This way, the aforementioned environmental approach may cooperate with the advancement of a brand-based organizational culture by changing the parts that compose the employees' experiences – it might begin with modest changes, but as long as it is consistently implemented, the brand values will spread throughout the whole organization.

Finally, the Designing for Brand Experience framework may also facilitate the alignment of the organizational culture with the brand by simply communicating the Brand Experience Proposition clearly, making it easier for the collaborators to know what the experience they are aiming for is – as Karmark (2005) notices, often the employees do not know what the brand effectively represent.

Concluding remarks

This last section presented and discussed the research findings in the light of the findings' contributions to practice and theory. It starts with an overall review of the research, describing how this monograph answers the research questions. Next, the contributions to theory are presented, and reflected upon the literature that grounds this research: first, the Semantic Transformation for Experiences, then the research's approach to Experience and Brand

Experience, and then, the Relationship Metaphor. Next, the Designing for Brand Experience framework is discussed as a contribution to both practice and theory, and the Brandslation process and Brand Experience Manual are explained as contributions to practice. Despite this distinction between the types of contribution, all research findings have implications to both practice and theory.

By the end of this section, a brief observation regarding the research's perspective on organizational management was presented. In that sense, it must be noted that this thesis approaches Service Branding from the NSD perspective; as Clatworthy (2013, p.100) argues, there is a "general trend in services branding to move from a focus upon staff to a focus upon multiple touch-points, or 'clues'".

/ CHAPTER

This chapter started by introducing the Research Questions (Table 5.1), and the Grounding Assumptions that support the current research (Table 5.2). Then, the three main Findings were discussed in the context of the Research Questions they help to answer. Lastly, the research contributions were presented, and elaborated. Throughout this exposition, Service Design has been defended as an integrative discipline that supports the Service Branding process, which answers the General Research question, ultimately concluding this research. In the next chapter, the research exposed through this thesis will be summarized, and the final arguments contended.

6. Conclusion

The research reported in this thesis explored how Service Design can facilitate the translation of brand strategy into customer experience. In order to do so, and to respond to the research problem (Chapter 1) this research proposed Designing for Brand Experience (Chapter 5) as a framework that operationalizes a Service Dominant Logic approach to branding – namely, Service Branding. The development of the Designing for Brand Experience framework was grounded in an extensive literature review (Chapter 3), and on thorough empirical research (Chapter 4) that was performed with design research methodology (Chapter 2) in collaboration with design organizations, corporate partners, and M.A. students.

In this concluding chapter, the context in which this thesis is placed is reviewed, the outcomes of the current research discussed, and its contributions to practice and theory summarized. The chapter ends by highlighting the limitations of this study, and by suggesting directions and content for further work.

6.1 THESIS CONTEXT

While the concept of brand has been broadly explored, branding approaches focused on the development of customer experience are still scarce – with exception of Clatworthy's (2012) seminal work, no model has explored the development of brand-based service interactions. Accordingly, this thesis has further developed the concept of *Service Branding* as a Service Dominant Logic approach to branding that emphasizes the value co-creation activities in which the customers interact with the brand manifestations.

Building on the characterization of brands as *conceptual meaning propositions made by the organization, which ultimately reside in the customers' minds as the result of their interactions with the branded*

offerings, Service Branding has been defined in this thesis as *the process of translating the brand's conceptual meaning proposition into customer experience through tangible service interactions*. This way, it is understood that the Service Branding process must be concerned not only with defining, but also with delivering the Brand Experience Proposition.

Developed through a research by design approach, this thesis proposes Designing for Brand Experience as a framework that operationalizes the Service Branding process. In doing so, it offers as a key contribution to the emerging concept of Service Branding, not only structuring a process for its realization, but also defining Service Branding as a field of study at the intersection between Service Design, Branding, and Service Dominant Logic.

6.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

In order to operationalize the Service Branding process, the current research reviewed and integrated knowledge from experience, branding, marketing, and service research, synthesizing fundamental theoretical concepts from these different areas into three grounding assumptions that informed the research process, thus framing the research findings that support the Designing for Brand Experience framework.

As suggested by Table 6.1 (next page), the Designing for Brand Experience framework is enabled by the combination of the Brandslation process, the Brand Experience Manual, and the Semantic Transformation for Experiences, which respectively facilitate the sub-processes (steps) of defining, communicating, and delivering the Brand Experience Proposition. Next, each of these research findings is reviewed, and the Designing for Brand Experience framework itself – as a combination of the three steps – is discussed.

Designing for Brand Experience Steps	Grounding Assumption	Research Finding
Defining the Brand Experience Proposition	The customer experience proposition should build upon the brand (Section 3.2 - *The Brand is the Experience Proposition*; Section 5.1)	The *Brandslation process* translates the brand strategy into a brand-based customer experience proposition
Communicating the Brand Experience Proposition	Service design teams embed the *Brand Experience Proposition* into the settings that enable the brand-based customer experience (Section 3.4 – *Semantic Transformation*; Section 5.2)	The *Brand Experience Manual* conveys the Brand Experience Proposition to the New Service Development team, linking Branding and Service Design
Delivering the Brand Experience Proposition	Meaningful Brand Experiences must not necessarily be highly experiential, but must convey the intended brand meaning (Section 3.2 - *Meaningful Brand Experiences*; Section 5.3)	*Semantic_Transformation for Experiences* facilitates the application of the *Brand Experience Manual*, and the development of brand-based customer experiences

Table 6.1: The grounding assumptions, research findings, and the different steps of the Designing for Brand Experience framework.

The Brandslation Process: Defining the Brand Experience Proposition

Service Branding can be briefly described as the process of *defining* and *delivering* the Brand Experience Proposition. Consequently, knowing what the experience that is being designed *for* is essential for the Designing for Brand Experience framework. Yet, during the early stages of the research, it was noticed that contemporary brand descriptors did not articulate the customer experience proposition. Accordingly the Brandslation process was developed with the goal of translating non-experiential brand strategies into a Brand Experience Proposition.

Developed through a sequence of action research iterations, the Brandslation process was devised in parallel with the development of the Brand Experience Manual, as these are considered “two faces of the same concept” (Section 5.2) – i.e. the Brand Experience Proposition. However, differently to the Brand Experience Manual, which has elements supported by a theory, the Brandslation process is the outcome of empirical research – hence, although

it is strongly grounded in academic research, it was not validated by a theoretical model, for there are no similar frameworks available in the literature.

In theoretical terms, the Brandslation process is grounded in the understanding that service interactions convey a meaning proposition. Since experiences are defined as *the customer's interpretation of the meanings embedded (purposefully or not) in the qualities and characteristics of the offering, resulting from the perception emerging from any sort of interaction* (Section 3.1), the customer's experiences are seen as not merely good or bad, but as the associations resulting from the customer's interpretation of the service interaction. As such, as any service interaction creates an impression on the customers (Johnston & Kong, 2011), the organization must focus on designing purposeful experiences.

In that sense, this thesis argues that since *brands are the reflection of the organization's value proposition, their relationship with the customers, and of their internal capabilities* (Section 3.2), it should define this experience proposition. Additionally, the research's foundation on the Semantic Transformation process (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012) also strengthens this argument, as the concept focuses on translating "qualitative brand descriptions … into value-based design features" (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010, p.8).

The final structure proposed for the Brandslation process is thoroughly described in research terms in Section 5.1, and in Appendix I, it is detailed in a practical manner. By presenting both expressions, this thesis aims to make the Brandslation process easier to adapt and replicate.

The Brand Experience Manual: Communicating the Brand Experience Proposition

The disconnect between the branding function, and those responsible for the development of the customer's experiences has been observed not only by academia (e.g. Clatworthy, 2012; Motta-Filho, 2012), but also by managerial literature (e.g. Shawn & Ivens, 2002), and the consulting world (e.g. Munchbach, 2014). Throughout the research, it was noticed that one of the causes of this problem was the lack of adequate brand input during the early stages of the service design process. Accordingly, the Brand Experience Manual was proposed as a tool that informs the New Service Development (NSD) teams of the experience proposition they are designing *for*, thus bridging the gap between *service development* and *branding*.

Similar to the Brandslation process, the Brand Experience Manual was also the outcome of an empirical exploration; yet, as previously mentioned, some of its components, namely the Relationship Metaphor, were not only grounded in academic literature, but also supported by it (Section 5.2). Also, it is worth noting that the development of the Brand Experience Manual was the initial goal of the current research, and the Brandslation process was devised to inform it – consequently, it is the structure of the Brandslation process responds to the needs of the Brand Experience Manual, and not the other way around.

The Brand Experience Manual builds on the premise that the semantic transformation – i.e. the process of translating "qualitative brand descriptions … into value-based design features" (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010, p.8) – takes place during the early stages of NSD process (Clatworthy, 2012). In other words, it is during the NSD that the service design teams embed the Brand Experience Proposition into the service prerequisites (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996), enabling its delivery through the service interactions.

This perspective is also associated with the definition of brands adopted by this thesis – since brands are described as a *conceptual meaning proposition made by the organization*, they must be manifested through some sort of material interface in order to be experienced by the customers. In that context, service interactions are seen as tangible, yet ephemeral occurrences that exist in the moment of their performance, ceasing to exist right after it (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Secomandi & Snelders, 2011).

Another important contribution from the current research is the concept of Relationship Metaphor. As the main component of the Brand Experience Manual, the Relationship Metaphor conveys the Brand Experience Proposition through the example of a relationship between a Brand Character and an Archetypal Customer. Additionally, the Brand Experience Manual also expresses the Brand Experience Proposition through Design Principles – prescriptive guidelines that inform what should be consistently done to embed the Brand Experience Proposition into the service settings; and through Service Moments – scenarios that illustrate "ideal" Brand-Based Service Interactions.

Further details about the Brand Experience Manual can be found in Section 5.2, and some practical aspects at the end of Appendix I.

The Semantic Transformation for Experiences: Delivering the Brand Experience Proposition

As previously mentioned, the Service Branding process is concerned not only with *defining*, but also with *delivering* the Brand Experience Proposition. Yet, when it comes to implementation, contemporary approaches to Semantic Transformation were considered unsuitable, as they failed to recognize the full extension of Service Dominant Logic's influence – i.e. that what is being designed is not a service, but a platform for value co-creation (e.g. Clatworthy, 2012). This way, the Semantic Transformation for Experiences proposes a theoretical model for the design and implementation of the Brand Experience Manual.

Different to the Brandslation process and the Brand Experience Manual, which were developed through empirical explorations, the Semantic Transformation for Experiences concept is the outcome of theoretical reflection. By integrating different scholarships on service research, Semantic Transformation for Experiences was advanced as a theoretical approach that facilitates the translation of the Brand Experience Proposition into Meaningful Brand Experiences, enabling the design of the settings that support brand-based service interactions.

Building on the conceptualization of *experiences as the customers' interpretations of the meanings embedded in the service offering*, Semantic Transformation for Experiences is grounded on the understanding that a meaningful experience must not necessarily be extraordinary (Arnould & Price, 1993), but convey an intended meaning through the qualities and characteristics of its manifestations.

Whereas the Brandslation process and the Brand Experience Manual define and communicate the Brand Experience Proposition to the service design teams, Semantic Transformation for Experiences facilitates development of Interactive Brand Experience Settings that deliver the Brand Experience Proposition. In many ways, Semantic Transformation for Experiences can be understood as a Design for Service (Kimbell, 2011a; Sangiorgi, 2012) approach aimed at delivering the Brand Experience Proposition through the services that are being designed *for*.

Additionally, by adopting Gloppen's (2012) conceptualization of designers as managers who ensure the adequate implementation of the service concept, Semantic Transformation for Experiences also addressed the gap between the front and the back-end of NSD, closing the Service Branding process.

The Designing for Brand Experience Framework: Putting it all together

The Designing for Brand Experience framework is the backbone of the current research – it integrates the theoretical foundation and the research findings into a model that addresses the research problem: *translating brand strategy into customer experience through Service Design*.

The fundamental assumption grounding the Designing for Brand Experience framework is the idea that the brand should define the customer experience proposition the organization wants to deliver – the Brand Experience Proposition is thus conceived as the main representation of the brand strategy. The notion of the brand as the source of the experience proposition is rooted in the foundation of the current research, which explores *how to translate brands into experiences*. In theoretical terms, this perspective was also supported by the centrality of the Semantic Transformation concept (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2012) to the present study, and by the view of brands as the reflection of the customer's relationship – the outcome of all previous experiences.

The Designing for Brand Experience framework builds on two essential concepts described throughout this thesis:

- the characterization of brands as conceptual meaning propositions made by the organization, which ultimately resides in the customers' minds as the result of their interactions with the branded offerings;
- and on the definition of experiences as the customer's interpretation of the meanings embedded (purposefully or not) in the qualities and characteristics of the offering, resulting from the perception emerging from any sort of interaction.

In that sense, *brand experiences* are understood as the customer's interpretation of the meanings communicated through service interactions, regardless of how extraordinary (Arnould & Price, 1993) they are. Conversely, this also means that the qualities and characteristics of the service interactions are seen as the means through which the Brand Experience Proposition is conveyed to the customers. Hence, analogous to a semiotic sign (representamen; Lancaster & Côrte-Real, 2007), the service interactions are regarded as the mediators that connect the Brand Experience Proposition and the customer's experiences (Image 6.1).

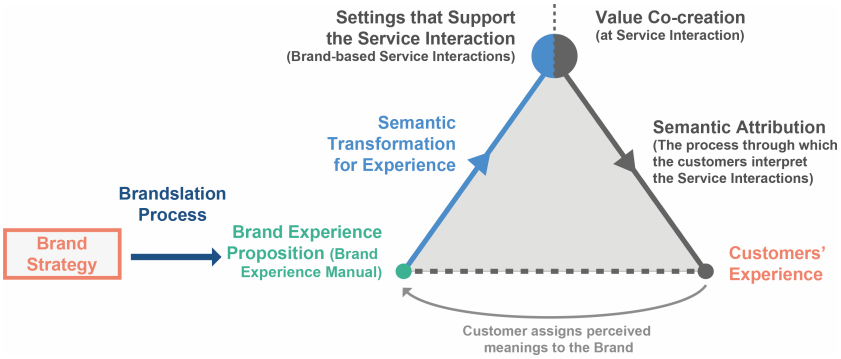

Image 6.1 –*Designing for Brand Experience* framework as a semiotic model

It is within this semiotic context that the Designing for Brand Experience framework stands – it combines the Brandslation process, the Brand Experience Manual, and the Semantic Transformation for Experiences into one integrated approach that translates brand strategy into customer experiences, thus operationalizing the Service Branding process.

- First, the Brandslation process translates the Brand Strategy into the Brand Experience Proposition.
- Then, the Brand Experience Manual conveys the Brand Experience Proposition to the teams responsible for the service development.
- Finally, Semantic Transformation for Experiences facilitates the translation of the Brand Experience Proposition into the settings that enable the provision of brand-based service interactions.

Despite the apparent brand-centricity, the Designing for Brand Experience framework is primarily focused on the customers. Even though the brand strategy informs the development of the Brand Experience Proposition, the Brandslation process ensures that the outcome is a Customer-Experience based Brand Proposition.

Moreover, since the Semantic Transformation for Experiences is conceptualized as a Service Design approach, it adopts a "designerly way of working" (Segelström, 2013, p. 27) that is "inherently customer and user-centered" (Wetter-Edman, 2011, p. 66), involving multiple stakeholders in the service development. In that sense, both stages of the Service Branding process, and consequently the Designing for Brand Experience framework, are seen as transdisciplinary (Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson, 2011), and co-creative.

6.3 CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Contributions

Through the development of the Designing for Brand Experience framework, this thesis contributed to both practice and research.

In terms of theory, the current research helped to advance the Service Branding concept, proposing a new approach to branding that focuses on the customer's experiences. As the Service Dominant Logic shifted the locus of value creation from *exchange* to *co-creative activities between multiple stakeholders* (Merz et al., 2009), branding practices cannot be further sustained by traditional marketing and communications methods. Accordingly, the Designing for Brand Experience framework operationalizes a Service Dominant Logic approach to branding – namely, Service Branding – facilitating the process of defining and delivering the Brand Experience Proposition.

The Designing for Brand Experience framework also argues for a Service Design perspective that focuses on supporting the provision of a predefined and intentional experience – a Design for Service Experiences approach, where the experiential goals is grounded in the brand strategy. In that sense, it is important to note that since brands are understood as conceptual meaning propositions, the intended experience does not necessarily have to be commercial; for example, the experience proposition can build upon the strategic goals for the national health organization.

Moreover, through Semantic Transformation for Experiences, the Designing for Brand Experience framework distinguishes the design practices focused on conceiving the *service as a conceptual proposition*, from those that acknowledge that what is being designed is the platform for value co-creation (e.g. Design for Services), proposing an approach that incorporates the development and implementation of the settings that support brand-based service interactions – i.e. Meaningful Brand Experiences.

By combining a *customer experience-based* approach to branding, and a *brand experience-oriented* approach to Service Design, the Designing for Brand Experience framework helps to bridge the gap between business strategy and service development, structuring a process for translating brand strategy into customer's experiences.

Further contributions to theory include the conceptualization of relationships as metaphors for the Brand Experience Proposition, addressing the issue of

communicating experiences; and the environmental approach to organizational culture, which emphasizes the employees' situational context (Ross & Nisbett, 2011), and the design of the settings – processes, systems, interfaces, and rules – that influence the staff's performance at both the front end and at the back stages of the service encounter.

In terms of practice, the main contribution relates to the operationalization of the Service Branding process through the three research findings that compose the steps of the Designing for Brand Experience framework:

- The Brandslation process, which offers a practical approach for translating traditional brand descriptors into a customer experience-based brand proposition – namely, the Brand Experience Proposition.
- The Brand Experience Manual, which conveys the Brand Experience Proposition, facilitating its communication, and reducing interpretation biases.
- And Semantic Transformation for Experiences, which describes a theoretical process that enables the implementation of the Brand Experience Proposition, facilitating the development of Meaningful Brand Experiences.

Additionally, various concepts have been advanced to respond to the research developments. In that context,

1. Brands have been defined at the intersection between the customer's interpretation, and the organization's meaning propositions;
2. Experience is explained in terms of the customer's interpretation of the meaning communicated through the qualities and characteristics of the interaction;
3. And Service Interactions are described as tangible, yet ephemeral occurrences that mediate the Brand Experience Proposition.
4. Accordingly, Brand Experience has been conceptualized in relation to the customer's interpretation of the meanings communicated through the service interactions;
5. And, Meaningful Brand Experiences is defended as service interactions that convey an intended meaning – the Brand Experience Proposition.

Limitations

Despite the efforts to ground all aspects of the current research, this thesis has been subject to some limitations. On the theoretical level, the main issue was that this research was explorative and integrative – it did not build upon one strongly established body of research, but connected several weak ones. Consequently, by encompassing such broad and diverse scholarships, gaps in

the theoretical foundation may have emerged, as some concepts could not be exhausted.

However, the greatest limitations imposed to the present work were related to practice. First, the Semantic Transformation for Experiences concept could not be empirically tested, for it was developed as a response to the theoretical shortcoming at a very late stage of the research. Additionally, although the Brandslation process and the Brand Experience Manual were evaluated, additional iterations could help to improve both, as the number of design interventions was limited due the complexity and length of the research cycles.

Also, it is important to mention the implementation issue; after the last iteration, as the Brand Experience Manual was finally structured and ready for use, the partner organization had difficulties with internalizing it, compromising the assessment of the impact the research had on the organization. In that sense, even though this thesis proposes the Semantic Transformation for Experiences process, it recognizes that just this may not be enough – it is also dependent upon the maturity of the organization, and their service design capabilities.

Finally, as this research was developed in cooperation with established service providers, it focused on a delivering the brand approach that may not be suitable to start-ups. Moreover, the cultural context must also be considered as this research was conduced within the Norwegian market. Although the research findings are considered to be generalizable, especially when it comes to trans-cultural application, this has not been tested, nor evaluated.

6.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

The research reported in this thesis explored the intersection between *Branding*, *Service Design*, and *Service Dominant Logic*, proposing a framework for the operationalization of Service Branding. Throughout this process, new topics have emerged for potential future research.

The advancement of the Semantic Transformation for Experiences

The concept of Service Branding is grounded on the processes of *defining* and *delivering* the Brand Experience Proposition. Whilst the Brandslation process has been developed through practice based research, the Semantic

Transformation for Experiences process was advanced theoretically. In that sense, empirical explorations of Semantic Transformation for Experiences would certainly help to facilitate the translation of the Brand Experience Proposition into Brand-Based Customer Experiences.

Moreover, on the theoretical level, Semantic Transformation for Experiences also points towards a Designing for Value Co-Creation approach, as it recognizes that what is being designed are the platforms and settings that enable the value co-creation over the service provision. Accordingly, it is suggested that Service Design research could benefit from an even greater integration with Service Dominant Logic.

Apply the Brandslation process in other contexts

The Brandslation process has been tested in a consumer service setting. Yet, it is believed that the definition of brands as *conceptual meaning propositions* makes the concept of brand very adaptable. Hence, it is suggested that the Brandslation process can be applied to a variety of situations, even those where the idea of brands is not very common, such as with public health care – i.e. what experience does the government want the patient to have.

Such study could also benefit from the greater openness of Service Design research in the public sector, which has fewer constraints in terms of confidentiality, facilitating the discussions on the topic.

Further Empirical tests on the Brand Experience Manual

Even though the Brand Experience Manual was developed in a co-creative and transdisciplinary approach, and later evaluated through discussions with the corporate partner, and branding and Service Design experts, its application was not tested in practice. Consequently, comparative studies (e.g. double blind) could help to assess its value, strengths and weaknesses, informing further developments.

/ CHAPTER

This last chapter reviewed the research findings through the perspective of its theoretical foundation, summarized its contributions and limitations, and finally, suggested topics for further exploration. In doing so, this chapter concludes this thesis with a brief reappraisal of the overall content of this monograph.

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Appendix I – Executing the Brandslation Process

This appendix describes the *Brandslation* process as executed in practice; hence, the language in this section is much less academic. In the current format, the process is based on a structure fit for mid-sized brands, and as such, adaptations for the adequate organizational context might be required. Additionally, it must be noted that the Brandslation process does not have a specific workshop for exploring customers' context; instead, during the research, several exercises explore the distinct aspects of the customers' world. Finally, although a brief description of the Brand Experience Manual is presented, it is advised that the reader go through Section 5.2 (*The Brand Experience Manual*), in order to better understand the configuration of the manual.

The Brandslation Process

The Brandslation process is composed of two main phases: the first is focused on gathering insights, and the second is dedicated to the development of the Brand Experience Proposition. Both phases are composed of four individual workshops, varying in terms of flexibility – whilst the order of the *Insight* phase can be altered, the *Development* phase must be performed in the defined sequence, for each subsequent workshop builds upon the previous one (Image A.1).

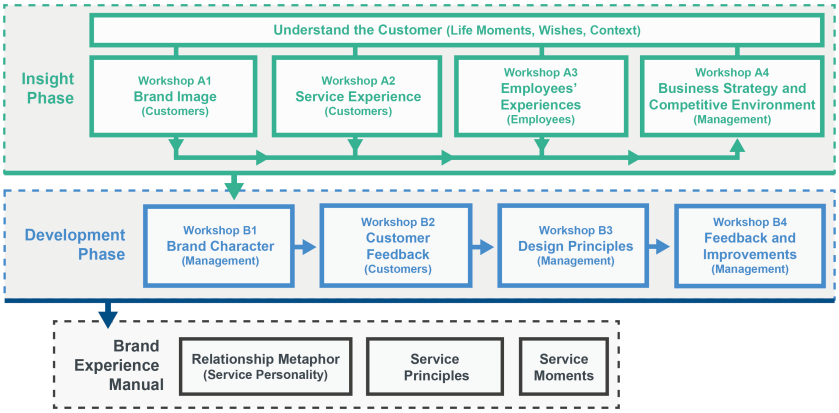

Image A.1 – The structure of the Brandslation process.

Although the *Insight* phase allows for some flexibility, it is strongly recommended that the *Business and Competitive Environment* workshop take place last. Since this workshop reviews the strategic positioning of the organization, it is a great opportunity to challenge management teams with the findings developed throughout the entire exploration. Furthermore, planning is key, and it is essential that the timetable is realistic, and grounded in the availability of the participants, ensuring the feasibility of the workshops.

In the next two sections, *Insight* and *Development* phases are further explained, and the individual workshops described. Also, it is important to keep in mind that the objective of the Brandslation process is to define the Brand Experience Proposition, enabling the first part of the Service Branding. In the *Findings and Contributions* chapter, the Brand Experience Manual is presented as a tool used to communicate the Brand Experience Proposition to the teams responsible for the Semantic Transformation for Experience, and the Designing for Brand Experience section presents an approach to the operationalization of the Service Branding process.

A.1 INSIGHT PHASE

The *Insight* phase is composed of four exploratory workshops (Image A.1), all focused on understanding the different factors that influence the customers' experiences with the brand: the customers' perception and wishes for the brand (A1), and for the service (A2); the employees' practices and experience (A3); and the organization behind the brand (A4). This way, by understanding the customers' perspective, the Brandslation process ensures

that the Brand Experience Proposition is desirable; by considering the employees and the internal capabilities of the organization, that it is feasible; and by building on the business strategy and competitive environment, that it is viable.

Hence, it is essential that the Brand Experience Proposition is grounded in organizational competencies. Since services are *capacities embedded in, and enabled by a dynamic configuration of resources* (Maglio et al., 2008) *that facilitate the process of value co-creation* (Vargo and Lusch, 2008; Vargo et al., 2008), the internal capabilities provide the company with a unique strategic differentiator (Schultz, 2005), from which the relationship with the customer – reflected by the brand – is a central component (Normann and Ramirez, 1994).

Preparations

This exploratory series is meant to gather information from the different stakeholders, co-creating insights that will support the process of defining the Brand Experience Proposition that takes place in the *Development* phase. In that sense, besides preparing the tools used to facilitate the workshops, the teams running the Brandslation process must also invite the participants for the workshop, and arrange the schedule for the sessions.

At this stage, the major source of concern is to ensure that enough customers will join the process. Dates must be thoroughly considered, as should the length of the meetings, and the incentives offered for the participants. Moreover, the schedule should leave some time for debriefing, as the reports generated during this phase are extremely valuable for the formulation of the exercises from the *Development* phase. Finally, so as to enhance the process, preliminary research about the brand, and the business sector is recommended – brand manuals and marketing research are usually good sources of insight.

Workshop A1 – Brand Image

The main goal of this workshop is to understand the customers' perceptions of the brand – the long-term association created throughout the interactions with different brand manifestations. Yet, so as to broaden the research, and improve the quality of the insights, some aspects of the customers' experience with the service, such as the process of value co-creation, are reviewed. Since the focus is the relationship with the brand, it is advised that

the participants are longstanding customers. In terms of structure, the workshop is divided into four exercises, as described below.

Exercise 1: Brand Mapping

During this exercise, the participants are asked to associate different characteristics with the brand, organizing them in a bullseye map (a target). To facilitate this process, image cards of famous personalities (fictional or not), places, and brands from other sectors are used. While preparing for the workshop, it is important to consider what are the best analogies to be used in the discussions, and use image cards accordingly – to do so, build on the insights and hypothesis developed by the preliminary research.

The point here is not to see what the associations are *per se*, but rather the meanings behind the relations. This way, as the customers associate the images with the brand, the facilitator should ask questions such as, "Why is this card in that place on the map?" It may happen that the link between the image and the association is not so straight, and that only one specific characteristic of that card applies. Also, sometimes the same cards have different meanings for different people.

Exercise 2: Brand Positioning

Whereas the previous exercise focused on the association with brands that are not necessarily within the same business, this exercise explores the positioning of the brand in comparison to the direct competition. This can be done with simple sheets of paper, where two axes are drawn in a Cartesian plane, and opposing qualities are assigned to the extreme of each line. Once again, the nature of the axis' value is dependent on the brand and on the business, and the preliminary research – or even the Brand Mapping exercise – can help inform what needs to be understood.

Exercise 3: Value-in-Context

The idea of this exercise is to understand how value is co-created in the use context. This means exploring the *what* (is the service's core use), *how* (it creates value, and how it is used), *why* (is it valuable), *when* and *where* (the customers interact with it) of the value co-creation. In practical terms, this can be operationalized by discussing the offerings and the different touch-points with which the customers interact through the service journey, while asking the aforementioned questions. Moreover, the exact nature of said

questions is dependent on the kind of business the brand is in; once again, the preliminary explorations can help with this.

From experience, the most effective way of facilitating the discussions is to focus on the key use situations and/or offerings – if the service is very sequential, a customer journey map can be drafted in order to facilitate the conversations, whereas in other cases, cards with the different key offerings might be a better solution (pull a card and discuss the offering/use situation). Cards can also be used in combination with the service journey as question cards – then, simply tape the answered question cards onto a printed version of the customers' journey.

Exercise 4: Reason of Choice – Expectation – Experience

In order to assess the overall experience of the customers, this exercise emphasizes asking three questions (Why did you choose this brand? What were your expectations then? How is your actual experience now?), in relation to the different key characteristics of the service. For example, in the case of telecom, it is important to check factors such as coverage, service packages (bundles), price, and support. If the brand is from the financial sector, factors such as loan costs, variety of insurances, and physical presence might be more relevant.

Once again, the other exercises can help to define what these key characteristics are – in that sense, the exercises must be flexible, and the tools should be designed with some open ends that are completed during the workshops.

Workshop A2 – Service Experience

This workshop aims at understanding the customers' experience with the service offerings; yet, similar to the previous session, it also explores aspects of the brand image. Ideally, the participants should have experienced the brand's key interaction recently. Since different sectors have different consumption lifecycles, it is important to consider which customer groups are the most adequate. Moreover, as the main tool used during the workshop is grounded in the customer's journey, it can be useful to interview some customers in preparation for this session, summarizing their different stories into one generic customer journey map. Following, the exercises used in the workshop are presented, with special attention to the *Customers' Journey Analysis*.

Exercise 1: Brand Mapping

This exercise is essentially the same as in the previous phase, and as such, it will not be described again; nonetheless, the opportunity of repeating this exercise has its benefits, and must be acknowledged. Since the insights from the previous sessions can produce incomplete answers, and/or new assumptions, a second round of discussions may enable further explorations, extending the comprehension of the customer's perception of the brand – a central tenet for the Brandslation process. This is also true even if the order of the workshops is changed – the following session should always consider what was learned from the previous one.

Exercise 2: Customers' Journey Analysis

The objective of this exercise is to understand the customers' experiences with the service; accordingly, the main tool used is the customer journey map. If a more nuanced perspective is required, it can be useful to explore the customer's journey prior to the session through interview. The insights from the *Brand Image* workshop can also be used; depending on the case, the journey map can even be drafted during the workshop itself. An easy way to do so is to focus on main interaction moments (e.g. becoming customers, daily use, and exceptional situations), leaving details for the workshop.

Although the journey map structures the exercise, the focus is on understanding the customers' experiences, which are triggered by the service interactions. This way, the journey map becomes a canvas, where the different touch-points are allocated, and the insights emerging from the discussions noted. Also, it is important to consider the transition between the touch-points – the journey itself. In terms of execution, it can be interesting to start the conversations with cards describing the different touch-points, and only move to the journey once some ideas have already been explored.

At this point, the participants should be invited to stick the post-its reporting their experiences with the different touch-points on the journey map. Once the main interactions have been covered, the facilitators should ask the participants to highlight the experiences they find most significant, color-coding if they are perceived as good, bad, or indifferent. Finally, this workshop can also be an opportunity to ask the customers for suggestions; as such, ideas-cards should be pre-arranged in order to help the participants organize their insights.

Workshop A3 – Employees' Experiences

Whereas the two previous workshops focused on the customers, the current one is concerned with the employees' experiences. The aim here is to understand the internal systems, how the staff perceives the brand, and how the organization's infrastructures influence the employees' capacity to enable the customers' experiences. Moreover, since the employees are on the front-line of the service interactions, they can provide valuable insights about customer experience.

Yet, as noted in the *Theoretical Review* chapter, delivering the Brand Experience Proposition is the responsibility of the entire organization, and not only of the front line personnel. Therefore, the current workshops should also involve back-office employees, since they are the ones supporting the customer facing staff, and developing the systems with which the internal and external customers interact (Edvardsson and Olsson, 1996; Patrício et al., 2008).

Accordingly, the participants invited for the workshop should come from different sectors and organizational levels. This approach may also facilitate unexpected findings; since the employees are also internal customers – using systems developed by someone in the organizations – poor experiences can be discussed, as representatives from different departments are present. As such, in planning for this session, it is important to consider which teams should be involved. Next, the exercises used to facilitate the workshops are described.

Exercise 1: Brand Mapping

This exercise explores the employees' perceptions of the brand, and follows the same structure and process as the *Brand Mappings* in the previous workshops. In terms of execution, the only observation is that when communicating the task, the participants should be reminded to focus on their own perspectives, and not on how they imagine the customers see the brand; although this last perspective can be explored, it is important to emphasize the employees' points of view.

Exercise 2: Service Journey Analysis

In order to understand how the organization's structures influences and limits the staff's ability to support the customers' experiences, this exercise explores the customers' journey from the employees' perspective. In doing

so, it examines the current experiences, its problems, and improvement opportunities; since the front line staff mediates the service systems and the customers, they are in a unique position to assist the Brandslation process with valuable customer insights. Moreover, by bringing personnel from different silos, this workshop also helps to find gaps in the organization's internal processes and systems.

The main tool for operationalizing this exercise is a poster conveying the customer journey map, and the different actors that influence the service (e.g. customers, employees, external stakeholders, and back end systems). A way to organize this is to print the journey at the top of the poster, and the actors (i.e. previous parenthesis) in the rows below the journey, where the participants can comment. It is also important that this journey map describe different service interactions, and the customer's experience at these touch-points, so that the discussions can start – throughout the conversations, new interactions can be added. To get the workshop moving, facilitators can ask the participants to share their points of view on the situation at hand, fostering empathy (e.g. narrate what the customer is doing, and the challenges and problems he may be facing during that interaction).

As the discussions evolve, insights on how to improve some service interactions will emerge. Also, key paint-points will be identified, and a richer understanding of the customers' experiences, and of the internal capabilities and infrastructures of the organization attained. By the end of the exercise, it can be useful to ask the participants to highlight the points they believe to be the most relevant to the overall customer experience.

Exercise 3: Customer Image

This exercise explores the employee perspective of customers' needs, concerns, and desires – since the front line staff is in direct contact with the customers, they have valuable insights about the customers, adding an important external perspective to the research. Moreover, this is also an opportunity to understand how the employees see the customers, adding a different view of 'who the customers are'.

An idea to operationalize this process is to draw the outline of a human body, and use its different parts for the topics. For example, the head can be used for the discussions of who the customers are; the upper part of the torso can be used to represent their desires; the bottom part of the torso their concerns;

and the legs their needs[57]. In the case of the "head" (who the customers are), cards with different characteristics, personality traits, and brands (consumption) can be used to draw an idea of who this person is; for the parts of the torso, discussions and verbal descriptions might be more effective.

Later, this customer representation will help to define the persona with whom the *Brand Character* interacts, expressing the *Relationship Metaphor*.

Workshop A4 – Business Strategy and Competitive Environment

As mentioned earlier, this workshop should be the last of this first phase, as it presents an exceptional opportunity for a high level conversation with the management teams; hence, this session should build on the insights developed by the other workshops, bringing in new ideas, and challenging old assumptions. The focus here is to understand the brand and business strategies, the competitive environment, and – by building on the insights from the previous workshops –, inquiry about the service systems' structure and limitations. Furthermore, it must be noted that the format of this workshop is rather context dependent (i.e. the type of business, the sort of competition, and previous insights), and the right tools for each situation will most certainly vary. Therefore, this section suggests a list of exercises that should be considered prior to use, as they may overlap.

Exercise 1: Brand Identity

The Brandslation process does not intend to necessarily change the brand[58], but to translate it into an experiential proposition, and as such, it builds upon the current brand identity. Yet, as already mentioned throughout the thesis, brand descriptors are often poorly defined, and additional research is necessary in order to develop the Brand Experience Proposition. Accordingly, this exercise is meant to extend the knowledge about the brand identity through discussions with management teams, helping to inform the *Brand Character* workshops, when a precise description is required

Structuring this exercise requires some research, as the brand's configuration may vary; however, the key points that must be explored are the *vision* (what is it that the brand promises to deliver on an abstract level), the *values* (what

[57] This model was developed by students from the 2016 Service Design 2 class at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design, during the application of the Brandslation process in a studio project.
[58] Although the Brandslation process is not focused on rebranding, it can help to define a new proposition; also, it can be used to structure brands that are poorly defined.

are the main qualities of the brand), and *tone of voice* (how is the brand communicating with the customer). In order to facilitate the conversations, a poster reporting the insights gathered during the preliminary research should be arranged, and the management teams should be invited to adjust/change its content, adding new information.

Exercise 2: Desired Brand Image

Whereas the *Brand Mapping* exercise is aimed at understanding the stakeholders' perceptions of the brand (previous workshops), this one focuses on exploring how the organization – represented by the management teams – would like the brand to be perceived. The similarities between this and the *Brand Mapping* exercise extend beyond the aforementioned characteristic, as both use the same processes and tools (image association); essentially, the only difference is the description of the task. Moreover, it is important to remember that the emphasis is on the meanings that the participants associate with the cards, and not the cards themselves.

Exercise 3: Brand Positioning

The objective of this exercise it to understand how the organization positions the brand in relation to the competition; similar to the *Brand Image* workshop, this exercise can be executed by drawing two axes on a sheet of paper, ascribing opposing qualities to the extremes of each line. Throughout the discussions, the management teams should compare the brand against its competitors, while commenting on the brand strategy – what is the business proposition the brand rests upon, and how/where it differentiates from the competition.

Exercise 4: Experience Analysis

This exercise focuses on understanding the foundations of the customers' experiences – what in the organization makes the experience happen in the way it does. In analyzing these reasons, the workshop prompts the participants to explore the internal systems, structures, and strategies that influence the service's provision. Moreover, this exercise is also an opportunity to reflect on the service experiences the organization would like the customers to have, and to find new ways to better serve the customers.

In order to operationalize this exercise, the design teams facilitating the Brandslation process should build on the insights from the previous workshops, organizing the findings about current customers' perceptions, and

discussing the key service characteristics (e.g. price, offering, image, user segmentation) with the managers attending the session. To facilitate this exercise, insight cards can be used to catalogue the characteristics that should be discussed. Also, a poster divided into three parts – current experiences, desired experiences, and opportunities – may help organize the discussions.

For example, the current experiences could be posted on the top row; then, the design teams should facilitate a discussion about how this situation could be improved, and note on a second row, the desired experiences. Finally, a new round of conversations should lead to the ideas for service improvement, which could be noted on the bottom row. In this process, it is important that the issues that cause poor experiences, and the challenges to its improvements are noticed, and described.

Exercise 5: SWOT – Competitive Environment

Similar to the *Brand Positioning*, this exercise compares the brand to its main competitors; yet, the focus is to explore the brand's strengths and weaknesses in relation to the key players in the market, looking for threats and opportunities – essentially, it is a SWOT analysis of the competitive environment. In terms of tools, this exercise can be developed with a simple poster divided in three rows, where the different brands are aligned side by side at the top of the paper. Then, the participants should attach their comments (e.g. written on post-its) below the different brand names; the weaknesses in the bottom row, and the advantages in the middle one.

Exercise 6: SWOT – Societal Environment

This exercise is essentially the same as the previous one, but instead of focusing on the competition, the emphasis is on societal aspects such as government regulations, and macro-societal changes. This exercise does not necessarily require a specific tool, but it is an important topic that should be discussed. For example, companies that evolved from state controlled monopolies may have different regulations than newer startups.

Exercise 7: Brand Portfolio

Analyzing the relationship between the brand, the organization, and the other companies/brands within the group can help to explain the brand positioning, and some characteristics and limitations of the service offerings (e.g. shared information and technical systems). Once again, this exercise does not need a specific tool, but having some sort of organized poster may help the debrief

process later. The key point is to understand what differentiates the brands within the organization's portfolio, what internal capabilities these brands share, and how this can affect the customers' experiences.

A.2 DEVELOPMENT PHASE

The *Development* phase consists of a sequence of four workshops. It is during this phase that the Brand Experience Proposition is defined, and the content of the Brand Experience Manual co-created in collaboration with the customers, employees, and the management teams. Undoubtedly, the most important session of the entire Brandslation process is the first workshop from this phase (B1; Image A.1), which is when the *Brand Character* – a metaphor for *who* the brand is in relation to the customers – is outlined, together with the *Relationship Metaphor*. Although the *Insight* phase supports the entire *Development* phase, its main *raison d'etre* is to inform this workshop.

After the definition of the *Brand Character*, it should be tested and refined in collaboration with customers; only then, the final version of the *Relationship Metaphor* should be settled (B2). Then, the typical actions of the *Brand Character* should be analyzed with the help of the management team, and the emerging patterns used to outline the *Design Principles* (B3). As the Brandslation process reaches its end, examples of the application of the Brand Experience Proposition through the customer journey should be drafted – what in the research was called *Service Moments*. At this stage, all the material developed should be reviewed with the partner organization (B4), with special attention to the *Design Principles*, and to the first draft of the *Service Moments*.

Once the last workshop is concluded, the expressions of the content developed throughout this phase (the *Relationship Metaphor*, *Design Principles*, and *Service Moments*) should be refined into their final versions, informing the development of the Brand Experience Manual. Finally, it must be noted that the format of the manual should be structured according to the organization's needs (e.g. it could be a handbook, a presentation, a video, a website, or a combination of different mediums).

Preparations

Due to the sequential configuration of the *Development* phase, the formulation of the workshops is highly dependent on the insights from the

preceding sessions. This characteristic forces the teams executing the Brandslation process to be flexible, and to adjust the course of the workshops in order to compensate for possible deficiencies in the outcomes of the previous session. Moreover, in order to avoid missing the subtleties and details of the meetings, it is recommended that debriefing takes place immediately after the workshops.

In that second phase, organizing the schedule is also a challenge, as a greater commitment from the management teams is required. Also, it can be interesting to involve personnel from higher organizational levels in that that group, so as to foster support for the project, ensuring resources for its implementation. Finally, experience has shown that if the customers are invited too far in advance, they may simply forget about the workshops. As such, it is important to keep in contact with the customers, ensuring their availability.

Workshop B1 – Brand Character

As previously noted, this is the most important workshop from the Brandslation process, as it is when the findings developed throughout the *Insight* phase is reviewed, and used to define the first draft of the Brand Experience Proposition, outlining the *Relationship Metaphor* and the *Brand Character.* Accordingly, the preparation for this workshop is rather complex, and an adequate amount of time should be reserved for preparation. Also, due the strategic relevance of the workshop, it is important that the right stakeholders are present in the session; i.e. inviting managers from a higher organizational level in order to obtain their insight, and also gain support for implementing the process' outcomes.

Preparations

Once the *Insight* phase is concluded, the teams running the Brandslation process should start structuring the findings so as to support the process of defining the Brand Character and the Relationship Metaphor. Since the Brandslation process aims at building a balanced experience proposition that considers the main stakeholders' – the organization, the customers, the employees – perceptions, expectations, and wishes, whilst also being based on the brand identity, and on the business strategy, the insights on which it builds upon should be structured accordingly.

In that sense, in order to facilitate the realization of the workshop, it is suggested that said insights are printed on three posters, communicating the

(1) brand perceptions, (2) actual experiences, and (3) desired experiences, each expressing the perspectives of the employees, customers, and the organization (represented by the management teams). For example, the brand perception poster can be organized as an intersection of multiple Venn diagrams; the actual experience as a customer journey; and the desired experiences as a service journey, comments from the research, or a mix of both. Additionally, a fourth poster should also be produced, stating the different elements of the brand identity and strategy – e.g. vision, values, tone of voice, personality, perceived and desired associations, and core offerings (Image 5.3).

Finally, it is important to note that in order to ensure viability and feasibility of the Brand Experience Proposition, the organizational capabilities and business strategy must be considered when developing the content for the posters – for example, the customers' whishes should be balanced with the business strategy, and the employees' against the organizational capabilities.

Getting started

The workshop starts by reviewing the insights reported on the posters with the assistance of management teams partaking in the workshop; despite the research efforts, it may happen that some aspects of the brand identity and strategy need adjustments. In terms of agenda, it is recommended that the discussions of the insights take at least one hour, with special attention given to the brand, which must be internalized. As the conversations evolve, the workshop facilitators should ask the participants to highlight the points they find to be the most relevant for customer experience, whilst fostering a discussion about their choices (e.g. why does this specific topic matter).

At that point, the participants should be free to add notes, and comment on what has been exposed. As the conversations evolve, it should naturally start moving towards 'how the customers' experiences should be' – if this does not happen spontaneously, the facilitators must push a little. Also, it is important to always revisit (and refer back to) the brand – the idea of having all the information in sight at once is that the different forces influencing customer experience are considered at the same time.

Once these discussions are over, the workshop moves towards the main exercise, which aims at framing the Brand Character, and defining the relationship between this character and an archetypal customer – the Relationship Metaphor for the Brand Experience Proposition. Since the brand emerges through the long-term interactions with the customer, by thinking of

the brand as an active partner in the relationship, this exercise helps to define the experience the organizations would like the customers to have with the character, which is essentially the experience proposition of the brand.

Before this exercise starts, it is also useful to review the archetypal customer with whom the Brand Character will interact – notice that on some occasions, multiple archetypal customers might be necessary. Reviewing these personas will help the workshop participants get acquainted with them, and will give the management teams an opportunity to adjust any misalignment of their profile. One final piece of advice is to carefully consider how much time will be spent on the customers' archetypes – experience has shown that if the facilitators are not cautious, the session can get lost in discussions about customer segmentation.

Exercise 1: Brand Character

At this point, the workshop participants should have a thorough understanding of the brand, the customers (archetypes), and the experience the organization can support. The exercise then becomes about discussing interaction scenarios between the brand and the customers, where the insights highlighted previously define the context – the focus is to portray how the brand interacts with the customers, and use adjectives that describe the behavioral qualities of the Brand Character. To facilitate this process, the participants should be asked to create a story narrating the relationship between *Brand Character* and the *Archetypal Customer* – this narrative must not necessarily be based on the actual service touch-points, but on an analogy telling how they met, how they interact, and how their relationship evolved.

Building on the actors from the narrative, the participants should start to describe who the Brand Character is. Once these descriptions start to repeat, it is time to move on to the next step: defining the *personality of the Brand Character* (Service Personality; Clatworthy, 2012) by clustering the adjectives into more coherent characteristics that can be used to describe personality traits (four to six). In this process, the qualities (adjectives) used to define the personality traits should be used to further describe the Brand Character, giving it more nuances. Afterwards, some time should be spent refining the personality traits and their descriptions.

As the personality of Brand Character becomes more explicit, the facilitators should invite the participants to further detail who the Brand Character is to the Archetypal Customer, and vice-versa, advancing the Relationship Metaphor, and defining the relationship context – for example, the Brand

Character and the Archetypal Customer could be good friends, siblings, or cohabitants; they may know each other for a long time, or just see each other occasionally. Finally, the workshop participants should also define what is the Brand Character's main goal – e.g. help the customer to thrive at university, or enable the customer to make the right insurance choices.

By considering the personality traits in the context of this relationship, a full picture of the Relationship Metaphor emerges: who the Brand Character and the Archetypal Customer are to each other; what sort of transaction do they engage in; and by building on the personality traits, how does the Brand Character behave towards the Archetypal Customer (e.g. friendly but distant, overprotective, coach style) – in that sense, the personality traits of the Brand Character should be described in the context of the Relationship Metaphor. Moreover, the other relational characteristics developed throughout the process should also be used to detail the Relationship Metaphor, giving more depth to it – e.g. how they met, and how the relationship evolved.

Accordingly, the *Relationship Metaphor* comprises the Brand Character, and the descriptors of the relationship between this Brand Character and the Archetypal Customer (Image 5.6) – as such, the teams running the Brandslation process must not confuse these concepts. The Brand Character is a metaphor for *who* the brand is – it conveys the Personality Traits, demographic (e.g. gender, age, job), and psychographic (e.g. preferences, consumption, hobbies) profile of the Brand Character. In turn, the Relationship Metaphor is more complete, it includes the Brand Character, but it also tells how this character is related to the Archetypal Customer, giving a richer and more nuanced expression of how they interact, properly expressing the relationship the organization wants the brand to develop with the customer – the Brand Experience Proposition.

Workshop B2 – Customer Feedback

The objective of this workshop is to test and refine the Brand Character and the Relationship Metaphor[59] with the customers – it is an opportunity to confirm if the proposition is well received, and to co-create the final version of the Brand Experience Proposition. This workshop is entirely based on the previous one – thus following the sequence is crucial –, and is composed of two exercises: the first focuses on adjusting the Brand Character and the Relationship Metaphor, and the second on the development of a "branded

[59] Although the *Brand Character* is part of the *Relationship Metaphor*, to make the explanation easier, they are stated as two items during this section.

service journey" – a portrayal of how the customers' experiences through the service journey would be whilst interacting with the Brand Character, in the context of the Relationship Metaphor.

Exercise 1: Relationship and Character Alignment

This first exercise is also an introductory session for the workshop itself. The first step is to get the participants acquainted with the *Brand Character* and the Relationship Metaphor developed in the previous workshop. For that, the Brand Character should be introduced, its personality traits clarified, and the suggested relationship between the brand and the customers described – essentially, every insight developed in the previous workshop should be brought in for discussion. From experience, it is often easier to start by presenting the character's personality traits. Throughout the conversations, it is important to let the customers comment as freely as possible – even if their feedback has already been covered by another topic, it is important to let them talk as freely as possible.

During the exercise, it might be the case that the customers mix the description of character's personality traits, as people tend to see a personality as a whole, and not as the sum of the traits – as such, workshop facilitators should strive to keep the traits organized. After the discussions, the teams partaking in the workshop should re-arrange the personality trait descriptions – here, it is essential to keep a balanced perspective between the customers' suggestions and the insights from the previous workshop. Next, the discussions should move to the other elements of the relationship metaphor, such as describing *who* the Brand Character and the Archetypal Customers are to each other, and *how* is the dynamic of their relationship – certainly, the customers are the best stakeholders to give a final version of this descriptor.

Exercise 2: Branded Journey

As the workshop participants have already discussed the Brand Character and the Relationship Metaphor, they should have internalized these descriptors to a certain extent – as much as possible given the timeframe. Then, the workshop facilitators should ask the participants to co-create a journey that conveys the Relationship Metaphor, making the Brand Character come to life through model interactions. Then, it is essential to consider the different levels of the journey that influences customer experience: not only the touch-points, but also the experiences across the service journey as a whole – the 'roads' between the touch-points (Polaine et al., 2014). In that sense, the best

tool to facilitate this exercise is a Customer Journey Map, where not only the individual encounters can be analyzed, but also the transitions and dynamics between the interactions.

A quick solution for the exercise tool is to divide the journey into three generic moments (becoming a customer, daily use, and exceptional situations) across a horizontal line (columns), and organize the touch-points into channels (phone contact, web, app, face-to-face, etc.) vertically (rows). The objective is to draft an "ideal brand journey"; however, it must be as *ideal* as it must be *branded* – the customer may easily drift towards describing the journey of their dreams, which may not necessarily be aligned with the brand. Even though some of the desired experiences should be considered, the focus on the Brand Experience Proposition (represented by the Relationship Metaphor) must be kept.

Hence, despite the relevance of the customers' insights to the Brand Experience Proposition, they must always be balanced. Finally, it is also important that the narratives used by the customers are properly noted, as they are crucial for the next workshop.

Workshop B3 – Design Principles

The goal of this workshop is to develop the *Design Principles* – a set of guidelines meant to help the design teams embed the Brand Experience Proposition in the service offerings. However, before this process starts, the Relationship Metaphor (and the Brand Character) must be settled, and the insights from the previous session reviewed. This way, in preparation for the present workshop, the teams running the Brandslation process must organize a thorough presentation of the Relationship Metaphor, describing all of its aspects: the Brand Character, the Archetypal Customer, their relationship, and the Brand Character's personality traits – which should also describe how the brand behaves in the relationship.

Additionally, building on the customers' inputs, a narrative that conveys the desired relationship between the customer and the brand should be expressed through a metaphorical account – e.g. how did the Brand Character and the Archetypal Customer meet, how they engage in normal social occasions, and how often and where they gather. This narrative is the last component of the Relationship Metaphor, and should portray the Brand Experience Proposition the organization wants to deliver to the customer, informing the development of the Design Principles. Essentially, the goal of this workshop is to define the enablers of the Brand Experience Proposition – what must be done

consistently in order to convey the Brand Experience Proposition throughout the service experiences.

Exercise 1: Reviewing the Relationship Metaphor

This first exercise is meant to adjust and conclude the Relationship Metaphor, settling the Brand Experience Proposition. In order to enable this process, the aforementioned (in two preceding paragraphs) material should be reviewed with the management teams, and the necessary changes proposed and noted. This reviewing process also serves the second purpose of this exercise, which is to prepare the workshop participants, making them aware of the Relationship Metaphor – once all topics are covered, the workshop should move on to the next activity.

Exercise 2 – Design Principles

As the Relationship Metaphor is established and understood, the workshop participants should focus on developing an exemplar customer journey, detailing the actions that must be taken in order to ensure the delivery of the Brand Experience Proposition through the service interactions. To facilitate this process, the facilitators of the Brandslation process should build on the insights from the previous workshop, focusing on how the Brand Character would enact the Relationship Metaphor through different service situations – e.g. how would the Brand Character, in the context of the Relationship Metaphor, perform the process of welcoming a new subscriber to the cable operator?

The idea is to go over multiple moments, and encounters in the customer journey, and translate the Relationship Metaphor into service interactions and touch-point performances. Once again, it is important to ensure that the Brand Experience Proposition balances the business model, and the service systems, certifying that the proposition is also viable and feasible – although most of this alignment has already been done in the Brand Character workshop, deviations may emerge throughout the process. Moreover, it must be noted that the objective of this exercise is not to design a perfect customer journey, but to find the key enablers that ensure the delivery of the Brand Experience Proposition.

In that sense, once the exemplar journey has been described, the focus should shift towards finding the common enabler – the actions and behaviors that are mentioned multiple times over the journey, which support the delivery of the

Brand Experience Proposition. By clustering these occurrences, the workshop participants can define Design Principles.

Concluding Remarks

The process of defining the Design Principles may take more time than the length of the workshop – accordingly, it is important that the workshop facilitators collect as much insight from the management teams as possible, ensuring that they have enough information to finish the process afterwards if needed. Once the workshop is concluded, all insights must be reviewed, and the final version of the Relationship Metaphor noted. At this point, the first version of the Brand Experience Manual should start to be developed, together with a draft of the *Service Moments* – narratives that exemplify the application of the Brand Experience Proposition in the customer journey.

Workshop B4 – Feedback and Improvements

This last session is an opportunity to adjust the course of the Brand Experience Manual development. Different to the previous workshops, this one does not emphasize exercises, but on reviewing what has been produced thus far. Although there are no exercises to prepare, the teams facilitating the Brandslation process must leave enough time between the workshops in order to produce enough of the Brand Experience Manual content to discuss during the meeting. As the Relationship Metaphor and its components have already been established, the focus of the current workshop should be on refining the Design Principles, and the narratives used to exemplify the Brand Experience Proposition – the *Service Moments.*

Accordingly, the format of the workshop is dependent on how advanced the development of the Brand Experience Manual is. As a general piece of advice, it is suggested that a fair amount of time is designated for defining the final version of the Design Principles, and to draft the script that narrates the Service Moments, as this is the most expressive exemplar of the Brand Experience Proposition. After this workshop, the Brandslation process shifts to an internal design practice in order to conclude the Brand Experience Manual – however, especially in the case of the Service Moments narratives, which tend to be done last, it can be useful to consult with the partner organization, and ask for their feedback.

In the next section, the Brand Experience Manual is briefly reviewed. For more information, please refer to the Brand Experience Manual section in the Findings and Contributions chapter.

A.3 THE BRAND EXPERIENCE MANUAL

As presented in the main body of this monograph, the *Brand Experience Manual* is a tool meant to communicate the Brand Experience Proposition to the teams responsible for the service development process. Essentially, the Brand Experience Manual is composed of a mix of complementary descriptive and prescriptive expressions, which include the Relationship Metaphor, the Design Principles and the Service Moments, reviewed below.

The Relationship Metaphor

The *Relationship Metaphor* is a descriptive expression that conveys the Brand Experience Proposition through the analogy of a relationship between the Brand Character and an Archetypal Customer. As such, it must include not only the description of the personality traits of the Brand Character, and its idiosyncrasies (demographics, psychographics, and Personal Descriptors), but also information about the Archetypal Customer, and the relationship between these two personas (Relational Descriptors; Image 5.6). In practical terms, it is useful to create a short narrative about this relationship. However, this analogy must not always be grounded in the actual service context – for example, in the case of a financial institution, the Brand Character may be described as a financially savvy coworker, or as a former sports coach, and not necessarily as a branch manager.

The goal is to express *how* the brand should act towards the customers, and not necessarily how the employees of the organization should. Although this can be done, it is strongly advised that the teams running the Brandslation process proceed very carefully, so that the Brand Experience Manual is not reduced to a set of employee guidelines – something that can, and should be developed later, building on the insights provided by the Brand Experience Manual. In that sense, it is not excessive to remind once again: the goal is to convey the Brand Experience Proposition through a relational analogy. The Relationship Metaphor expresses how this experience should be on strategic levels – it should even influence the definition of the actual service offering (e.g. the bundles offered in the case of a telecom company, or the type of coverage provided by an insurance company).

Design Principles

The *Design Principles* are prescriptive guidelines meant to inform the design teams *what* has to be consistently done in order to deliver the Brand Experience Proposition, facilitating the design of brand-based service

interactions. As such, it must be noted that the Design Principles do not convey how the interaction should be (which is done by the Relationship Metaphor), but rather, it explains *what* to do – e.g. use all interactions with the customers as an opportunity to learn from them. Although the design principles might look rather simplistic and generic, the objective is to trace the actions that will bridge the current and the desired state. In a sense, the Design Principles list the main paint points that are hindering the delivery of the desired experience.

Service Moments

The last component of the Brand Experience Manual are the *Service Moments* – inspirational examples that demonstrate service scenarios created by applying the Relationship Metaphor and Service Principles, providing an experiential proxy for the Brand Experience Proposition. In practical terms, these scenarios should be enacted either through storyboards, movies, or animations (the chosen option during the research), making it easier for the audience to 'experience the Brand Experience Proposition'. During the research it was noticed that the users of the Brand Experience Manual could find it difficult to grasp the Brand Experience Proposition, and the use of stories facilitated comprehension. Lastly, it must be noted that the goal of the Service Moments is not to design the customer journey, but to provide a descriptive expression of the Brand Experience Proposition.

/ A P P E N D I X

This appendix concludes this monograph by presenting an operational version of the Brandslation process, and a brief description of the Brand Experience Manual. As noted previously, the Brandslation process, as reported in this section, was structured for a mid-sized company; yet, the thorough documentation shown in the *Findings and Contributions* chapter, combined with the description of its development presented in Chapter 4, should facilitate the adaptation of the Brandslation process to new contexts.